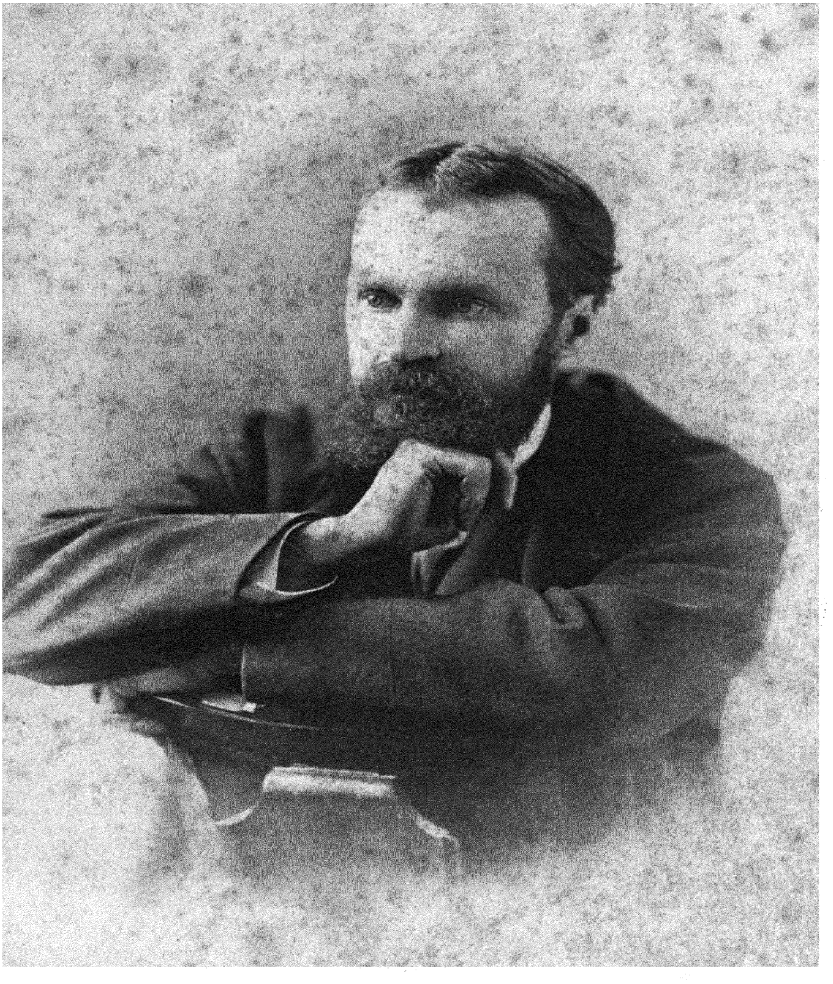
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WILLIAM JAMES, ABOUT 1885

THE
THOUGHT AND CHARACTER OF
WILLIAM JAMES

As revealed in unpublished correspondence and notes, together with his published writings

By

RALPH BARTON PERRY

VOLUME I

INHERITANCE AND VOCATION

With Illustrations

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ὦ ψυχὴ καθαρά
θανοῦσα γὰρ οὐ θάνες

PREFACE

THE present work was originally undertaken for the purpose of giving to the public selections from the great mass of correspondence, lecture notes, diaries, marginalia, and other manuscripts left by William James and deposited by his family in the Harvard College Library. Although it has seemed desirable to weave this material into a systematic account of James's development, there has been no abandonment of the original aim, which was to provide a vehicle for James himself. The reader will here find some five hundred letters written by James not included in the *Letters of William James,* edited by his son Henry James, and published in 1920. To these have been added fifty or more letters written by Henry, the distinguished father of William James, and about thirty written by Henry, his still more distinguished brother. Fortunately William James and his father had the habit of preserving the letters which they received, so that it is often possible to reconstruct an entire correspondence, sometimes extending over many years. Letters written *to* William or the elder Henry include seventeen unpublished letters from Emerson, and single letters or groups from such correspondents as Turgenev, Godkin, C. E. Norton, Santayana, Charles W. Eliot, Bergson, Oliver Wendell Holmes, Rudyard Kipling, Chauncey Wright, Charles Peirce, Ernst Mach, Henry Sidgwick, Croom Robertson, Shadworth Hodgson, Renouvier, Royce, Thomas Davidson, George H. Howison, Stanley Hall, F. J. Child, Henry Holt, James Ward, Stumpf, John Dewey, Frederic Myers, Benjamin Paul Blood, F. H. Bradley, L. T. Hobhouse, Münsterberg, and Giovanni Papini.

Letters and other writings here printed or cited may be assumed to be unpublished unless the contrary is indicated. A table of abbreviations for names or titles frequently used will be found at the close of each volume. For permission to reprint I am indebted to many magazines and publishers, specific acknowledgment being made in each case at the place where the citation appears. I wish also to

thank James's correspondents or their literary executors for permission to use the letters written to James. I am especially grateful to Professor Bergson, who has not only allowed me to use his letters, but has revised their English translations. The illustrations, for the most part, appear for the first time; but the photograph of the elder Henry James and his son Henry is reproduced from *A Small Boy and Others* with the permission of Charles Scribner's Sons; the photograph of Stanley Hall from his *Life and Confessions of a Psychologist,* with the permission of D. Appleton and Company; and the photograph of Giovanni Papini with the permission of his biographer, Enzo Palmieri.

My obligations for aid received in the preparation of this work are very extensive. R. W. Black, F. A. Tupper, and George D. Burrage, students of James in the early days, have helped me with notes and recollections. Among the many colleagues at Harvard and elsewhere who have replied to frequent "queries" with patience (and usually with information) I mention only Bliss Perry, André Morize, Susanne K. Langer, R. L. Rusk, Austin Warren, and G. Prezzolini. Elie Halévy I desire to thank for his revision of the English translation of the letters of Renouvier. My daughter-in-law, Harriet Seelye Perry, has kindly assisted me in the preparation of the index. Harvard University has given me every encouragement and facility for the completion of what has proved a protracted and time-consuming task. I wish especially to thank the officers and attendants of the Widener Library for their coöperation and unfailing courtesy. I come at last to Henry James and Elizabeth Perkins Aldrich. To them my debt is so great that I would name them as joint authors were it not that, having made the ultimate decisions myself, I must, for better or for worse, assume the responsibility.

RALPH BARTON PERRY

Cambridge, Massachusetts
May 2, 1935

FOREWORD

THE life of William James was widely spread, both in its roots and in its branches. It took its nourishment from many sources, grew in many directions, and bore a great variety of fruits. It was richly fertilized and abundantly fertile. Having a peculiar genius for friendship, James entered into relations of intimacy with a large circle of contemporaries, not only with men of his own age but with his juniors and seniors. He was gifted in the art of self-expression, and had at the same time a power to elicit self-expression from others, so that his friendships were highly articulate and his correspondence voluminous. Habits of travel and a knowledge of languages widened the scope of his sociability, and made him an important channel by which America was carried to Europe and Europe to America. In short, his life and mind were so interwoven with their context, so thoroughly socialized and humanized, that a record of them must necessarily be in some measure a history of his epoch.

Part I. The temporal span of James's development qualifies him to represent the transition from the nineteenth to the twentieth century. Through his father and his boyhood he reaches back to the "golden day" of American letters and to the enthusiasms and reforms that preceded the Civil War. This background, typified and documented by the family intimacy with Emerson, forms the theme of the opening part of the present study.

Part II. James's education cannot be divorced from his origin and inheritance, or from surrounding influences, but he soon exhibited the truth of his own doctrine that the mind of man is the principal agent in its own formation. He experimented with himself and with his world, and found his career only after a long period of vacillation and doubt aggravated by ill-health. The story of his education includes the parallel development of his brother Henry and the loving solicitude with which each observed the progress of the other. At the same time his career was divided be-

tween writing and teaching, and illuminates the more or less unnatural alliance of these two vocations.

Part III. James began his philosophical thinking about 1860, at a time when the armies of science and religion were being mobilized for the war which lasted out the century, and in which James sought to be a mediator. How he adhered to the British empirical tradition, how he sought to liberalize this tradition and reconcile it with religion, and how he fought against its great adversary, Hegelianism, make up the theme of James's early philosophical orientation.

Part IV. The first of James's books was the *Principles of Psychology,* and although his philosophical and psychological interests were synchronous and interrelated, it is possible to consider this work by itself, to trace its sources, expound its characteristic doctrine, and illustrate from James's correspondence the comment which it provoked.

Part V. In the '90s, feeling that the period of his psychological fertility was closed, he turned to moral, social, and religious questions: delivering popular addresses, riding on the wave of his growing fame, and then, after an illness which threatened to terminate his career altogether, gathering and consolidating his spiritual resources in the *Varieties of Religious Experience.*

Part VI. In the last and most productive period of his life James made a sustained effort to produce a metaphysics and to give a systematic form to his philosophical thinking. *Pragmatism, Essays in Radical Empiricism,* and *A Pluralistic Universe* were some of the results of this effort — concessions of his philosophical ambition to the exigencies of circumstance and the brevity of time.

While it is true that James and his philosophy originated in the nineteenth century and overlapped the twentieth, such an historical attribution would be misleading. James was true to his origins and his ancestry, as a man must needs be. But it was not like James to feel allegiance to the past, least of all to his own past. His philosophizing in the twentieth century was not an inference from premises laid down in the century before. He traveled with little baggage and with no inflexible itinerary, being singularly free, and wholly devoted to what he took to be the truth at the present moment of his thinking. He was modern, in the sense that is applicable to all ages. Hence it is that James is a philosopher of the twentieth century as well as of the nineteenth, and that much of his thinking, as well as of the man himself, seems formed in the fashion of to-day. And were he alive now, he would, as always, be looking to the future.

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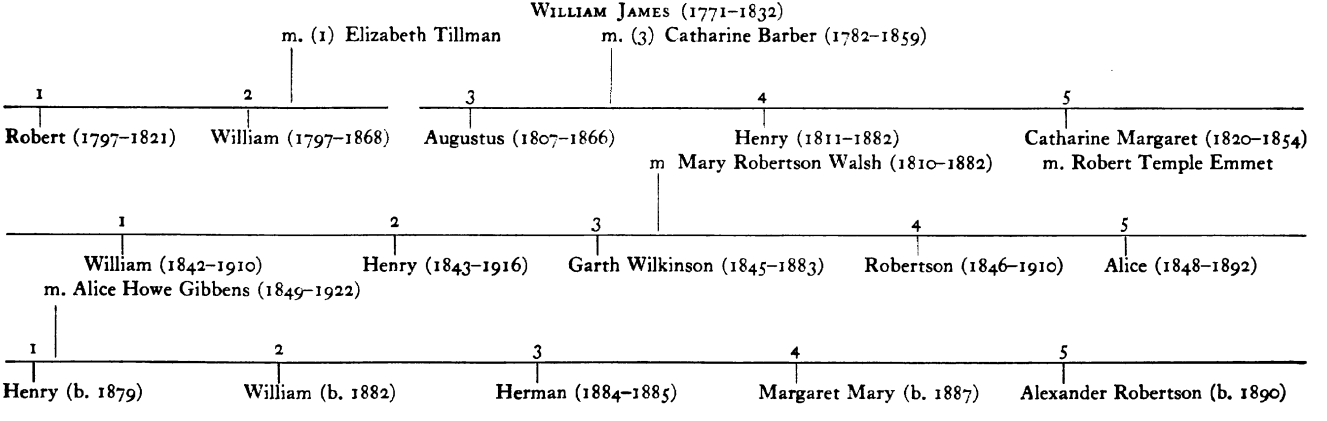
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1828–30 H. J.[1] (the "elder Henry James") at Union College
1835–38 H. J.[1] at Princeton Theological Seminary
1837 H. J.[1] in Europe
1840 H. J.[1] marries Mary Robertson Walsh
1842 b. New York City, January 11
1843 H. J.[2] (Henry James, the novelist), b. New York City
1843–44 James family in Europe
1852–55 School in New York
1855–58 School and tutors in England and France
1858–59 Newport, R. I.
1859–60 School and tutors, Switzerland and Germany
1860–61 Painting with W. M. Hunt, Newport, R. I.
1861 Enters Lawrence Scientific School at Harvard
1864 James family moves to Boston
1864 Enters Harvard Medical School
1865–66 With Agassiz expedition in Brazil
1866 James family moves to Cambridge (20 Quincy Street)
1867–68 Europe, mainly Germany
1869 M.D., Harvard
1869–72 Ill-health and recovery
1873 Instructor in anatomy and physiology, Harvard
1873–74 Recuperation in Europe, especially Italy
1875 Begins teaching psychology
1875 H. J.[2] begins residence abroad
1876 Assistant professor of physiology
1878 Marries Alice Howe Gibbens, Boston, July 10
1878 Undertakes treatise on psychology
1879 Begins teaching philosophy (Philos. 3)
1880 Assistant professor of philosophy
1882 Death of H. J.[1] and Mrs. H. J.[1]
1882–83 Professional contacts in Europe, especially England
1885 Professor of philosophy
1886 Acquires place in Chocorua
1889 Moves into new house at 95 Irving Street

1890	Publication of *Principles of Psychology*
1892	Alice James d. London, March 6
1892–93	Succeeded by Münsterberg in Psychological Laboratory
1896–97	Lowell Institute Lectures on "Exceptional Mental States"
1897	Publication of *Will to Believe and Other Essays*
1898	Injury to heart
1898	Lecture on "Philosophical Conceptions and Practical Results," Berkeley, Calif.
1899	Publication of *Talks to Teachers*
1899–01	Convalescence in Europe, especially Nauheim
1901–02	Gifford Lectures at Edinburgh
1902	Publication of *Varieties of Religious Experience*
1903	LL.D. from Harvard
1905	Trip to Mediterranean. Congress at Rome
1906	Acting professor at Stanford University
1906–07	Lectures on Pragmatism, Lowell Institute and Columbia
1907	Publication of *Pragmatism*
1907	Final resignation from Harvard
1908–09	Hibbert Lectures at Oxford
1909	Publication of *A Pluralistic Universe*
1909	Publication of *Meaning of Truth*
1910	Europe, March–August
1910	d. Chocorua, August 26

PART I

HIS FATHER'S SON

I

THE CALVINISTIC INHERITANCE

THE family circle within which William James grew to maturity was unusual in the degree to which it quickened and moulded its members. It was central and not peripheral to their individual lives. The father, Henry James the elder, had no recognized profession that harnessed him to its routine or summoned him to an office. His occupations of study, meditation, and writing — all of his vocational activities save occasional public lectures — were carried on in the plain sight of his household; and though its other members were unreceptive or even indifferent to "father's ideas," and knew little of what was in his books, the "felt side-wind of their strong composition" made a part of the circumambient atmosphere, and "was in the last resort the gage of something perpetually fine going on." Such, at least, is the grateful testimony of one of the most illustrious members of this family group, who also refers to them as "genially interested in almost nothing but each other."[1] Their mutual interest was due in part to the fact that the education of the children — their relation to school and church and state — was as irregular as their father's vocation. The family claimed them in default of any stable institutional attachments elsewhere. They were further united by the bond of their exceptional tenderness. The elder James complained of his love for his children as both painful and sinful. Emerson records in one of his notebooks: "Henry James said to me, he wished sometimes the lightning would strike his wife and children out of existence, and he should suffer no more from loving them." That his principles as well as his feelings were involved appears from the following, written to the younger Henry: —

Cambridge, Dec. 21 [1869?]

My darling Harry, —

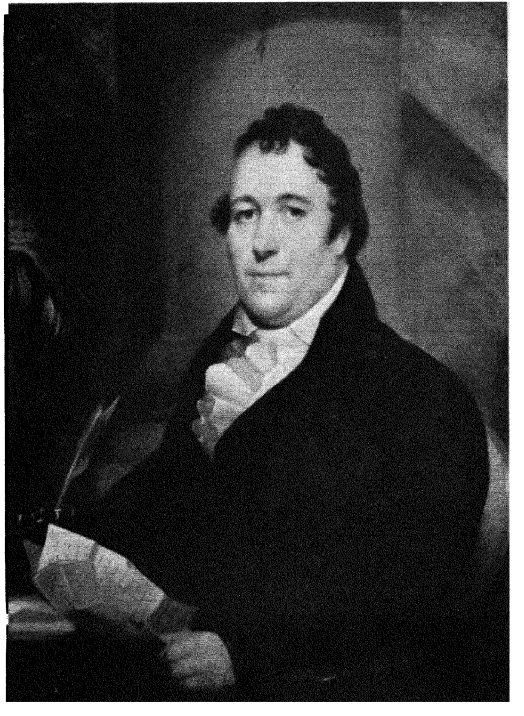
. . . Your long sickness, and Alice's, and now Willy's, have been an immense discipline for me, in gradually teaching me to univer-

[1] Henry James, *Notes of a Son and Brother*, 1914, 163; *A Small Boy and Others*, 1913, 59. Selections from these books are reprinted by special permission of the publishers, Charles Scribner's Sons.

salize my sympathies. It was dreadful to see those you love so tenderly exposed to so much wearing suffering, and I fought against the conviction that it was inevitable. But when I gained a truer perception of the case, and saw that it was a zeal chiefly on behalf of my own children that animated my rebellion, and that I should perhaps scarcely suffer at all, if other people's children alone were in question, and mine were left to enjoy their wonted health and peace, I grew ashamed of myself, and consented to ask for the amelioration of their lot only as a part of the common lot. This is what we want, and this alone, for God's eternal sabbath in our nature, the reconciliation of the individual and the universal interest in humanity. . . . Ever, my darling boy, your loving DADDY

But if the members of this family were interested in one another it was primarily because they were interesting. They shared this quality with the larger tribe to which they belonged, the uncles, aunts, and cousins who were perpetually crossing paths with them and to whose vicissitudes of fortune they could never remain indifferent. William James of Albany, New York, progenitor of the tribe, father of the "elder Henry James," and grandfather of the subject of this book, died in 1832, a decade before the birth of his illustrious grandson. But his third wife, Catharine Barber, lived until 1859, and when our William and his brother Henry were small children they were frequent visitors at her house. This scene, living in vague but poignant memories, and amplified by the vivid narratives of their father, closed the vista of their retrospect. To this scene William looked back through the events of that intermediate life which bound him to it: —

"Father's boyhood up in Albany, Grandmother's house, the father and brothers and sister, with their passions and turbulent histories, his burning, amputation and sickness, his college days and ramblings, his theological throes, his engagement and marriage and fatherhood, his finding more and more of the truths he finally settled down in, his travels in Europe, the days of the old house in New York and all the men I used to see there, at last his quieter motion down the later years of life in Newport, Boston and Cambridge, with his friends and correspondents about him, and his books more and more easily brought forth — how long, how long all



THE ELDER WILLIAM JAMES

Portrait, 1822, Attributed to Samuel L. Wald and William Jewett



CATHARINE BARBER JAMES, ABOUT 1855

these things were in the living, but how short their memory now is!" [2]

When Henry, after his brother's death, sought to revive his earliest memory of their common past, the "first," which "began long ago, far off, and yet glimmers . . . there as out of a thin golden haze," was "at our infantile Albany . . . occasions tasting of ample leisure . . . tasting of accessible garden peaches . . . tasting of many-sized uncles, aunts, cousins, of strange legendary domestics, inveterately but archaically Irish . . . as well as of dim family ramifications and local allusions . . . that flowered into anecdote . . . tasting above all of a big much-shadowed savoury house in which a softly-sighing widowed grandmother, Catharine Barber by birth, whose attitude was a resigned consciousness of complications and accretions, dispensed an hospitality seemingly as joyless as it was certainly boundless." [3]

"William of Albany" [4] was an ample and dynamic person. During the forty-odd years which elapsed between his emigration from Ireland (probably in 1789) and his death in 1832, he survived three or more business partners; participated in the opening of the Erie Canal and the westward development along the Mohawk Valley; extended his interests beyond merchandizing to commerce, real estate, banking, and public utilities, and from Canada to New York City; accumulated one of the great fortunes of his day (estimated at $3,000,000); married three wives, and begat fourteen children; became one of the first citizens of his city and state, and a chief pillar of the Presbyterian Church. It is not surprising that this first William should have felt sure of himself, and sought to impose his will on others; or that he should have been loyally attached to his way of salvation, and to the God who presided over his destiny. He attempted to keep both his worldly and his spiritual estate intact by making the possession of the one dependent on the acceptance of the other. His will provided that the inheritance should not be distributed until his youngest living grandchild should come

[2] Written in 1882 immediately after his father's death; *The Letters of William James*, edited by his son Henry James, 1920, I, 221, published by the Atlantic Monthly Press.

[3] *S.B.O.*, 3, 4.

[4] A good description of "William of Albany" is to be found in *L.W.J.*, I, 2–4. *Cf.* also Austin Warren, *The Elder Henry James*, 1934; and C. H. Grattan, *The Three Jameses*, 1932. Much information has been brought to light by Prof. Harold A. Larrabee of Union College; *cf. Union Alumni Monthly*, XV, No. 7; *The American Scholar*, I, No. 4; and the *Schenectady Gazette*, Jan. 23, 1933.

of age, hoping thus to avoid "the lamentable consequences which so frequently result to young persons brought up in affluence, from coming at once into the possession of property." Meanwhile the property was to be administered by trustees who were so to exercise their discretion as "to discourage prodigality and vice, and furnish an incentive to economy and usefulness." Whoever led a "grossly immoral, idle or dishonorable life" was to receive a small annuity, but his portion was to be withheld.[5]

The elder William James thus did his best to transmit a blend of piety and acquisitiveness to his surviving offspring; but partly because there were too many of them, partly because the strictness of his rule was compromised by his own indulgence, partly because his children inherited their father's temperament without inheriting his opinions, and partly for technical reasons known only to lawyers and courts of equity, his plans, in sum, miscarried. Calvinism and churchgoing rapidly declined. Money-getting and money-keeping ceased to be a family vocation. "The rupture with my grandfather's tradition," wrote Henry, "was complete; we were never in a single case, I think, for two generations, guilty of a stroke of 'business.' "[6] Money became rather a means to the leisurely amenities, the life of fashion, the cultivation of taste and its gratification, or the study and pursuit of letters.

The sons who were most blameless in their father's eyes were Robert, who superintended his commercial concerns for a number of years, but died in 1821, and Augustus, who was named as one of the trustees under the will. These sons, not being theologically-minded, appear to have borne the yoke of hereditary Presbyterianism without protest. There were two other sons, however, who had religious ideas of their own, and whose rebelliousness was the special object of parental wrath. They were the "Rev. William," born in 1797, the second child of the first marriage; and the "elder Henry," born in 1811, the fourth child of the third marriage. The "Rev. William" obtained his early education from Presbyterian clergymen, and entered Princeton, where he experienced a "spiritual renovation" during a religious revival in 1815. He graduated from Princeton College in 1816, was prepared for the Presbyterian ministry at Princeton Theological Seminary, and ordained in 1820.

[5] Grattan, *op. cit.*, 18–9.
[6] *S.B.O.*, 190; *cf.* 1–15, 172–96.

But the professional career of the Reverend William James was intermittent and irregular. The last thirty-three years of his life, from the resignation of his last charge in 1835 until his death in 1868, were devoted to "philosophical and theological research." From the address delivered at his funeral by his Princeton Theological classmate, the Reverend Dr. William B. Sprague, we learn that "he was doubtful and dissatisfied in respect to his own spiritual condition"; that "his mind was generally teeming with profound thought, and was never in its element while moving in a beaten track"; that "his discourses for the pulpit . . . were better fitted to furnish material for thought to thoroughly disciplined minds, than to minister to the gratification of the superficial and emotional hearer"; that he sometimes "rose to a pitch of enthusiasm that might have been likened to the rushing tempest"; that "he had a large and generous heart," was "naturally impulsive"; and that "he was fully aware that his peculiarities of temperament were not in harmony with the uniform routine of pastoral life." [7] So much of this might have been written of his younger half brother, Henry, or of his nephew William, as to suggest irresistibly that the latter's heredity was already brewing. Take a temperament ardent (or Irish), a piety Calvinistic, a physique nervous and energetic rather than robust; modify these with the effects of affluence and leisure; and the result is an ineradicable puritanism contradicted by tenderheartedness, and an emotional instability mellowed by urbanity.

In the case of the half brother Henry, father of the third and most famous William, these ancestral and domestic influences were accidentally modified by acute suffering and permanent impairment of bodily capacity. It appears that a book entitled *Lectures on Experimental Philosophy, Astronomy, and Chemistry,* by G. Gregory, D.D., Vicar of West-ham, was published in London in 1808, and that a copy was brought to Albany, New York, by a young Scotchman named Robert Boyle. Living in the same boarding house with Boyle was a boy of sixteen named Joseph Henry, who chanced one day to be confined by illness. Gregory's *Lectures* lying open on the table, this boy picked it up from idle curiosity, read it with avidity, and thereupon dedicated his life to experimental science. Some years later, in 1824 or thereabouts, this same Joseph Henry

[7] W. B. Sprague, *Address Delivered on Occasion of the Funeral of Rev. William James.* Albany, 1868, 12, 14, 18, 19.

became the tutor of Henry James, as well as of the children of the famous General Stephen Van Rensselaer, with whom the elder William James was associated in many public and commercial enterprises. In the hours which he could spare from this employment the young scientist carried on his investigations and assisted Dr. T. Romeyn Beck, the principal of the Albany Institute, where Henry James, a boy of thirteen, was then attending school. Dr. Beck was a chemist, and he encouraged his boys to play at science under the direction of his young assistant. Perhaps this assistant reflected on the question contained in the book to which he owed his conversion: "Why does flame or smoke always mount upward?" [8] In any case he taught the boys in his charge to fly hot-air balloons supplied with lighted balls of tow. One of these balls having accidentally entered the window of a neighbor's barn, Henry James was seriously burned in a gallant attempt to stamp it out. The result was two years in bed and a double amputation of his leg above the knee.[9]

This happened to a boy who later described himself as follows: "I lived in every fibre of my body. The dawn always found me on my feet; and I can still vividly recall the divine rapture which filled my blood as I pursued under the magical light of morning the sports of the river, the wood, or the field." [10] The experience did not embitter him, nor did it diminish his fund of vital energy, but it heightened his sensitiveness, confirmed a tendency to inward brooding, contributed to his detachment from the world of affairs, and predestined him to a sedentary and urban life. It is characteristic that he should himself record, in his *Autobiographical Sketch*, that the pain of the surgery without anæsthesia suddenly revealed the depth of his father's affection: "His sympathy with my sufferings was so excessive that my mother had the greatest possible difficulty in imposing due prudence upon his expression of it." [11]

In 1828 the young Henry entered Union College and went to live at the home of Reverend Eliphalet Nott, its ambitious and colorful

[8] *N.S.B.*, 276; *Memorial of Joseph Henry*, Washington, 1880, 180; *cf.* also 206–10.

[9] *L.W.J.*, I, 7–8.

[10] *The Literary Remains of Henry James*, edited by his son, William James, 1885, 183; published by James R. Osgood and Co. The above citation was quoted from an autobiographical manuscript left by H.J.[1], published by W.J. in the *Atlantic Monthly*, LIV (1884), and afterwards more fully in *L.R.H.J.*

[11] *L.R.H.J.*, 147.

president. President Nott was both liberal in his theology, and thus an unsettling influence upon the young Henry, and also liberal in his financial methods, and thus a disturbing influence upon the father. Having undertaken to finance Union College by lotteries, and having thus assumed obligations which he could not meet, he borrowed from his friend James to the extent of $100,000, and pledged the real property of the college as security. The money was afterwards repaid, but had James chosen he might, apparently, have become the owner of an educational institution. Instead he became a trustee, a member of the finance committee, and a friendly adviser.

When the young Henry entered Union College his spirits had fully revived. The loss of his leg prevented him from engaging in "the sports of the river, the wood, or the field," but he could and did enter with zest into the pleasures and fashionable life of his day. Indeed he was so extravagant at his father's expense that the latter employed a friend to warn him. This intermediary considered him "on the verge of ruin," though not "irretrievably lost," and exhorted him to submit in everything — in his manner of life and in his choice of a profession — to the advice of his father and mother. Whereupon Henry departed for Boston to read proof and do translation in the office of Jenks and Palmer; while the irate father, noting his son's "progress in arts of low vileness" and "unblushing falsehood," predicted that he would soon find himself lodged in prison.[12] The prodigal returned to college, however, and graduated in 1830, with a passable but not distinguished record; after which he made an abortive attempt to please his father by studying law, and became for a time (1831–1832) one of the editors of an Albany publication entitled the *Craftsman*.

These are but the external events of a life which was profoundly introspective. The inward history of his boyhood and youth he has happily recorded in his own recollections. First the protest: "My juvenile faith as enforced upon me at home, at church, and at Sunday-school, amounted substantially to this: that a profound natural enmity existed from the beginning between man and God, which however Christ had finally allayed, and that I ought therefore grate-

[12] From a correspondence between William James (of Albany) and his friend Archibald McIntyre; and a letter of H.J.[1] to Isaac Jackson, tutor at Union College. *Cf.* also Warren, *op. cit.*, 16–20.

fully to submit myself to the law of Christ. . . . Our Orthodox Protestant faith . . . makes absolutely no ecclesiastical provision in the way of spectacle for engaging the affections of childhood. The innocent carnal delights of children are ignored by the church save at Christmas; and as Christmas comes but once a year, we poor little ones were practically shut up for all our spiritual limbering, or training in the divine life, to the influence of our ordinary paralytic Sunday routine."

Then remorse: "I began very early to discover disorderly tendencies, or prove rebellious to religious restraints. . . . From the day of my birth I had not only never known what it was to have an honest want, a want of my nature, ungratified, but I had also been able to squander, upon the will of my personal caprice, an amount of sustenance equal to the maintenance of a virtuous household. . . . My days bowled themselves out one after another, like waves upon the shore, and as a general thing deafened me by their clamor to any inward voice; but the dark silent night usually let in the spectral eye of God, and set me to wondering and pondering evermore how I should effectually baffle its gaze. . . . Whenever this experience occurred, I was down in the dust of self-abasement, and then tried every way I possibly could to *transact* with God — on the basis of course of his revealed clemency in Christ — by the most profuse acknowledgments of indebtedness, and the most profuse promises of a future payment."

Finally, protest against a view of life in which youth was thus poisoned by remorse: "The great worth of one's childhood to his future manhood consists in its being a storehouse of innocent natural emotions and affections, based upon ignorance. . . . Accordingly in so far as you inconsiderably shorten this period of infantile innocence and ignorance in the child, you weaken his chances of a future manly character. . . . I am sure that the early development of my moral sense was every way fatal to my natural innocence, the innocence essential to a free evolution of one's spiritual character, and put me in an attitude of incessant exaction — in fact, of the most unhandsome mendicancy and higgling — towards my creative source." [18]

It is clear that the youthful Henry was preoccupied with religion. He was too temperamentally religious either to accept his hereditary beliefs with indifference or to renounce them altogether. His

[18] *L.R.H.J.*, 181, 154, 182, 89, 161, 178–9.

worldly interests and animal spirits were at war with his humanity, and both were at war with his traditional piety. But in his case such a conflict could result only in the enrichment and intensification of faith.

Good Presbyterians tended toward Princeton. The Reverend William had gone there in 1813. Joseph Henry, already a famous physicist, had gone there in 1832, called from the Albany Institute to a professorship of natural philosophy in the College of New Jersey.[14] Henry James followed in 1835, when he entered the Princeton Theological Seminary.

As a theological student at Princeton James could have little in common with his fellows. To them religion was an institution, to him it was an original and personal revelation. He thus describes himself in his *Autobiographical Sketch* through the pen of a fictitious fellow student: "He contrasted signally with the entire mass of student life in the Seminary, by the almost total destitution which his religious character exhibited of the dramatic element, — that element of unconscious hypocrisy which Christ stigmatized in the religious zealots of his day, and which indeed seems to be inseparable from the religious *profession*. . . . All his discourse betrayed such an unconscious, or at all events unaffected, habit of spiritualizing secular things and secularizing sacred things, that I was erelong forced to conclude that for *his* needs, at all events, the outward or figurative antagonism of 'the church' and 'the world' had more than fulfilled its intellectual uses, whatever these may have been." [15]

And on his imaginary deathbed he is represented as saying: "I claim for my own part to know God no longer by tradition, much less, of course, by sense — both of which pretensions would be absurd in this day of universal scientific fustigation and fumigation — but by natural consciousness, or within the compass precisely of what my own life has in common with that of all other men." [16]

In 1838 James withdrew from the Princeton Seminary and took up his residence in New York City. He was now permanently alienated from the Church, being "disaffected both by temper and culture to ritual or ceremonial views" of religion,[17] and believing

[14] Henry became the first secretary and director of the Smithsonian Institute in 1846, and died in 1878, distinguished for his leadership of American science, as well as for his own contributions to the subjects of electricity and electromagnetism.

[15] *L.R.H.J.*, 124, 127.

[16] *L.R.H.J.*, 142–3.

[17] *L.R.H.J.*, 123.

that the Church promoted self-righteousnes by segregating a class as the alleged recipients of God's special favor. His insistence on the essentially spiritual meaning of Christ, or of Heaven and Hell, put him quite out of sympathy with any strict interpretation of dogma. The ministry being closed to him, and the other recognized professions being wholly incompatible with his genius, he entered upon that career which seemed to his children so embarrassingly equivocal, and which he described by responding to their questions: "Say I 'm a philosopher, say I 'm a seeker for truth, say I 'm a lover of my kind, say I 'm an author of books if you like; or, best of all, just say I 'm a Student." [18]

He was all these things, but there was a vocation underlying them, namely, to make articulate and triumphant his own peculiar religious insight. That insight was at once a denunciation of Calvinism and a development of it. He paid his respects to the Calvinistic deity with great frequency. He did not disguise his low opinion of "a God . . . who has nought to do but receive assiduous court for a work of creation done myriads of ages ago . . . and who is willing . . . to accept our decorous Sunday homage in ample quittance of obligations so unconsciously incurred." This being his opinion of the Calvinistic God, he thought no better of the Calvinistic emphasis on personal and selective salvation: "Do what I would, I could never succeed in persuading myself that God Almighty cared a jot for me in my personal capacity, — that is, as I stood morally individualized from, or consciously antagonized with, my kind." [19]

But though James insisted upon the unreserved lovingness and lovableness of God, and upon the solidarity of mankind, his personal religious experience was profoundly Calvinistic. It is Calvinistic in this very idea of human solidarity. For is it not a first premise of Calvinism that the sin of Adam is communicated to his whole progeny, so that the race is like an organism which, being stricken in one of its members, must suffer in all? James was Calvinistic, too, in his unreserved acceptance of the view that man is estranged from God. Religion begins with despair. This is not an accident, but a necessary condition: there can be no upward path that does not start from the depths. He was Calvinistic in his acceptance of the doctrine of justification by faith, salvation being an

[18] *N.S.B.*, 69.
[19] *L.R.H.J.*, 39, 91.

unmerited bounty, proceeding from indulgent love to its unworthy object.

So far James not only accepted Calvinism, but rejoiced in it, as the highest and holiest truth. The cycle of sin, repentance, and redemption is not a series of makeshifts dictated by experience; it is a dialectic of spiritual logic, and a diapason of spiritual beauty. But the depth of his Calvinism only makes the more astonishing his radical departure from it — a departure so radical that it might be termed an inversion. For Calvinism, men fall collectively, and are saved individually. They are fallen by nature, by force of their biological inheritance; while they are raised up as individuals — elected, set apart, and marked by their superior zeal and rectitude. But that which is the mark of salvation for the Calvinist, that sense of the special favor of God which expresses itself in a preëminent capacity for righteousness, is for James the very moment of the fall. The biological man is innocent. It is when he presumes to claim individual superiority, whether on the score of his prerogatives or on that of his exceeding piety, that he is most completely alienated from God. What he must repent is his pride, and the beginning of his salvation appears when he identifies his own hopes altogether with those of the race. In short, for James men fall individually, and are saved collectively!

James's repudiation of orthodox Calvinism — and he kept repudiating it heartily for many years to come [20] — evidently was an occasion of scandal, as well as of evangelical anxiety, to the Presbyterian friends of his youth. As late as 1859 his former Princeton roommate wrote to admonish him, and elicited the following reply: —

Newport, May 12 [1859] [21]

My dear Sir, —

I perfectly remember you at Princeton, and am right glad to see that the modesty, amiableness and urbanity which characterized you

[20] *Cf., e.g.*, the terrific onslaught on the Calvinistic God in his *Substance and Shadow*, 1863, 165–6: "For the scheme postulates God as a being of such essential malignity . . . as to require that His thirst of blood once aroused by the sin of His own abject and helpless creatures, should be slaked only in one of two ways: either . . . by the substantive reduction of these creatures themselves to eternal misery; or else . . . by the substitution in their place of an exquisitely innocent victim. . . . Judged of by either alternative this scheme . . . reduces the Divine name indeed below the level of the lowest diabolism."

[21] The further admonitions which this letter evoked can scarcely have had the desired effect upon the prodigal, if, knowing that prodigal, one may judge from the

as a seminary student have contracted so little tarnish from the rude ordeal of your subsequent professional life.

I am sure I am every way inclined to do justice to the kindly feelings of your letter, but thinking me, as you do, *honestly* moved to my opinions, you ought not to view them as exposing me to the Divine chastisement, whatever they may be. I could not possibly dispose myself to punish a child of my own, for any conceivable judgment he might honestly form about any conceivable thing; if I found his judgment erroneous I would do my best to correct it, and I have no doubt with good effects proportioned to the sincerity of my aims. But I should be very sorry to regard this measure of decency unknown to the skies. In fact, and little as it is credited, a direct Divine inspiration is at the bottom of all our most ordinary justice and generosity. I pray you, then, so far as I am concerned, dismiss all your fears. I shall gladly accept all the punishment, which either you or I may be exposed to for our opinions from the Divine hand throughout eternity, provided only I am able thoroughly to live down the sneak I was born, and thoroughly live up the righteous man God's providence would make me.

You say "you are sorry that a person like me should be reproved by such persons as Redpath and Greeley." [22] The former I have not the least knowledge of. Greeley I have only known as a goose: but I have not the least objection myself to their reprobation, urged as it is in the interests not of truth, but of the narrowest conventional prudery. For my part I am only sorry that a professed minister of Christ should look upon the worthless bruises one gets in propagating the truth, as of any moment beside the inestimable satisfactions of obeying one's highest convictions.

It is obvious from certain expressions in your letter that your good heart is pained by what you conceive my renunciation of the gospel, meaning thereby my rejection of Calvinism. I can't offer one word in alleviation of that pang. I reject Calvinism, it is true, with a good-will for which Webster's dictionary is poor in terms of

following passages! "I wish . . . to impress on your mind the fact that this is the object of my desire concerning you — to know that you are walking with God and illustrating your system by a high-toned and unflinching morality." "I simply knew you as a gay young student with an ardent temperament, sparkling social qualities and a free use of money, and very naturally had my fears that you would be tempted if at all from our rigid course of life, not by *speculation* but by *passion* — not on points of *doctrine* but of *morals*." (July 19 and Aug. 1, 1859.)

[22] The reference is presumably to Horace Greeley and to James Redpath, abolitionist, Irish agitator, for a time associate of Greeley's on the *Tribune*.

expression, but I do so only in the sovereign interests of Christianity, very heartily worshipping the man Christ Jesus as the only God of heaven and earth; seeing, in other words, no divinity above the conditions of my own nature, you, I imagine, can hardly conceive the completeness of my contempt, on the one hand, for all those monstrous and odious caricatures of the Divine name which make our Calvinistic literature a sickening abomination to the heart, more even than a falsity to the intellect, — or, on the other hand, the completeness of my abandonment to all the inspirations and aspirations of my God-renewed and emancipated nature.

I hope you are personally enjoying all the domestic comfort and blessing so good a heart is capable of, and I remain, with many thanks for your kind and indulgent memories of me, affectionately your friend,

H. JAMES

P.S. You ask me not to print your name. I certainly could have no desire to do so. You are quite free, however, to deal with either my name or my letter as you please, since I am sure you will do nothing but what is completely frank and fair in manly warfare.

This Calvinistic reaction against Calvinism was the main generating force of James's lecturing and writing, and all his later doctrines have this Calvinistic-anti-Calvinistic core. They are in fact but phases of one doctrine. When, being in England in 1837, he was attracted by the teachings of Robert Sandeman, it was evidently because this writer harped on the priority of faith to works, and proposed to restore the fraternal solidarity of the primitive church. In the early '40s James was attempting a symbolical and allegorical interpretation of the Scriptures, and accumulating "immense piles of manuscript." [23] He was also at this time pondering the question of nature, looking for evidence of its unity and deeper meaning, and seeking a reconciliation of science and religion. Joseph Henry, elder associate of his boyhood days, and now enjoying at Princeton the fame which led shortly to his call to the Smithsonian Institute, had become his intimate friend. Between May and September, 1837, the two men traveled and lived together in Europe, and after James took up his residence in New York he frequently saw "Pro-

[23] *L.R.H.J.*, 58, 62. James brought out an edition of Sandeman in 1839.

fessor Henry" when the latter visited the city. The following exchange of letters reveals James's effort to work out his own salvation: —

New York, July 9, 1843

My dear Friend, —

On returning home a few days since, I found to my great regret that you had called in my absence. I am heartily sorry to have missed you, as I have wanted very frequently within the past year to hold communication with you. At such times I should have run over to Princeton, had it not been for the awkwardness of meeting people there who *will not talk with* one on equal terms, about those matters which necessarily form the only staple of discourse *with them.* I cannot so far stultify my understanding of the divine order as to suppose any human being or set of beings entitled by their attainments in philosophy or devotion to pass an *a priori* judgment upon those who chance to differ from them. The disgusting narrowness of church people afflicts my spirit with as palpable an asphyxia as charcoal vapour produces in my body; and effectually forbids all hope of pleasant or profitable intercourse with them. My recollection of the Princeton people is that they are virtuous, agreeable people up to a certain pitch: were it my lot to be thrown much with them I should suffer from a constant apprehension of that pitch becoming transcended, and of their turning out something quite otherwise.

My time has been closely occupied with study, and it was to get some furtherance in this that I desired to meet you. Again and again I am forced by scriptural philosophy to the conviction that all the phenomena of physics are to be explained and grouped under laws *exclusively spiritual* — that they are in fact only the material expression of spiritual truth, or, as Paul says, the visible forms of invisible substance (HEB. ii. 3). When I have been feelingly on the brink of some clearer apprehension of the connection between them, I have had deeply to lament my ignorance of any connected view of physics, — even of the facts of any one branch: and I have wanted to know from you whether some book did not exist exhibiting the *fundamental unity* of the different sciences; that is, exhibiting the presence and operation in *all* the sciences of great leading and fundamental principles which make all *one* at bottom, in spite

of their superficial diversities. . . . I am perplexed by the barrenness of such scientific books as I have found level to my comprehension, which give one nothing but bewildering heaps of facts peculiar to one branch of science, and never attempt to shew the brotherhood of these facts to every other fact of nature. . . . How can a man separate one branch of science from another without perceiving that he is in so far belittling and dishonouring it, and that it is only by making it connect itself in some manner with *all* other sciences that it becomes worthy of his pursuit? But do you know of such a book as I want? . . . I dread, too, to hear of one, lest when found it should exact more preliminary science from its readers than I could readily muster.

I am advertising my house for sale and shall be guided by circumstances connected with its sale as to whether I shall go into the country or go for a couple of years to Europe. My health has got unsteady from deprivation of fresh air and confinement to my chair. I think it likely we may go over to France for the winter, and afterwards to Germany. When do you next come hitherwards? Much I should like to know what you discover in those deep waters where you sail, if your discoveries bear any relation to my knowledge. In your researches into the physical, have you yet come to the *moral?* Hand and glove is a poor similitude of the union which to my conviction exists between these things. Cause and effect — parent and child — fountain and stream — such, rather, is their intimacy. However, I had no idea of troubling you to this extent when I began. Remember me very kindly to your wife, and believe me ever faithfully yours,

H. JAMES

Princeton, Aug. 22, 1843

My dear James, —

I have delayed from time to time answering your interesting letter of the 9th with the hope of being able to visit you. I have, however, been prevented from leaving home, but I now think it not improbable that I may go to New York in the course of next week, and if I do so we can then have a long talk on the subject of your letter. I fear I cannot give you within the compass of a letter an idea of my views of the connexion of the different branches of physical science with each other and with truths of a higher nature.

The book you enquire after has not yet been written and indeed the development of physical science is not sufficiently advanced for the production of such a work.

Science properly so-called does not consist in an accumulation of mere facts but in a *knowledge* of *the laws of phenomena;* in such a knowledge as will enable us to predict what will take place at any epoch when the circumstances are known. In this sense astronomy is the most perfect of all the branches of physical science, since all its phenomena have been referred to the simple laws of gravitation and motion; and by an application of these laws we are able to say what was or what will be the particular phenomena exhibited at any given time past or present. Besides the astronomical there are several lesser groups of phenomena which have been traced to the operation of simple laws. Of these we have one group which is classed under the head of the *luminous,* another which may be called the *thermonous,* a third the electrical, and a fourth the magnetical. A few years ago these groups were entirely isolated and apparently had no principle of generalization in common, but even within my own time great changes have taken place in this respect; the electrical and the magnetical phenomena have been referred to one law, or to the agency of the same principle operating under different circumstances. Also light and heat have been united in the definite conception of waves of different lengths of an all-pervading ethereal medium. The connexion between the electrical phenomena and those of light and heat has not yet been made out, although there are many facts which lead us to believe that a connexion does exist, — particularly between the agents of heat and electricity. For example, an indefinite development of heat can be produced by the transmission of an electrical current through a platinum wire, and conversely the greatest amount of electrical disturbance is produced by a small quantity of heat applied to the point of juncture of two bars of different metals. Still we are as yet ignorant of the *key fact* which is necessary to teach us *how* the phenomena of heat are connected with those of light, to enable us to say whether they are connected as cause and effect or whether they are both effects of some more general cause. Such a fact, however, I have little doubt will be discovered in the course of a few years, and then the four imponderable agents of nature, as we now call them, will be reduced to one.

The tendency of science is to higher and higher, or rather I should say wider and wider, generalizations, and could we be possessed of sufficient intelligence we would probably see all the phenomena of the external universe, and perhaps all those of the spiritual, reduced to the operation of a single and simple law of the *Divine* will. I cannot think that any fact relative to mind or matter is isolated. On the contrary, I believe that every phenomenon is connected with every other. Thus could we cause the polarity of the needle to cease we would by so doing change the whole order and dependence of the material universe. Our elementary books are entirely destitute of the true scientific spirit, and generally inculcate the idea that science consists in a mere accumulation and arrangement of facts. The reason of this is that works of this kind are generally prepared by compilers who have no knowledge of the subject beyond the mere facts they collate. Those who are actively engaged in the discovery of new truths are unwilling to stop in their career to teach the mere elements of the knowledge which has been produced by the labours of their predecessors. With much respect and esteem, yours as ever,

JOSEPH HENRY

P.S. Should I fail to see you in the city it would give me much pleasure to receive a visit from you at Princeton, — come with your family. We can give you quarters and will be most happy in doing so. You need not meet any persons but those of our family.

J. H.

II

SWEDENBORG AND FOURIER

JAMES'S real literary career did not begin until 1850, and meanwhile he had seen the light.[1] This light came to him from two sources, Swedenborg and Fourier. They did not convert him — but confirmed and sustained him, giving him a language, a systematic framework, and an organized support for the faith that was in him.

A young English physician named J. J. Garth Wilkinson fell under the influence of Swedenborg's teachings in 1835, and presently became his editor, translator, and expositor. An article of Wilkinson's, published in the *Monthly Magazine* in 1841, seems to have been crucial in turning James's thought definitely in the same direction.[2] This influence was confirmed by a dramatic personal experience. In 1844, while residing near Windsor in England, James passed through a crisis of doubt and depression, associated with physical exhaustion: "It was impossible for me . . . to hold this audacious faith in selfhood any longer. When I sat down to dinner on that memorable chilly afternoon in Windsor, I held it serene and unweakened by the faintest breath of doubt; before I rose from table, it had inwardly shrivelled to a cinder. One moment I devoutly thanked God for the inappreciable boon of selfhood; the next, that inappreciable boon seemed to me the one thing damnable on earth, seemed a literal nest of hell within my own entrails." [3]

[1] The major writings of Henry James are as follows: *Moralism and Christianity; or Man's Experience and Destiny*, 1850; *Lectures and Miscellanies*, 1852; *The Church of Christ Not an Ecclesiasticism*, 1854; *The Nature of Evil, considered in a Letter to the Rev. Edward Beecher, D.D., Author of "The Conflict of Ages,"* 1855; *Christianity the Logic of Creation*, 1857; *Substance and Shadow; or Morality and Religion in Their Relation to Life*, 1863; *The Secret of Swedenborg, being an elucidation of his doctrine of the Divine Natural Humanity*, 1869; *Society the Redeemed Form of Man, and the Earnest of God's Omnipotence in Human Nature, affirmed in Letters to a Friend*, 1879.

[2] *Cf.* C. J. Wilkinson: *James John Garth Wilkinson*, 1911, 41; also, article on Wilkinson by E. I. Carlyle, in *Dictionary of National Biography*.

[3] *L.R.H.J.*, 71. The whole passage, beginning at p. 59, should be read.

Two years later, being still in England, a friend whom he met at a watering place suggested that he was suffering from what Swedenborg called a "vastation," and recommended a study of the master's works. James adopted the recommendation: "I read from the first with palpitating interest. My heart divined, even before my intelligence was prepared to do justice to the books, the unequalled amount of truth to be found in them. . . . Imagine a subject of some petty despotism condemned to die, and with (what is more and worse) a sentiment of death pervading all his consciousness, lifted by a sudden miracle into felt harmony with universal man, and filled to the brim with the sentiment of indestructible life instead; and you will have a true picture of my emancipated condition." [4]

When James finally enjoyed a profound and lasting sense of salvation, it was salvation *from* Calvinism. "I had," he said ". . . been in the habit of ascribing to the Creator, so far as my own life and actions were concerned, an outside discernment of the most jealous scrutiny, and had accordingly put the greatest possible alertness into his service and worship, until my will, as you have seen, — thoroughly fagged out as it were with the formal, heartless, endless task of conciliating a stony-hearted Deity, — actually collapsed." In other words, Calvinism meant painful, if not pathological, anxiety over one's eternal fortunes, which unfortunately are not within one's control. Some are saved and some are damned. Which am I? If I am saved there should be marks of it in my superior moral state. Do I find these marks? Intense preoccupation with an ambiguous doom! Salvation came to James with the insight that this desperate interest in oneself is only a phase in the process by which God takes all mankind to his heart.

The relations of James and Wilkinson ripened into a lifelong intimacy. They named their children for one another. James poured out the torrent of his thought in long and frequent letters, which were often incorporated in his books. He introduced Wilkinson to his friends (among them Emerson, Longfellow, Dana, and Hawthorne) and helped him to find American publishers for his writings. That James and Wilkinson were well attuned to one

[4] *Ibid.*, 66–7, 69. The friend was a "Mrs. Chichester, a gentle lady of his acquaintance there." (*N.S.B.*, 173.) H.J.[2] here conveys the impression of this legendary conversion left on the members of the James family. *Cf.* also the letter of H.J.[1] to Mrs. Shaw, printed below, 33.

another, for comradeship as well as exchange of ideas, is clear from the following letter. MacDaniel, a mutual friend and emissary, has evidently reported that James was offended with Wilkinson, and the latter has alluded to the matter in a recent letter to which this is the reply: —

New York, Sept. 6, 1852

My dear Wilkinson, —

Could I lay my hands upon the thick noddle of our friend MacDaniel just now, I think its faculties would run a fair chance of sharpening. What could the man have meant by such a tale, and of my being offended, moreover of all men with you, you darling old soul! towards whom all my thoughts and dispositions are as genial and caressing as bread to butter, or strawberries to cream, or mutton to turnips. Such an outrage, to be sure! I can't conceive what possible ground existed for the fancy. I don't remember anything he said distinctly; I have a general impression of his speaking very kindly and admiringly of you; but deuce a word do I recollect that dropt from him touching our relation. Very possibly he may have said something about your distrusting the immaculate wisdom of my books, and I, by way of rewarding his good nature, may have put on an air of great interest, and said "Ah! the scamp! I will punch him when I once get his head under my arm," — but clearly this was the extent of my demonstration. I have had no word from you, nor heard any of you, since we parted at the railroad depot in London, which has n't deepened my love to you. I could wish of course, now and then, for a little more intellectual sympathy on your part, but your judgments have always been so genuine, so characteristic of the man I knew and loved, so vastly and blissfully and ingenuously English even when they were most opposite to me that I would as soon have thought of blaspheming the British Constitution, or quarrelling with a decree of Providence. Besides, it is not my love only that is in question, it is my pride in you, also. I have always reckoned it quite the tallest of my social merits that I was your correspondent, and had the power always of fixing the attention of the best people, by simply taking a letter of yours from my pocket and proceeding to read it. The fact is I lived on you for years, as the bee lives on flowers; you were the plume in my bonnet, my jewelled breast-

plate, my shining knee buckles, in short my *dulce decus et tutamen.* Emerson was docile in my presence by virtue of your leaven, and even Parker forgot to dogmatize. How then could I ever feel offense? Is a man offended with an estate which affords him great revenues? Answer that, and be satisfied.

No, no, I am at peace with all mankind, but so particularly with you that I scarcely think a week can even elapse without my saying, "O! what could I give for a month of Wilkinson!" I have thought it absurd to be boring you any longer with my transcendentalisms, when you persisted in despising them too much to admit them into the bare vestibule of your attention; and I, accordingly, have written very seldom of late. Another reason of this is, that I have the same horror of pen and ink which you confess to. When I get through my public stint, I feel only like lying down with the young ones, or wandering about town to look in at windows, and going to the theatres to laugh at some of your farces. I feel for example as if I were approaching your senescence. I am determined accordingly to take holiday for the rest of my life, and make all my work sabbatical, and expressive only of irrepressive inward health and impulsion. I seem to be doing as much as the skies will ever expect of me, to behave tenderly towards the children and neighbours, and speak words of fellowship now and then to the omnibus people. A lecture or newspaper squib will now and then force itself out of my finger ends, but in the main I intend to be sane.

Another obstacle to my free communication with you as of old, too, has been the preposterous and uncalled-for change which I learn has come over your personal appearance. I left you a thin, scholarly, unobtrusive, somewhat shy manner of man, and now they tell me you are become corpulent, florid, altogether potent and perhaps aggressive. Do you suppose I am going to take such a Wilkinson as that to my bosom, and lavish the friendship upon him which belonged to his modest and tender chrysalis? No, I assure you, not without a fresh acquaintance with him. Accordingly I must go over the water before two years are past, if only to be reintroduced to you, and see whether the old heavenly soul has held its place. Look in the glass, and tell me whether the muscles of the mouth are as treacherous and mobile as they used to be. Do you remember your old levity? Do you remember that

I could never look at you talking of serious things, without laughing? Is *that* Wilkinson still extant? If so, keep him immortal, I pray you for my sake, and let no adipose obscure his sweetness. For I shall yet see him before I die.

There, I took up my pen to rejoice over your criticism of my book,[5] and shew you how all your objections proved its great value; for you see when no one else will admit the beauty of one's offspring, one will be sure to be then most entirely persuaded of it himself. But I have got drowned in the memory of you and your darling wife, and can only express a feeling of delight which is unutterable, by words without sense. You are too destitute of religion [6] to do me justice as an author; that is the sum of my convictions on the whole subject, and I hand you over accordingly to the prayers of the devout. Your own book,[7] the frontispiece to which made it an actual terror to me for so long, has been gleefully thumbed since, I can tell you. Surely no book written by a mere mortal has ever so glowed with the terrible inspiration of nature, and one reads it accordingly with the same dizzy pleasure he feels in looking at Niagara, or careering over Switzerland. Who wrote the review of it in the *North British?* [8] Some good Samaritan, I perceive, is saying a friendly word for me in the *Leader,*[9] for which I give him great thanks in silence. No other paper, I believe, has noticed it, for which on the whole I am glad; for as a second edition of it will be acquired here in the winter — think of that, Master Brook — I shall defecate it of some of its abominations, and add a little which will make it more deserving perhaps. But do pardon me all this trash, so tiresome, for it only means to say at bottom that I am most devoutly, my dear Wilkinson, both chary and proud of your generous friendship, and that no man lives to whom I can

[5] Apparently the *Lectures and Miscellanies,* which appeared in this year.

[6] Nor did Wilkinson share James's zeal for metaphysical theology, as indicated in his reply to this letter: "Surely, my dear Henry James, you would not cramp me by insisting that I shall study, or without study swallow, your great batches of universals, when I solemnly tell you that they are out of my line. . . . Respect the blink-eyedness of the doctor who, in comparison with curing an old cough or a chronic gouty limb, thinks astronomy and theology to be for him of little moment." (May 1853. *Cf.* Wilkinson, *op. cit.,* 88–9.)

[7] *The Human Body and Its Connection with Man,* Philadelphia, 1851. The "frontispiece" referred to is the dedication of the book to "Henry James, Esq., of New York," its "foster parent."

[8] The review of Wilkinson's *The Human Body* appeared in the *North British Review,* XVII (1852).

[9] The review appeared in two parts, entitled "An American Thinker," and "The Old and New Theology." They were published in the *Leader,* Vol. III, on Aug. 14 and Aug. 21, 1852.

say with more truth what I now say to you, that I am and shall be ever faithfully yours,

H. JAMES

P.S. 7th — Apropos of MacDaniel: Who should walk in last evening, after I had sunk into somnolent acquiescence in all my persecutions, but that identical malefactor himself. But he was so fresh from you, and savoured so of your most loving presence, that I became pusillanimously forgiving, nor even uttered a word of upbraiding all the night. He was rich with tidings of you, and therefore sacred from my vengeance. I fairly begin to love the man.

P.S. 2nd — I enclose for Mrs. W. some bits from the *Tribune*. If she thinks my meaning bad, she must be sure to say that she misapprehends it. My wife and Mrs. Walsh [10] enjoin the assurance of their best affection to you both. We all want vastly to see your girls, dear little tots as we remember them, and compare them with their promise.

It was as impossible for James to be a good Swedenborgian as to be a good Presbyterian. "In common with Margaret Fuller," remarks one of his admirers, "it is not as a seer of ghosts, but as a seer of truths, that Swedenborg interests him." [11] Religion was for him a matter of experience and insight, and not of dogma or historical revelation. The events of the life of Jesus were to him symbols of the deeper truth — of "that complete lordship of nature which universal man shall ere long achieve, by virtue of his essential or indwelling divine force." [12] He did not like any church in the concrete, because of its sectarian claim to special favor, and because it was an organization tending to preoccupation with a desiccated self-righteousness in its members. In the *Secret of Swedenborg* he delivers himself on the subject in a characteristic manner of genial invective.

"The Swedenborgian sect assumes to be the New Jerusalem, which is the figurative name used in the Apocalypse to denote God's perfected spiritual work in human nature; and under this tremendous designation it is content to employ itself in doing — what? why, in

[10] This is Mrs. Catharine Walsh, William James's "Aunt Kate," and a beloved member of Henry James's household until his death.

[11] W. White, *Emanuel Swedenborg*, 1867, II, 653.

[12] *Lectures and Miscellanies*, 1852, 147.

pouring new wine into old bottles, with such a preternatural solicitude for the tenacity of the bottles as necessitates an altogether comical indifference to the quality of the wine. . . . The sect of the *soi-disant* New Jerusalem . . . deliberately empties itself of all interest in the hallowed struggle which society is everywhere making for her very existence against established injustice and sanctified imposture, in order to concentrate its energy and prudence upon the washing and dressing, upon the larding and stuffing, upon the embalming and perfuming, of its own invincibly squalid little *corpus*. This Pharisaic spirit, the spirit of separatism or sect, is the identical spirit of hell; and to attempt compassing any consideration for oneself at the Divine hands by making oneself to differ from other people, or claiming a higher divine sanctity than they enjoy, is to encounter the only sure damnation. . . . Let the reader, whatever else he may fairly or foolishly conclude against Swedenborg, acquit him point-blank of countenancing this abject ecclesiastical drivel." [18]

Wilkinson, on the other hand, thought that the Swedenborgians were better entitled to that name than James. Friendly expostulations on this subject form the theme of the letter written on receipt of James's later book, *Society the Redeemed Form of Man*.

London, May 20, 1879

My dear James, —

It is very satisfying to me to write to you again after long years, and in answer to receiving a missive so robust, and a missile so provocative, as your last book; for the presentation of which to us we both heartily thank you. . . . I have read your book carefully from alpha to omega. There is no need to say how much I am impressed with the power and fascination of its setting forth. The heart-glow which almost pervades it is a new quality in literature, and illuminates many things by giving loving instinct to the reader. A tropical splendour of human affection acclimatizes thoughts that have no flowers or fruits in other writers. . . .

Yet, dear old friend, I have a few things to say against you. You would be better, not as a man, but as a consistency, if you were detached from Swedenborg. Your theory has been suggested by his collision with your mind; he has struck you hard; and in the tenderness and generosity of your constitution, you have accepted his

[18] *L.R.H.J.*, 104–6; *cf.* also the amusing letter quoted in *L.W.J.*, I, 14–6.

heavy blow as polite intercourse; and founded, on your own side, not his, a friendship with his works, instead of recognizing his opposition as the main fact between you. To set yourself right you have abased his attorney; fallen upon the body of Swedenborgians, who are his printers, publishers, and liberal continuers and adherents. They say nothing but what he says; and humbly enough they say it. And he is all right, and they are disgustingly wrong! . . .

The only term common to you and Swedenborg is the *Divine Natural Humanity.* But is there any common idea between you here? I cannot find one. Swedenborg's Divine Natural is Jehovah triumphant in Jesus Christ over his infirm humanity, and over all the hells which had access to it: transforming his natural into the Divine Natural. Swedenborg goes to this end, and to the consequences of a new and everlasting Church proceeding from this Divine Natural. Your Divine Natural, unless I misunderstand you, is diffused in all men, giving, or to give, them infinitude of some kind, and abolishing heavens and hells as mere preparations for the Godhead of Humanity. . . . And at last, the Christ Himself seems to disappear into Humanity, as God has disappeared into Christ; and Man is all in all. You seem somehow to end with Professor Clifford, "the kingdom of man is at hand." Nothing is left to my apprehension but pananthropism, a composite form of pantheism. . . .

I know you will forgive me for saying all this, because it is honest, and in its essence, loving. Probably I shall not see you again in this world; but if we are good children, the Atlantic will not always roll unmannerly between us; but in another life, if we very much wish to manifest hearts, and compare notes, the spiritual Atlantic will contract so that we can step across it, and shake hands when love's need arises.

I am now reading Professor W. James's essays, in *Mind,* and another periodical; lent me by that renowned artist, Henry James Junr., who is the talk of all the most cultivated tables in England. I have just sent to America for his *A Passionate Pilgrim,* a book I do not like to be without. If Prof. W.J. writes anything, I should wish much to see it. With love to Mrs. James and yourself, to Mrs. Walsh, Alice, and all the kindred, your affectionate,

J. J. GARTH WILKINSON

The differences between Wilkinson and James, though playfully evaded or momentarily dissolved in the glow of friendship, were persistent and significant. Wilkinson's Swedenborgianism was colored by the fact that he was a physiologist and a good Christian; while James was a metaphysician, a mystic, and a hereditary Calvinist, who looked to Swedenborg to deliver him altogether from the letter — even from the letter of Swedenborgianism.

James's other great source of light was Fourier, who died in 1837, and whose fame spread with such rapidity that in 1846 the number of his American followers was estimated at 200,000. It is, of course, impossible to explain this movement as an isolated phenomenon, or as proving the peculiar merit of Fourier's teachings. It is a manifestation of that same eager and confident spirit of reform which appears in the Free Soil movement, abolitionism, the peace societies, the Owenite movement, and transcendentalism. Those who belonged to one of these movements usually belonged to the rest, or at any rate were sympathetic to them, and to all other "isms." "In the history of the world," said Emerson, "the doctrine of reform had never such scope as at the present hour. . . . We are to revise the whole of our social structure, the state, the school, religion, marriage, trade, science, and explore their foundations in our own nature." [14] The Fourierites belonged to what Emerson called "the party of the Future." [15] Fourier's doctrines were hopeful and humane; and they were also concrete, methodical, and "scientific," giving their devotees something to do as well as something to talk about. He taught that men are essentially good, and that evil arises from maladjustment — properly organized men may be left to the prompting and free expression of their passions. Such a state of harmony is to be achieved by association in communities or "phalanxes," in which capital, labor, and talent are all duly rewarded, and human relations are nicely attuned to human nature.

The launching of the Fourierite cult in America was mainly due to Albert Brisbane, who converted those that became its leading exponents — George Ripley, Horace Greeley, Parke Godwin.[16] Begin-

[14] The *Dial*, I (184–1), 523, 534. Even mediumship and spiritism profited by the general enthusiasm, but Andrew Jackson Davis's lead in this direction was not followed by the group with which James was more immediately associated, and James himself took little interest in it.

[15] *Works*, Centenary Edition, X, 326, 339.

[16] Albert Brisbane was the father of Arthur Brisbane, the present-day journalist. Parke Godwin and James had been close friends since the time they were fellow

ning in 1842, Greeley devoted to the cause a column of the front page of the *Tribune*. Through Brisbane and Ripley, Brook Farm was converted into a Fourierite "Phalanx," and the whole constellation of New England literary celebrities was thus brought into the Fourierite orbit. The *Dial* expounded Fourierite doctrines.[17] The *Phalanx*, established by Brisbane as the organ of the movement, was succeeded in 1845 by the famous *Harbinger*, a weekly magazine edited by Ripley, and devoted to "the principle of universal unity as taught by Charles Fourier"; to "the causes of a radical, organic, social reform essential to the highest development of man's nature; to the production of those elevated and beautiful forms of character of which he is capable; and to the diffusion of happiness, excellence and universal harmony upon the earth." [18]

The columns of this devoted organ wear to-day the aspect of a faded bridal wreath or an ancestral lock of infant's hair — pathetic relics of dead hopes, ghosts of old illusions. What a feeling of millennial expectancy pervades the opening address to the public! "In the words of the illustrious Swedenborg, which we have selected for the motto of the *Harbinger*, 'All things, at the present day, stand provided and prepared, and await the light. The ship is in the harbour; the sails are swelling; the east wind blows; let us weigh the anchor, and put forth to sea.' " In 1847 an editorial on "Tide Marks" declared that "all great social changes are preceded by the simultaneous rise in many minds, even the most conservative, and separated by position, circumstances and pursuits, of all sorts of aspirations and suggestions, incidental, fragmentary, momentary, which all however wear some shade of the common hue of the Idea which is at the bottom of said change. So it is with regard to the next great phase in the progress of society, the greatest change humanity has ever undergone, from the ages of incoherence to the normal state of Harmony in the Associative Order. It is the idea of the age; and like a tide it rises in all minds." [19]

The new times were coming to-morrow, or, at the latest, day after to-morrow! It was not merely a question of hope, but of

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students at the Princeton Theological Seminary, and were correspondents from 1861 until the latter's death. *Cf.* Warren, *op. cit.*, 245, note 12, and 97, 113.

[17] *Cf.* Ripley's favorable comment in Vol. I (1840–1), 265–6.

[18] From the Prospectus. *Cf.* O. B. Frothingham, *George Ripley*, American Men of Letters, 1882, 179.

[19] Vol. V, 1847, 219.

definite preparations for the impending event. A correspondent of the *Harbinger,* writing in 1847, clips the following from a pamphlet which was circulated in Braceville, Ohio: —

"NOTICE is hereby given to all Men and Women, that a Convention of Reformers, who are willing to become the 'Messengers of Jesus Christ,' for the introduction of the New Era of Universal Peace among all mankind, will be held at the Trumbull Phalanx (situate in Trumbull County, Ohio, nine miles west of Warren, and five miles north of the village of Newton Falls) to commence its sessions on the 12th of August next, 1847, for the purpose of instructing and initiating them in the points which must be made manifest before the Millennial Dispensation of 'Good Will and Universal Peace' amongst all mankind will be established upon this earth, in accordance with the express design and guidance of the Spirit of God.

ANDREW B. SMOLNIKAR

(Formerly Roman Catholic Priest and Professor of Divinity — now Messenger of the Dispensation of the Fulness of Times. EPHESIANS. i.10)" [20]

The *Harbinger,* having been moved to New York from Brook Farm upon the abandonment of the latter project in 1847, expired in 1849. The high hopes which had sustained it seemed to lose nothing either of elevation or of ardor. Its place was promptly taken by the *Spirit of the Age,*[21] doomed like its predecessors to die in infancy. The "Prospectus," by the editor, William Henry Channing, has a cosmic sweep and magnificent disregard of difficulties that suggest the first chapter of the Book of Genesis: —

"This weekly paper seeks as its end the Peaceful Transformation of human societies from isolated to associated interests, from competitive to coöperative industry, from disunity to unity. Amidst Revolution and Reaction it advocates Reorganization. It desires to reconcile conflicting classes and to harmonize man's various

[20] *Ibid.,* 163. Eleven Owenite and thirty-four Fourierite communities are said to have existed at various times between 1840 and 1870, the decade 1840–50 being the time of maximum activity. The Trumbull Phalanx, and the North American Phalanx in New Jersey, were among the strongest of the Fourierite groups. *Cf.* A. Maverick, *Henry J. Raymond and the New York Press, for Thirty Years;* 1870, 56–8.

[21] The *Spirit of the Age* was to be succeeded by the *New Times,* of which James was to be editor in chief, and which issued a voluble pronouncement. This periodical never appeared. *Cf.* Warren, *op. cit.,* 114–6.

tendencies by an orderly arrangement of all relations, in the Family, the Township, the Nation, the World. Thus would it aid to introduce the Era of Confederated Communities, which in spirit, truth and deed shall be the Kingdom of God and his Righteousness, a Heaven upon Earth." [22]

The circle of the *Harbinger* and that of Brook Farm comprised James's friends and intimates. The extent to which these circles coincided, as well as the quality of their members, can be judged by a bare recital of names. The principal writers for the *Harbinger* were George Ripley, Charles A. Dana, and John S. Dwight; occasional contributors included, besides James and Wilkinson, Albert Brisbane, William H. Channing, George William Curtis, Parke Godwin, Horace Greeley, Thomas Wentworth Higginson, W. W. Story, James Freeman Clarke, Francis G. Shaw, John G. Whittier, William Ellery Channing, Christopher P. Cranch, Stephen Pearl Andrews, James Russell Lowell, Edmund Tweedy, Otis Clapp, Frederick H. Hedge, D. S. Oliphant. Among the resident members of Brook Farm were Ripley, Dana, Dwight, and Nathaniel Hawthorne; Francis G. Shaw was a neighbor and generous supporter; while the list of friendly visitors included William H. Channing, Margaret Fuller, Emerson, Bronson Alcott, Greeley, Brisbane, Elizabeth Peabody, T. W. Higginson, James Russell Lowell, and Theodore Parker. There was also through Greeley a close relation between both of these groups and the *Tribune*. When the dispersal of the Brook Farm community took place in 1847, a little room at the top of the *Tribune* building afforded a place of refuge for the *Harbinger,* and Ripley, Margaret Fuller, Dana, and others became members of the *Tribune* staff. Godwin and Brisbane, as well as Wilkinson, were already contributors. James himself was a voluminous letter writer, and the pages of the *Tribune* abound in his sprightly, sharp-edged, and home-thrusting polemics.

There is no evidence that Fourier was influenced by Swedenborg, and it is not certain that he was even acquainted with his doctrines.[23] Swedenborg was a religious mystic and dogmatist, while Fourier was devoted to social reform in a manner which was designed to be both practical and scientific. But there were striking similarities both of method and of doctrine, and the two movements seemed

[22] *Spirit of the Age*, I, 1849, 8.
[23] H. Bourgin, *Fourier, contribution à l'étude du socialisme français*, 1905, 80–6

predestined to marriage. Swedenborgianism needed a social programme, and Fourierism needed a metaphysical and religious foundation. It was this reciprocal, complementary fitness that was most important to the reformers of the 1840's. Though James was one of the first to hail the union, and apparently converted Wilkinson,[24] it seems to have suggested itself almost simultaneously to many leaders of the two movements on both sides of the Atlantic. The *Harbinger,* as we have seen, professed Fourier and quoted Swedenborg. Dwight, Dana, and Hugh Doherty, editor of the London *Phalanx,* proclaimed both Swedenborg and Fourier from 1844. In the same year Parke Godwin wrote: "These two great minds, the greatest beyond all comparison in our later days, were the instruments of Providence in bringing to light the mysteries of His Word and Works, as they are comprehended and followed, in the higher states of existence. It is no exaggeration, we think, to say that they are the two commissioned by the Great Leader of the Christian Israel, to spy out the promised land of peace and blessedness." [25]

Emerson wrote as early as 1842 that "one could not but be struck with strange coincidences betwixt Fourier and Swedenborg." It is clear from the context that he could not take the details of Fourierism seriously, though he approved its spirit and much of its underlying theory.[26] Swedenborg was an earlier and much deeper passion. Emerson began giving his famous lecture on Swedenborg about 1845, and contributed greatly to his vogue both in England and in America.[27] The Brook Farm group as a whole turned towards Swedenborg *after* they had felt the influence of Fourier, wanting "a new Heaven as well as a new earth." [28] James, on the other hand, began with a new Heaven. Convinced of the efficacy of God's all-redeeming love, he felt the need of a *social science* that would link this "spiritual insight" with the laws of nature. Paragraphs from a letter to a friend throw an interesting light on this second conversion — to the gospel according to Fourier: —

[24] Writing Sept. 27, 1867, to his namesake, James's son, Garth Wilkinson James, Wilkinson said he was James's "convert" as regards "the all-importance of a new social life."

[25] Parke Godwin, *A Popular View of the Doctrines of Charles Fourier,* 106.

[26] *Dial,* III (1842–3), 87 ff.

[27] Emerson's "Swedenborg; or, the Mystic" was published in 1850 in *Representative Men.* He had become interested in Swedenborg at least fifteen years before this date.

[28] "It accepted the doctrines of Fourier in 1844, and in 1845 the teachings of Swedenborg were eagerly studied by nearly all its members." G. W. Cooke, *Ralph Waldo Emerson,* 1881, 94.

"The Christian facts, the wondrous deeds and words of Christ, had somehow given me such a conception of the love which they professed to reveal, as made it intolerable to me to believe that God willingly looked upon any of his creatures as hopelessly degraded. My heart revolted before my head was able to see any extrication for it. In this state of conflict, my nerves gave way, and I was obliged to abandon thought and betake myself to the water-cure. . . . I was here for the first time taught, by a thorough disclosure of the laws of spiritual existence, that God's great work was wrought not in minds of individuals here and there, as my theology taught me, but in the very stuff of human nature itself, in the very commonest affections and appetites and passions of universal man, a transforming, redeeming, regenerating work, which shall lift all mankind into endless union with God. . . .

"But I so felt the want of a knowledge of the true laws of nature, that I was on the point of despairing a second time, not now for want of *spiritual* insight, but for want of *scientific* insight. I felt that the social sentiment, that new feeling of equality or fellowship, which had of late been begotten in the earth, was the true presence of God in nature: but how to organize that sentiment, how to give it expression or form worthy of its source: alas! alas! my way was again fearfully obstructed. . . . Imagine my gratitude to God, then, when, about those days, I heard the name of Fourier as having conceived a Divine *social* order for man! I have never ceased from that day to this to look upon Fourier's disclosures of the harmonies which are possible to humanity, in every sphere whether of its passions or active administration, as stamped with God's own truth. What I recognize of His *inward* glory in Christ, drives me to demand such an outward fulfilment of it in every form of human nature as Fourier paints. I believe accordingly in Fourier, not prudentially, but stoutly and devoutly: and I laugh to scorn all apprehension of its ever being proved 'too good to be true.' " [29]

The doctrines of Fourier attracted James not only because they seemed to provide a social science and a guarantee of fulfillment, but because they confirmed two of his most cherished convictions.

[29] May 10, 1859. The correspondent is Sarah Blake Sturgis Shaw, wife of Francis George Shaw and mother of Robert Gould Shaw.

The first of these was social solidarity, "the unity or personality of the great race itself." The only important sense in which "good" men differ from "bad" is in their relation to "that great unitary life of God in our nature, which we call society, fraternity, fellowship, equality." [30] James's most memorable application of this principle to contemporary issues was contained in the oration delivered before the citizens of Newport, Rhode Island, on July 4, 1861, and entitled, "The Social Significance of Our Institutions." Rarely has the creed of the Declaration been so proudly affirmed, and never has it been so completely divorced from the individualism that gave it birth. The speaker rejects authority: "Liberty . . . consists in the inalienable right of every man to believe according to the unbribed inspiration of his own heart, and to act according to the unperverted dictates of his own understanding." The equality with which men are endowed by creation, as distinguished from the differences of talent, aptitude, and station to which they are born, is their equality before God as "equal retainers of His sovereign bounty" regardless of all invidious personal merit. Social equality consists in "every man's joint and equal dependence with every other man upon the association of his kind for all that he himself is or enjoys." Fraternity is the spiritual bond of the indwelling of God in the race. Slavery, since it violates the sacredness of the universal humanity, is essentially diabolical, and the orator calls upon Lincoln and Seward to refuse all compromise with its exponents. Thus are the old formulas of the eighteenth century freed of their archaisms and inoculated with the spirit of a new age. These brief extracts convey no idea of the ringing fervor of the address as a whole. Never has the traditional political piety of America received a more unqualified endorsement, or the faith of America in her unique and commanding destiny been proclaimed with a more blatant patriotism or a more magnificent audacity.[31]

The second cherished idea for which James found confirmation in Fourier was the idea of human innocence. Fourier ascribed misconduct and the necessity of institutional control to maladjustment, and his programme consisted in devising communities so skillfully organized that within them the individual could enjoy entire spon-

[30] Henry James, *Substance and Shadow*, 1863, 145, 369.
[31] *The Social Significance of Our Institutions*, 1861, 27, 21, 16, and *passim*.

taneity and be "freely good." [32] Or, as William James expressed it, "In a Society organized divinely our *natures* will not be altered, but our spontaneities, because they then will work harmoniously, will all work innocently, and the Kingdom of Heaven will have come." [33]

Now there is among men a well-known tendency to anticipate the Kingdom of Heaven, and the fact that Fourierites, together with other radicals of the day, applied this principle of innocence and spontaneity to the relations of the sexes led to certain rumors of scandal. The following letter is addressed to Edmund Tweedy, to whom James was introduced in 1845 by Wilkinson, and to whom he became intimately bound by propinquity and family ties as well as by their common interest in Swedenborg and Fourier.[34] Tweedy was at this time traveling in Europe: —

New York, Sept. 5, 1852

Dear old Patriarch, —

. . . I presume you will never think of returning here. Your manners by this time must have become so emasculate, that a glimpse of our rude virtue, and the smack of our rough and honest climate, would prove too much for you. You would find no maccaroni fit to eat, and vermicelli nourishes no muscle such as we need. Of course, then, you will live abroad at least for the next five or ten years. You will thus live down not only your old dissipated acquaintance like Godwin, Whitely, etc., but also the memory of your own departures from the path of strict orthodoxy. Your socialistic tendencies and the awful amount of money you sunk for yourself and friends in the North American Phalanx will have been forgotten, and you will walk down to Wall St. with me completely refreshed

[32] H. J.[1] to Mrs. Shaw, June 5 [1859]. In *Moralism and Christianity*, 1850, 79, the author discusses the famous Parkman-Webster murder to show that crime is the product of an imperfectly ordered society. The democratic movement which began with the American and French revolutions seemed to James to imply, and in some degree to prove, "that men are capable of so adjusting their relations to each other, as that they will need no police or external force to control them, but will spontaneously do the right thing in all places and at all times." (*Cf. Lectures and Miscellanies*, 1852, 11; and the whole essay on "Democracy and Its Issues"; also M. A. DeW. Howe, *Memories of a Hostess*, Atlantic Monthly Press, 1922, 75.)

[33] Prefatory note to his father's "Emerson," *Atlantic*, XCIV (1904).

[34] *Cf.* Wilkinson to James, Nov. 29, 1845. Tweedy married Mary Temple, to whom H. J.[1] was also devoted, and who was the sister of the Robert Emmet Temple to whom his own sister Catharine Margaret was married. For other Tweedy correspondence consult Index. The several generations of Jameses, Temples, and "Tweedies" were associated as members of one family; *cf. L.W.J.*, I, 36.

and furbished up.[35] Speaking of the Phalanx: I met a friend the other day in the omnibus, a young gentleman of refinement and intelligence too, though this latter predicate may seem dubious to you after hearing the story; and he said, after a considerable deal of preparatory grimace, "Mr. James, pray tell me did you ever visit Cambridge when Mr. Emerson, Mr. Hawthorne and others were trying their socialistic experiment there?" "O," replied I, "I perceive you have been reading Hawthorne's new book, the *Blithedale Romance,* rather inattentively. The experiment you speak of did not take place at Cambridge, though within a thousand miles of it to be sure, nor had Mr. Emerson any connection with it beyond that of an amiable looker-on. I was never so fortunate as to know any of the parties to the experiment, either, until the experiment was over." "Ah, ah, so! so!" rejoined my friend, clearing his throat for a further question, "and now, Mr. James, allow me to ask whether it is your impression that a great deal of *concubinage* was indulged in there?" *Did* you ever! I of course willingly protested against such an insinuation, on your account and Ripley's, but the *Herald* and *Express* have so bedevilled the idea of socialism in the minds of our spoon-fed people, that it conveys no thought to them but that of license. . . .

If you will settle down as I propose, we shall go forth to meet you, and dwell under the shadow of your beautiful manners, until we find so joyous a life lifting us up on its bosom as will claim to be instantly recorded in a book — and a book moreover — O! you Mammonite! — that will sell. Apropos of selling: my book sells well.[36] It has recently had two very appreciative notices in the London *Leader,* and I doubt not by the first of January a new edition will be needed. Don't you feel, then, somewhat ashamed of your wicked insinuations? I shall eventually live abroad in all probability on the income of my writings. How much more honorable this than upon one derived from the merciless warfare of Cedar and Wall Streets? . . .

There is no news of an aggravating character to interest you in our family. Steam-boats are running mad on the river and lakes, and the people will shortly be obliged to take to lynching the captain

[35] Tweedy was treasurer of "The American Union of Associationists," Greeley being president, Ripley and Godwin secretaries. Thomas W. Whitely was president of the Fourierist community at Sylvania, in Pike County, Pa.

[36] *Lectures and Miscellanies.*

and hands in order to protect themselves against violence. Yesterday, the *Reindeer* blew up on the Hudson at Saugerties, killing twenty-seven people; found: how many more no one knows. She had not let off steam once between New York and that point! . . . Farewell, you dear old vagabond, and believe me ever unreservedly yours,

H. J.

P.S. I intended to have written the last word with a *d* instead of an *r*.

The kind of misrepresentation to which James, as a follower of Fourier, was exposed is illustrated by the following paragraph from William Hepworth Dixon's *Spiritual Wives:* "The Rev. Henry James, a Brook Farm enthusiast, who scandalized society by making a public confession of his call to the New Jerusalem, filled many pages of the *Harbinger* with proofs that there is so little difference between Fourier and Swedenborg in practice, that a convert of one reformer may admit the other reformer's claims; since Fourier's Passional series (a pretty French name for Free Love) might be readily made to run alongside of Swedenborg's toleration of concubines. In fact, this reverend author, a man of very high gifts in scholarship and eloquence, declared himself, on spiritual grounds, in favor of a system of divorce, which is hardly to be distinguished from divorce at will." [37]

To this James replied that it contains "as many untruths, very nearly, as there are words in the paragraph"; and went on to say: "My hope in enlarging the grounds of divorce, on the contrary, is based exclusively upon my conception of marriage as furnishing the *essential* bond of the sexual relations, and as only awaiting, therefore, the disuse of force, and the inauguration of perfect freedom in those relations, to prove itself also an *indestructible* bond." [38]

In 1849 James wrote a short preface to V. Hennequin's *Love in the Phalanstery,* published in New York in the interest of the American Union of Associationists. He was concerned to show two things: (1) that Fourier did not intend his ideas to be put into practice until after a previous reform "in the material organization

[37] This book appeared in 1868, and the quotation is from p. 391.
[38] *Secret of Swedenborg,* 1869, 241, 242.

of society"; (2) that the purpose of Fourier's reform was to substitute a marriage founded on love for the present proprietary, hypocritical, and legalistic conceptions of the relationship. In 1853, James contributed to a volume by Stephen Pearl Andrews on *Love, Marriage and Divorce.* Ten years later he returned to the topic in *Substance and Shadow,* where he defended Swedenborg's view that chastity and purity are realized in true marriage rather than in celibacy; and where he said that the appetites and passions, if admitted "to the sunshine of God's recognition" and "clothed with His smile," are "a solace and refreshment to our spiritual faculties." [89] In other words, James proclaimed with his characteristic recklessness and hearty whole-souled affirmation the doctrine that human progress and true religion, which are the same thing, look in the direction of vindicating the natural man and delivering him from institutional authority.

The transcendentalists, Brook Farmers, and romantic humanitarians were William James's spiritual uncles. They belonged definitely to the past, and were already beginning to wear the aspect of historic monuments. Although, being reared with a wise tolerance and liberality, he suffered no reaction against the associations of his youth, these men of his father's circle influenced him congenitally, rather than as contemporary and living forces. His friends were their sons, and his teachers were men of another tribe altogether.

[89] P. 517.

III

EARLY FRIENDSHIP WITH EMERSON

THE birth of William James coincides almost precisely with the beginning of the acquaintance between his father and Emerson. On March 18, 1842, Emerson wrote in his diary: "In New York I became acquainted with Henry James." [1] The following letter to Emerson apparently deals with this event. James had gone to hear Emerson lecture, was attracted to him, and invited him to his house, where he arrived just in time to be taken upstairs to admire "the lately-born babe who was to become the second American William James." [2]

New York City, Thursday Evening [March 3, 1842?]

My dear Sir, —

I listened to your address this evening,[3] and as my bosom glowed with many a true word that fell from your lips I felt erelong fully assured that before me I beheld a man who in very truth was seeking the realities of things. I said to myself, I will try when I go home how far this man follows reality — how far he loves truth

[1] B. Perry, *The Heart of Emerson's Journals*, 173, selections from this book being reprinted by permission of and special arrangement with Houghton Mifflin Co. The names of Horace Greeley and Albert Brisbane also appear in this list of new acquaintances. An unpublished letter, dated March 10, 1842, from Emerson to Margaret Fuller, reports the same fact; and speaks at the same time of Henry James's brother John, and of the fact that Henry James's sister (Jeanette) had married William H. Barker, the brother of Anna (Mrs. Samuel G.) Ward. Mrs. Ward was a friend both of James and of Emerson, and her son, Thomas W. Ward, was one of William's most intimate friends and correspondents. *Cf.* below, 229 ff. In 1904 William James edited for publication in the *Atlantic* (XCIV) a paper of his father's on "Emerson," which opens with the words: "It is now full thirty years ago that I made Mr. Emerson's acquaintance. He had come at the time to New York to read a course of lectures. These I diligently attended, and I saw much of him also in private. He at once captivated my imagination, and I have been ever since his loving bondman." The editor (W.J.) states that this paper was written in "1868, or thereabouts." Either this last statement, or the statement "full thirty years," above, must be in error. The lectures which Emerson was delivering in New York in 1842 were those that afterwards formed the first volume of his *Essays*.

[2] *S.B.O.*, 8.

[3] On Thursday, March 3, Emerson lectured in the Society Library on "The Times."

and goodness. For I will write to him that I, too, in my small degree am coveting to understand the truth which surrounds me and embraces me, am seeking worthily to apprehend, or to be more worthily apprehended of, the love which underlies and vivifies all the seeming barrenness of our most unloving world; but that yet for every step I have taken I find myself severed from friends and kindred, so that at last, and just when I am become more consciously worthy of love than I ever was, in so far as being more consciously and universally loving may argue me so, I find my free manifestations compressed into the sphere of my own fireside. I will further tell him that to talk familiarly with one who earnestly follows truth through whatever frowning ways she beckons him on, and loves her with so true a love as never to have been baffled from her pursuit by all the wearisome forms of error he may have encountered in the way, has never been my lot for one half-hour even; and that he, therefore, if he be now the generous lover of truth and of her friends which he seems to be, may give me this untasted pleasure, and let me once feel the cordial grasp of a fellow pilgrim, and remember for long days the cheering Godspeed and the ringing laugh with which he bounded on from my sight at parting. I will not insult his reverence for truth equally with my own by saying that I desire his guidance in any way, but I will tell him that when once my voice is known, I may now and then call him back to interpret some of the hieroglyphics which here and there line our way, and which my own skill in tongues may be unequal to, — which slight services he cannot well deny. I will tell him that I do not value his substantive discoveries, whatever they may be, perhaps half so highly as he values them, but that I chiefly value that erect attitude of mind about him which in God's universe undauntedly seeks the worthiest tidings of God, and calmly defies every mumbling phantom which would herein challenge its freedom. And finally, not to try his patience also, I will tell him that should his zeal for realities and his contempt of vulgar shows abide the ordeal I had thus contrived for them, I should gladly await his visit to me whenever he should be pleased to appoint it.

This in substance is what I said to myself. Now that I have told it to you also, you have become a sort of confidant between me and myself, and so in a manner bound to promote harmony there. If you shrink from the confidence thus thrust upon you, *I* shall

certainly be blamed by *myself,* for making so indiscreet a communication to you; but if you abide it, *I* shall with equal certainty be highly felicitated by *myself* for achieving a result so undeniably auspicious to both. In every event, I remain, your true well-wisher,

H. JAMES

P.S. My residence is at No. 5, Washington Place. This Place runs from Broadway to Washington Square, and forms, or is formed by, the row of buildings between the University building and Broadway. My occupations are all indoor, so that I am generally at home — always in the evenings.

The next letter to Emerson reveals that mixture of admiration, love, and irritation which on James's part is the sign of their quickly ripening friendship.[4] There was every reason why they should differ, or, rather, why James should differ from Emerson. One of the differences was that whereas James *would* differ, Emerson would not. James kept the old Calvinistic habit of theological disputation. His impulse was to argue and persuade, and he hated to let people go whom he thought worth saving. He had his intuitions and convictions, but he wanted reasons for them, and was constantly striving to shape these into a metaphysics. Emerson's eloquence, on the other hand, was affirmative rather than demonstrative. He refused to be drawn into argument, or even to answer questions, and the more he eluded the more he exasperated.[5] To this must be added the profound temperamental difference — the vehemence of the one and the imperturbability of the other.

New York City [1842?]

To the Invisible Emerson, the Emerson that thinks and feels and lives, this letter is addressed; and not to the Emerson that talks and bewitches one out of his serious thought when one talks to him, by the beautiful serenity of his behaviour. This latter Emerson I shall begin to hate soon for keeping my stupid eyes so continually away from the profounder Emerson who alone can do one any good. But

[4] The letter is undated, and is assigned to the year 1842 because the writer speaks of himself as "thirty-one years in life," having been born in 1811.

[5] "Emerson would listen, I fancy, as if charmed, to James's talk of the 'divine natural Humanity,' but he would never *subscribe;* and this, from one whose native gifts were so suggestive of that same Humanity, was disappointing." (William James, in the prefatory note to his father's "Emerson," *Atlantic,* XCIV, 1904, 740.)

I will now have the true man's ear alone. I came home tonight from my lecture a little disposed to think from the smart reduction of my audience that I had about as well not prepared my lectures, especially that I get no tidings of having interested one of the sort (the religious) for whom they were wholly designed. And now I say to myself "the first step in your outgoing to the world having thus failed you, no second step of course offers itself, but you must come back to your perch, and look round the horizon for some other flight." No sooner said than done — my eyes are already open to look, and shall continue patiently open always. When I next see you I want a half-hour's help from you in this matter. And the purpose of this letter is to secure it. Whenever I am with you I get no help from you — that is, of the sort which you can give me, I feel sure — and this letter is to let you know what it is I want before I come next. Usually the temper you shew, of perfect repose, of perfect candour, so perfectly free from all sickening partizanship, so full of magnanimous tenderness towards all creatures, makes me forget my wants in your lavish plenty. But I know you have the same wants as I have, deep down in your bosom hidden from my sight, and it is by these I want somewhat to know you. Henceforth I commit the visible man to my wife for her reproof — and mine in leisure hours.

I am led, quite without any conscious wilfulness either, to seek the *laws* of these appearances that swim round us in God's great museum — to get hold of some central *facts* which may make all other facts properly circumferential, and *orderly* so — and you continually dishearten me by your apparent indifference to such law and central facts: by the dishonour you seem to cast upon our intelligence, as if it stood much in our way. Now my conviction at present is that my intelligence is the necessary digestive apparatus for my life. . . . Is it not so in truth with you? Is not your life continually fed by knowledge, and could you have any life but brute life without it? Do you not feel the necessity of reaching after these laws all the while, — some inner fact which shall link together mighty masses of now conflicting facts; and suddenly by getting hold of such fact, are you not sensibly lifted up to far vaster freedom of life? . . . But I cannot say what I want to say — what aches to say itself in me — and so I 'll hold up till I see you, and try once more to get some better furtherance by my own effort.

Here am I thirty-one years in life, ignorant in all outward science, but having patient habits of meditation which never know disgust or weariness, and feeling a force of impulsive love toward all humanity which will not let me rest wholly mute — a force which grows against all resistance that I can master against it. What shall I do? Shall I get me a little nook in the country and communicate with my *living* kind, not my talking kind — by life only — a word, may be, of *that* communication, a fit word, once a year? Or shall I follow some commoner method, learn science and bring myself first into men's respect, that thus I may the better speak to them? I confess this last theory seems rank with earthliness — to belong to days forever past. Can the invisible Emerson then put up from his depths some heart-secret-law which shall find itself reproduced in mine and so further me, or at least *stay* me? Let him try, and above all let him forgive *more suo* all my botherings.

H. JAMES

The following passages refer reminiscently to the same period as this letter: "Good heavens! how soothed and comforted I was by the innocent lovely look of my new acquaintance, by his tender courtesy, his generous laudatory appreciation of my crude literary ventures! and how I used to lock myself up with him in my bed-room, swearing that before the door was opened I would arrive at the secret of his immense superiority to the common herd of literary men! I might just as well have locked myself up with a handful of diamonds, so far as any capacity of self-cognizance existed in him. . . . On the whole I may say that at first I was greatly disappointed in him, because his intellect never kept the promise which his lovely face and manners held out to me. He was to my senses a literal divine presence in the house with me; and we cannot recognize literal divine presences in our houses without feeling sure that they will be able to say something of critical importance to one's intellect. It turned out that any average old dame in a horse-car would have satisfied my intellectual rapacity just as well as Emerson. . . . No man could look at him speaking (or when he was silent either, for that matter) without having a vision of the divinest beauty. But when you went to him to hold discourse about the wondrous phenomenon, you found him absolutely destitute of reflective power." [6]

[6] *L.R.H.J.*, 296–7, 300.

Lectures brought Emerson intermittently to New York and he became a frequent visitor at the James house. One or more of these visits left the following traces on the mind of Henry James, the second son, then under twelve years of age: "Do I roll several occasions into one, or amplify one beyond reason? — this last being ever, I allow, the waiting pitfall of a chronicler too memory-ridden. I 'visualize' at any rate the winter firelight of our back-parlour at dusk and the great Emerson — I knew he was great, greater than any of our friends — sitting in it between my parents, before the lamps had been lighted, as a visitor consentingly housed only could have done, and affecting me the more as an apparition sinuously and, I held, elegantly slim, benevolently aquiline, and commanding a tone alien, beautifully alien, to any we heard round-about." [7]

The following letter from Emerson indicates a growing intimacy between the two men and a widening circle of common friends: —

Concord, May 6, 1843

My dear Sir, —

It is hardly true to the relation between us that no intercourse should occur until I shall sometime go to your city or you shall pass through my village; and yet a friendly silence is more grateful than inadequate communion, as most communions are. I recall with lively pleasure our free conversations, cheered to me by the equal love, courage and intelligence I met, and if I were a day younger or had a few grains more of reliance on circumstances, I should have already more than once obeyed my inclination to ask how your dice were falling, and furthermore whether there were no hope that they might fall within the Massachusetts line. For I could not help feeling in talking with you how much you would enjoy the society of a few persons whom I most value, and with the assurance of being valued in return. But this and the like of this, I leave with the silent Disposer who loveth not meddlers, and often allows them to punish themselves. I live in Concord, and value my nest, yet I will not promise to myself or another that I shall not in a year or two flee to Berkshire from so public and metropolitan a place as this quietest of country towns.

But the reason of my writing now is to inform you that a friend

[7] *N.S.B.*, 204. The second Henry James was born in 1843, and the above impression must have occurred before 1855, when the family ceased to reside in New York.

of mine who has been an inmate of my house for the last two years, Henry D. Thoreau, is now going (tomorrow) to New York to live with my brother William at Staten Island, to take charge of the education of his son. I should like both for Mr. Thoreau's and for your own sake that you would meet and see what you have for each other. Thoreau is a profound mind and a person of true magnanimity, and if it should happen that there is some village pedantry and tediousness of facts, it will easily be forgotten when you come at what is better. One can never be sure that these delicatest of all experiments, experiments of men and intercourse, will prosper: but if you remain in the city this summer, which seemed uncertain, I wish you would send your card to him through my brother at 64 Wall Street. I want that he should tell you about our *Dial,* which has just escaped the fate of being extinguished. Can you not send me some brief record of your faith or hope to enliven our little journal with a new element?

I have never learned from Tappan [8] whether he carried home your Montaigne and found you. That also I had much at heart and now the other friend, G. Waldo, has come to New York, and as I understand it the two are in the same office. Gladly I would learn how you prosper with Channing also. I had nearly forgotten to say that if you meet Mr. Godwin, as I believe you know him, you would mention Thoreau to him, as one of our main contributors to the *Dial,* and as one who would be very glad of literary employment and would make on many subjects very valuable papers. He hopes to make his pen useful to him through the journals or booksellers. Here is a longer letter than I dreamed of when I began, yet I wish to be remembered to Mrs. James. Your affectionate servant,

R. W. EMERSON

The following letter is peculiarly interesting as revealing James's earlier and more favorable attitude to the Carlyle whose personal peculiarities he had not as yet had an opportunity of observing.[9]

[8] William A. Tappan. The Tappans, and especially Mrs. (Caroline Sturgis) Tappan, became lifelong intimates of the James family. An account of Mrs. Tappan, together with a number of letters addressed to her by the elder Henry James, will be found in *N.S.B,* 213–47. Tappan and Giles Waldo were at this time young New Yorkers interested in Emerson and sympathetically received by him in Concord. Rev. William Henry Channing was at this time leader of an independent religious society in New York.

[9] *Cf.* below, 53, 64 ff.

New York, May 11, 1843

My dear Emerson, —

Your letter was well-come, I assure you, every way, even in that of flesh and blood, as it bade begone a spell of the blues which two days prevalence of east winds and dyspepsia had conjured over me. . . . Something or other disturbs the deep serene of my rejoicing in you. . . . All that I can at present say is that, being better satisfied with you than any man I ever met, I am worst satisfied: which being interpreted means, that while your *life* is of that sort which, so far as I can detect it, lays hold of my profoundest love, ever and anon some provokingly perverse way of speech breaks forth which does not seem to me to come from the life, and incontinently knocks me into downright *pi* again. It all comes of some lurking narrowness in me, which shall be discovered if so it be — but which nevertheless shall be legitimately discovered, that is, through the experience of growing life. . . . So by and bye, when I come into greener and freer pastures, I will wonder at the straitness of my present paddock, which I am so blindly bent on deeming ample for your accommodation. Till then bear with me.

I shall right gladly welcome Mr. Thoreau for all our sakes to my fireside, or any preferable summer seat the house affords — and will so advise him at once. Of Tappan I have seen nothing — but have hopes, so long as he continues to hold Montaigne, and reverences honesty. Channing I have not seen either of late — indeed, since you left. He is very busy with his church matters, and I with my matters; and although I should well like to lay hands upon him often, I have never ventured to his house, knowing not his habits nor surroundings. I observed by Greeley's paper that he and Brisbane have enlisted Channing in the service of the attractive phalanxes. An Albany paper had an account of a meeting which they severally addressed there. However, I presume Channing would not be carried so off by this matter as to look upon it in the way Brisbane and the rest do — as a perfect social vermifuge. . . .

I am cheered by the coming of Carlyle's new book,[10] which Greeley announces, and shall hasten off, as soon as I have leisure, for it. The title is provokingly enigmatical. Thought enough will be there, no doubt, whatever it may be named. Thought heaped up to topheaviness and inevitable lopsidedness, but more interesting

[10] *Past and Present.* Vol. IV of the *Dial* contains Emerson's opinion of the book.

thought to me than comes from any other quarter of Europe. Interesting for the man's sake whom it shews. According to my notion Carlyle is the very best interpreter of spiritual philosophy which could be devised *for this age,* the age of transition and conflict. And what renders him so is his natural birth- and education-place. Just to think of a *Scotchman* with a heart widened to German spiritualities! To have overcome his educational bigotries far enough to listen to the new ideas, this was wonderful. But then to give all his native shrewdness and humour to the service of making them *tell* to the minds of his people — what more fortunate thing for the time could there be than this? You don't look upon Calvinism as a fact at all, wherein you are to my mind philosophically infirm, and impaired as to your universality. I can see in Carlyle's writing the advantage his familiarity with this fact gives him over you with a general audience. What is highest in Carlyle is built upon that lowest. At least so I read. I believe Jonathan Edwards *redivivus* in true blue would, after an honest study of the philosophy that has grown up since his day, make the best possible reconciler and critic of philosophy — far better than Schelling *redivivus.*

Surely my heart goes forth to your invitation to Concord! We shall see. I am anxious to hear about the *Dial* from Mr. Thoreau. I did not like Mr. Lane's paper wholly.[11] Why should we put our trust in princes? You and I shall value Mr. Alcott to the full measure of his worth or of our capacity, and never cease to repeat to ourselves how worthy he is — but what divine sanction have we to go forth to the great race and proclaim *him a prophet?* Of what interest is that fact to any human being? Let him prove himself a prophet in silence, and he will be found out soon enough. Let his words prove him so — which is the convincing way — that will quite extinguish our demonstrations. That long extract from Alcott, how painful it was to me with all its eloquence. Why spend so much pains to *demonstrate* the poet — the prophet? Does he ever need it? Now I presume such is by no means the truth, yet the impression left by that friendly paper on my mind was that Alcott was musing considerably — or rather say, *acutely felt his*

[11] This is Charles Lane, the English admirer and fellow Pestalozzian whom Bronson Alcott brought back with him from "umbrageous Ham" and associated with himself in the Fruitlands Community founded at Harvard, Mass., in 1843. (*Cf.* Clara E. Sears, *Bronson Alcott's Fruitlands,* 1915.) His article, "A. Bronson Alcott's Works," names Alcott among the geniuses who have not been adequately appreciated by their time and place.

claims upon his generation — and this impression could not attract me to his books. I will expect to see a Jeremiah betaking himself to copious tears over the blindness of his generation to that truth which is their life — but utterly forgetting his own prophetic self in that sincere sorrow, at the same time. The truth must reach them at some time, by some truer Jeremiah — why should he send his attendants forth when his voice has failed to arrest the people, to sound the praises of that voice? Of course this is all nonsense except with that precise view of Mr. Lane's article.

But I must stop, ere I be stopped. My wife is grateful for your remembrance, and thinks nothing would so help me as a little intercourse with Concord. Another fine little boy now lying in her lap preaches to me that I must become settled somewhere at home.[12] I have left out just all, nearly, that I want to say, and may soon, if the want continues, write you again. I will speak to Godwin about Thoreau. I am, dear Emerson, ever truly, yours,

H. JAMES

The meeting between Thoreau and James seems to have been an immediate success, though Thoreau came to have his doubts concerning the usefulness of James's philosophy.[13] The former wrote to his parents that he had met "Henry James, a lame man," of whom he "had heard before"; and described his impressions at length in a letter to Emerson of June 8, 1843: —

"I have been to see Henry James, and like him very much. It was a great pleasure to meet him. It makes humanity seem more erect and respectable. I never was more kindly and faithfully catechized. It made me respect myself more to be thought worthy of such wise questions. He is a man, and takes his own way, or stands still in his own place. I know of no one so patient and determined to have the good of you. It is almost friendship, such plain and human dealing. I think that he will not write or speak inspiringly; but he is a refreshing, forward-looking and forward-moving man, and he has naturalized and humanized New York for me. He actually reproaches you by his respect for your poor words. I had three hours' solid talk with him, and he asks me to make free

[12] The "fine little boy" alluded to in this and the next letter was Henry James, Jr., recently arrived.

[13] *Cf.* below, 149.

use of his house. He wants an expression of your faith, or to be sure that it is faith, and confesses that his own treads fast upon the neck of his understanding. He exclaimed, at some careless answer of mine, 'Well, you Transcendentalists are wonderfully consistent. I must get hold of this somehow.' " [14]

Emerson, in turn, wrote to James: —

Concord, July 21, 1843

My dear Sir, —

My friend Waldo goes tomorrow morning home to New York and I will not any longer leave your kind letter unacknowledged, lest I should need to write to Paris or Berlin, to seek you. I was greatly gratified again by Henry Thoreau's joy in your company. He said he stood a catechism that was as good as a bath, and seemed to find a compensation for the whole disappointment of the city, which he does not love. But what is the loving or not loving worth of a countryman who looks for the first time into Broadway, and does not know five souls out of your 300,000? Yet Thoreau's affirmative testimony will always weigh with me. Do let him see you again before you remove quite out of reach, for he very much needs to see new persons, — the solitary youth. I hear of your plans of travelling with a kind of selfish alarm, as we do of the engagement of beautiful women who shall now shine no more on us. We talked along so comfortably together, and the madness (is it?) you find in my logic made such good antagonism, that New York looked greatly nearer and warmer to me for your inhabitation. I was bent too on your seeing that lonely young palm tree I learned to know there last winter: and now I find that my little plot only half proceeded. Tappan has brought Waldo to New York to live and work with him, and as the two youths are full of whims, one of them was that Tappan should carry some letter of introduction of Waldo, and Waldo should return your book for Tappan. And so it was done. I should heartily like that you should see them both nearly. But I suppose they will know how to rectify their own fun.

Well, if you go to Europe, I shall rejoice in the opening of opportunities so rich and stimulating as the visit now will make for you. It is, to such as are ripe for it, such a varied and immense entertain-

[14] F. B. Sanborn, *Familiar Letters of H. D. Thoreau*, 1894, 95, reprinted by permission of and special arrangement with Houghton Mifflin Co.

ment that I never wonder at its superlative attraction; and when it is practicable, it may easily silence all contradiction except of the most defined and assured duty. And yet it will not do that which you will ever hold before you to be done, but that will remain to be achieved afterward as now. But if we carry man about with us, I suppose we shall everywhere bring the newest and welcomest goods, and go as benefactors to whatever lands. Do not fail to tell me what you shall decide, and whither and when. Tell Mrs. Henry James that I heartily greet her on the new friend, though little now, that has come to her hearth: and you also. Yours affectionately,

R. W. EMERSON

New York, Oct. 3, 1843

My dear Friend, —

I believe we shall sail for Europe in the *Great Western* the 19th of this month. My affairs, in various regards, seem to indicate this as the advisable course. How long I shall stay, and whether I shall gain what I go for specially, or something instead which I have not thought of, and all questions of that class — I am of course in the dark about. But I think it probable I shall winter in some mild English climate — Devonshire, perhaps — and go on with my studies as at home. My chest is in an unsound condition someway, and if I can find a superior climate for it in England than I have at home, I think I shall then be much furthered also in my pursuits. In that case too I may print an essay in England, if it finishes itself in time, and so get rid of one labour. I shall miss the stimulus of your candid and generous society and other friendly faces will be missed. I confess this aspect of the journey is not pleasant to think or talk of. One's destiny puts on many garments as it goes on shaping itself in secret — let me not cling to any particular fashion.

The inquiry which I shall print,[15] if I can get it into something like form, is into the *supernatural* constitution of morality, shewing that the phenomena of moral life in man demand a foreign genesis — that is to say, some such interference with human history as the special manifestation of Deity in humanity which the Scriptures assign to the Christ — that its access is logical, though a Logos or word, and possible only on the condition of *our understanding* — that is, of our standing under it in our present sensuous constitution

[15] Probably *Moralism and Christianity*, published in 1850.

and being thus moulded into the higher life. I am sorry that you care so little for science of any sort, for, feeling so near to you as I do in your life, I am driven incessantly to exact that inquiries of this sort which interest me so much, shall not be looked upon by you as mere folly. God knows that I have no thought but that my labour when perfected *may turn out* a very slim thing as a labour to other eyes, but the *kind of inquiry* I cannot but believe to be eminently vivifying to any man. Oh you man without a handle! shall one never be able to help himself out of you, according to his needs, and be dependent only upon your fitful tippings-up?

But I meant only to tell you of my intention. I did n't mean to ask for a letter to Carlyle, not knowing whether he liked visitors, and feeling besides a visit would be scarcely anything but a stare on my part — but Channing tells me I need n't fear to ask and I accordingly do. If you have any the least scruple whether with reference to him or me, follow it, I beseech you, without any fear of my misunderstanding it. Can I do anything for you in the way of taking parcels, no matter how large or expensive, or for any of your friends? By the way, if you could give me a line to Sterling,[16] I might sometime see him. He is one whom I should like much to have a confab with. But it does appear a horrid boldness to present yourself in this roundabout way to a man, making a purchase of his friend in order to project yourself on to him — so I say again, if you have the shadow of a scruple, give it play. If you see Margaret Fuller ask her to give me some service to render her abroad. I assure you it seems a real hardship to go away out of the country now that I have just come to talk with her. The dear noble woman! I shall often think of her with joy — and with hope of fuller conferences and sympathies somewhere. . . . Farewell then, my dear friend — many things spring up to my lips to say besides, but they are only variations of the tune *I love you.* I shall heartily bless the man I meet abroad who shall remind me of you. Please address me *Astor House,* New York, as I shall probably be out of my house on the 10th instant. Say good-bye for both of us to good Margaret Fuller. Ever faithfully yours,

H. J.

[16] This was, of course, Emerson's beloved but "unseen friend" John Sterling, who died in 1844.

P.S. Before leaving, I shall send you my address in London, hoping some friendly angel may prompt you occasionally to make use of it. If I knew where to find such a servitor, I should promptly *retain* him.

Concord, Oct. 11, 1843

My dear Sir, —

I hate to have good men go out of the country which they keep sweet, otherwise I shall no doubt often wish that I were with you to see the fine things and persons of the old land, and especially when you go to see my friends, which you must not fail to do, and bring or send me the minutest report of them. But truly it is a great disappointment to lose you now, when by the tenour of your last letter, I was just assuring myself that you would come into Massachusetts and reside for a time, and perhaps in due time we should make a neighbour and a brother of you. A month ago I wrote you a long letter, which I withheld on reading it over, as I fancied my argument more pleasant than wise, — but the topic was the lesson of all this socialism which works and gropes and sighs and prays and runs mad around us, — what was the meaning, what the right of the movement, and what the claim it has on all the lovers of equity and truth. But I quickly remembered that however keen is my own relish for friendly and cultivated society, I am yet so moody and capricious in my appetites, that I have no right to be forward in agitating the slightest plan of concert or arrangement never so simple, and should hardly dare to ask my own brother to unite with me to live here or there, lest, on the first day of meeting, I should wish to renew the dialogue of Abraham and Lot (I did not hear your exposition of that excellent text). Indeed all my momentary inclination to entertain the matter as a practical question, arose from my love of the dear and noble persons who had put it in my mind, and there and now we will leave it. I will not conceal my pleasure at your abiding interest in me, and as I confidently acquit us both of any unworthy aim in our inquiries, I doubt not we shall find ourselves nearer by and by. But I am truly sorry again for your departure on account of my stout townsman and colleague Thoreau, whom you so gaily describe, for though he might in any case see you but little, he knows so few persons, that it is of great importance to him to see such as shall act on him: and he was very happy in seeing you.

I fear I did not make it plain in my letter, what the young men themselves ought ere this to have explained, that it was Waldo and not Tappan, who brought home Montaigne to you. Tappan is on every account worth talking with, and I shall regret it if he does not visit you before you go.

15 Oct. I have kept my letter all these days in expectation of a return of an account from a bookseller that I might load you with a business letter to Carlyle.[17] Through some vexatious miscarriage it has not yet arrived, and I will wait no longer. I enclose letters of introduction to Carlyle and Sterling, and may yet find you a letter for Carlyle enclosing money. But do not look for it. You must get Sterling's present address from Carlyle: for his new play "Strafford," which I have just got, is dated "Ventnor, Isle of Wight," in June. I beseech you, write to me. And now all good attend you and yours in your flight and sojourning and safe return! and let your wife also remember me with kindness! Farewell.

R. W. EMERSON

P.S. W. Ellery Channing, my nearest neighbour and good friend,[18] desires to send a copy of his book of poems to Mr. Carlyle and to Mr. Sterling. Will you not oblige a poet so far as to convey the volumes to them?

The James family sailed for Europe on October 19, 1843, on that memorable journey which was to be remembered for the revelation of Swedenborg, and for the beginning of a personal acquaintance with Wilkinson and Carlyle. What James thought of Carlyle he set down afterwards with his usual enthusiastic candor; what Carlyle thought of James, except that he "liked him," is less clearly recorded.[19] In 1845 James and his family returned to America, first to Albany and then, in 1847, to New York. In October of this year Emerson went to England, where, on James's recommendation, he met Wilkinson. The latter wrote to his friend in America that Emerson's lecture on Swedenborg was a great help to the cause in England, and described his impression as follows: —

[17] Such a letter would doubtless concern the publication in Boston (Little and Brown, 1843) of an edition of Carlyle's *Past and Present*. Emerson made all the arrangements and attended to the business side of the transaction. The edition was unsuccessful because of being undersold by a cheaper pirated edition in New York.

[18] He whom Emerson called the "Concord poet," nephew of the great Unitarian theologian, and cousin of the William Henry Channing whom we have already met as a member of the *Harbinger* group.

[19] *Cf. N.S.B.*, 186–8; below, 64 ff.

Feb. 25, 1848

My dear James, —

. . . Emerson, by the bye, is expected in London daily, and I have no doubt I shall see him when he arrives. How I wish he would come and board with us for a month or two! There 's a curious *on dit* afloat (which if you now learn it from me for the first time I charge you not to propagate), of a disagreement having taken place between Emerson and Carlyle. Of the particulars I know little; but it seems that the two old friends and correspondents found out when they met, that they had neither an idea nor a sympathy in common. Their parting is said to have been painful in the extreme. I wonder if they did not know the state of their relations long before. It is almost impossible their long correspondence should not have opened their eyes to it, either negatively or positively. They ought therefore to have considered each other as objects of profound and respectful study, and to have revolved around each other, spy-glass in hand, with infinite grace, and mutual excusation. But to disagree! especially when one of the parties was just thrown, after a long voyage, upon a strange shore! There is something extremely melancholy in the thing, and it must have given poor Emerson a grievous damper. Among other irreconcilable differences were their opinions on slavery, which Carlyle defended with unreserve, while Emerson, of course, took the opposite course. Upon the whole I incline to think that my countryman must have been in the wrong, in manner at all events, if not in matter. Moreover at times his very mind is repulsive, even horrific; and his whole intellectual force lies in the greatness of his despair; while Emerson is a son of hope even where hope is unreasonable, and occasionally becomes sublime from the forcible pencil of light which he sheds athwart a gloom. Carlyle ought therefore to have got drunk, or made any sacrifice, rather than have allowed his wretchedness to swallow the other's joy; above all, rather than sacrifice an old friendship to either opinion or indigestion. . . . I am, my dear James, your affectionate friend,

JAMES JOHN GARTH WILKINSON

London, April 11, 1848

My dear James, —

. . . I have now had many opportunities of seeing your remarkable Emerson. When first I met him, the impression was faint,

but ever since then he has been coming out into clearer outline and more unique proportions. At present I reverence him for being no bigger than other men, while yet he is so much more precious. He is only a small stone, about the bigness of an egg, but then it is a diamond: he is only a moderate sized metalline cup, but then it is pure, thick gold: he is only about as big as a rose, but then it is the immortal amaranth. I mean by this, that without being visibly great or potent, his qualities are wonderful. You feel that he is so candid, and so respectful, that communion of converse results even where the differences of nature and opinion are remarkable. He is an enemy into whose ear you pour your complaints and your plans; a besieger of whom you take counsel respecting the morrow's *sortie,* or the countermine which you are to spring upon him at midnight. He is, in short, a delightfully dangerous, and a dangerously delightful man; and one whom you cannot see or know long, without inclining to believe that there are more substantial ties of love and respect among men, than strait dogmas or party cries.

We have had very much talk upon Association, and I tried to hint to friend Emerson, that that individuality which he would maintain so inviolate and so high as to make it even doubtful whether there be a higher, was practically null in the present confusion, where there is no space between man and man, but would come forth with power and great splendor under the new social *régime.* He is quite willing to see whatever there is in this same Association, and, I am sure, to help it with his own earnest soul. He goes to Paris in a few days, and will take a letter to Hugh Doherty. . . . Your affectionate friend,

JAMES JOHN GARTH WILKINSON [20]

With Emerson and James both home from their travels their correspondence was resumed, together with the old habit of meeting in

[20] An echo of Emerson's visit to England is contained in the following passage from a letter written to James by Wilkinson on Feb. 8, 1850: "While on this subject, I am reminded of two dreams which Hampstead has produced. One night I heard my wife talking in her sleep, and adroitly questioned her of what she was doing. 'What sentences!' she replied, 'it is Emerson lecturing! He is in a square hall, with a gallery round it, clothed in a Roman toga. Now he has just uttered a sentence, and walks round the gallery while all the people repeat it after him, that they may gain its meaning. He then goes out at a door, and reappears at another door, to utter forth a new sentence.' I thought there was something in the dream not unperceptive of the manner in which Emerson and the public utter and receive the marmoreal oracles."

New York on the occasions of Emerson's lecturing. They met also in Boston, James being a member of the series of clubs which were successively organized there *autour d'Emerson.* He sometimes attended the "Symposium," which preceded the "Town and Country Club," and some years later, after moving to Boston, he became an active member of the more famous "Saturday Club." Emerson evidently had a high opinion of James's conviviality. On July 12, 1849, writing to his friend Samuel G. Ward, and speaking of the Town and Country Club, he said, "Henry James of New York is a member, and I had the happiest half-hour with that man lately at his house, so fresh and expansive he is." And to Ward's proposal to form that inner and more genial circle which after more than six years of gestation became the Saturday Club, he replied: "I should be delighted with your plan of a circle. . . . Cabot, Bangs, and William [Henry] Channing are the men I should seek, and Henry James of New York, if he were here, as he used to talk of coming. . . . He is an expansive, expanding companion and would remove to Boston to attend a good club a single night." [21]

In 1849 James was invited to address the Town and Country Club: —

Concord, Aug. 28, 1849

My dear James, —

It is a great many days ago but not a month since that I, being at the Town and Country Club, heard a conversation concerning the inviting some gentlemen to read a paper to the Club, in November. I hastened to say, that we had been foolishly wearing homespun and eating Indian corn now for two or three of our holidays, like farmers shut up in a snow-drift, when we might have dressed in cashmere, and dieted on grapes and pomegranates; for, did we not number distinguished colleagues far from Frog Pond and unconchituated? [22] So I proposed you as the proper person to read us the memoir on the vacant day. Immediately I was told that you were not a member. I affirmed that you were, for Alcott had long ago assured me that he had taken all the proper steps to make you one, and you had signified to me at New York your good will to it,

[21] Edward W. Emerson, *The Early Years of the Saturday Club,* 1918, 4, 7, 8; reprinted with permission of Houghton Mifflin Co.

[22] The reference is probably to Cochituate, a lake whose water now helps to supply Boston.

as I remember. Besides, I think it was Dwight [28] who told me you had a paper that would suit us. The treasurer replied that you had not complied with a vote necessary to membership, and paid his subscription. I declared you intended membership, and I would be surety for his five dollars. Then you were unanimously elected orator, — I meaning instantly to sit down and apprise you first of the facts, entreat your assent, nay, preclude all possibility of doubt or denial, on your part. But a heap of things has hindered me from hour to hour and from day to day; and, I suppose, you got some formal secretary's notification, and who knows but you had forgotten there was a club, and refused to come. I have seen nobody since, and do not know what correspondence has been. But if you have hesitated, or if you have refused, I beseech you to reconsider it all, and accept as the loveliest thing you can do. Then you will come and see me here in my fen, and we will finish that score of conversations we began some two or more months ago. Yours,

R. W. EMERSON

James's reply accepts the invitation to Boston, and broaches the plan for another European trip, this time with a view to the educational and other needs of his large family of small children: William, aged seven; Henry, six; Garth Wilkinson, four; Robertson, three; and Alice, one.

New York, Aug. 31, 1849

My dear Emerson, —

I wrote yesterday to Mr. Alcott accepting the invitation of the T. and C. Club for November, and enclosing five dollars for my subscription. I am horrified at the prospect of speaking before so urbane an assemblage as I am likely to meet, and nothing but the protection of your magnanimous countenance reconciles me. There is nothing I dread so much as literary men, especially *our* literary men. Catch them out of the range of mere personal gossip about authors and books, and ask them for honest sympathy with your sentiment or an honest repugnancy of it, and you will find the company of stage-drivers sweeter and more comforting to your soul. In truth the questions which are beginning to fill the best books and

[28] John Sullivan Dwight.

will fill the best for a long time to come, are not related to what men have called literature, and are as well — I think better — judged by those whom books have at all events not belittled. It seems to me the authorial vocation will not be so reputable in the future as in the past. If, as we are promised by all signs, the life which has hitherto glistened only in the intellect of men shall come down to their senses and put on every palpable form, I suspect the library will fall into disuse, and men will begin to believe that the only way for each to help the other is to live one's own life.

Your own books suggest this conviction incessantly. I never read you as an author at all. Your books are not literature but life, and criticism always strikes me, therefore, as infinitely laughable when applied to you. The opposite of this in literary men is what makes me hate them. You come to them with some grand secret that opens heaven to the lowest and most excluded hut, that lifts your own life out of bottomless and stifling mud, where living is abject toil, and expect some involuntary token of human sympathy, even of natural curiosity, — but no, a supercilious smile decks every visage, and the only notice taken of you is a muttered invocation of this, that and the other accepted name. These men do not live, and if books turn men into this parrot existence, I hope the Astor Library will meet the same fate as the Alexandrian. When a man lives he can scarcely write. He cannot read, I apprehend, at all. All his writing will be algebraized — put in the form of sonnets and proverbs, and the community will feel itself insulted to be offered a great book, as though it were stupid and wanted tedious drilling like a child.

But I have lost sight of what I wanted to say. I am totally unfit to appear before your people except upon the subjects which usually engage my most earnest thought. I should greatly like to consider socialism from the highest point of view, but the name is a stench in the nostrils of all the devout and honourable, and I would not willingly outrage your kindness in introducing me by *obtruding* the topic upon my audience. Do you then think that any chance exists for my getting heard without long offense upon that subject? I cannot conceal my whole thought about it, if I speak at all, and therefore I await your dictum before I set to work. In case you think I had better leave this topic, I should like to read a paper on

sin. It seems to me that a very beautiful philosophy underlies all our experiences in that line, and I should greatly like to say all I feel upon the subject. But on second thoughts, this would be very shocking, too, to prejudiced people, and besides would involve a practical social bearing; so it is perhaps rather worse than the other. The fact is, I am in a very bad way I am afraid, for I cannot heartily engage in any topic in which I shall appear to advantage. However, I will do what I can, and take on with me certificates of good citizenship from my wife and family and neighbours, in case the worst comes to the worst.

My wife and I are obliged — so numerous has waxed our family — to enlarge our house in town, and get a country house for the summer. These things look expensive and temporary to us, besides being an additional care; and so, looking upon our four stout boys, who have no play-room within doors, and import shocking bad manners from the street, with much pity, we gravely ponder whether it would not be better to go abroad for a few years with them, allowing them to absorb French and German and get a better sensuous education than they are likely to get here. To be sure, this is but a glimpse of our ground of proceeding — but perhaps you know some decisive word which shall dispense us from any further consideration of the subject. When my paper to the Town and Country Club shall be read I shall be functionless, and may study as well, and, better perhaps, abroad as here. Anyhow, and everywhere, I am, yours faithfully,

H. JAMES

Concord, Sept. 7, 1849

My dear James, —

I was heartily glad to find you had decided aright, in spite of my negligence to hold up candles. Socialism is as good a topic as a brave man who likes it can choose. We all have a leaning towards it from the "anxious benches," an expectation of being convicted and converted, on account of a certain geometry that is in it, notwithstanding that we are born hermits. I hear with some terror that you are going to Europe, I who never see you, perhaps shall not, if you stay on this side. But New York looked amiable and intelligent whilst I knew you were in it. And now that we are to have a club, we might hope to see the members once a year. But

you will not go till I have seen you, and learned to share in the project. So, with kind remembrances to Mrs. James, yours,

R. W. EMERSON

On November 1 James gave his lecture, on "Socialism and Civilization in Relation to the Development of the Individual Life," before the Town and Country Club in Boston; defending the thesis of "Socialism" (common to Saint-Simon, Owen, and Fourier) that man is "sufficient unto himself . . . save during his minority," against the thesis of "Civilization," that, being inherently depraved, man "requires the dominion of tutors and governors all his appointed days upon the earth." [24] The European trip being indefinitely postponed, James continued to reside in New York and to receive his friend on his periodical visits.

New York, Jan. 12, 1850

My dear Emerson, —

I see in the morning paper an advertisement of your approaching visit to this city, and I must lose no time in saying how happy my humble household would be to entertain you. I can't help saying so much, though I am sure it will do me no good, as that voracious brother of yours will infallibly contrive to engulf and insulate you as before. I should think less of him, indeed, if he did n't, but at the same time if I stood in that natural relation to you, I should be admonished never to urge its claims, but rather keep it out of sight as a thing disallowed and inappropriate to the style of man you represent. True men are like Melchisedec without natural descent, and knowing no such accidents as brothers and sisters. Mr. William Emerson may be of the Melchisedecian order, and I hope he is; but if it be otherwise, do find fault with his importunities, and tell him you have sheep which do not belong to that fold, but are fairly pining for your pastoral presence in remote and stormy 14th st.

For I must somehow compass an undisturbed and unlimited congress with you, in the which we shall establish the whole present and future meaning of the world. I will not, however, bore you — even if you should put yourself within my doors and windows. I would, in that case, from mere selfish prudence treat you above all

[24] The lecture was published in *Moralism and Christianity*, 1850, *q.v.*, 41.

things according to your own ease and freedom. But I really must see you without hindrance for one hour or many, as my need may require, and come into intelligible relation with your understanding and sympathy. For it is not as great man or notability that you ever interested me one whit, but only as most real man, a man who expresses no caprice or *tour de force* of nature, but the very ordinary and level rule of his nature, if that nature were allowed free play. Hence, above all men, I believe, I want to know you better and be better known of you. If you *can,* therefore, come to us as here proposed, altogether; if not, be sure not to exclude yourself from us wholly, but leave several big chinks in your programme of performances which we may fill up. — On the whole, though it would be pleasant enough for us, it *would* be rather grievous to you to come under the same roof with our vociferous nurslings; so I repent me of my treachery to you, and remain as ever, yours, from the Melchisedec point of view,

H. JAMES

Whether Emerson ran the risk of exposure to the "vociferous nurslings" is not recorded, but in any case he left the "chinks." The next letter testifies to the progress of their friendship, but at the same time indicates that the "Mr. Scroggins" [25] of Concord is not wholly approving of his fellow author. The book in question (the covering letter being missing) was James's *Moralism and Christianity,* containing the recent address before the Town and Country Club, together with two lectures recently given in New York. From the correspondence of this year it is evident that James interested himself actively in arranging and promoting Emerson's lectures.

Concord, Feb. 25, 1850

My dear James, —

Your letter and your book arrived safely at my door many days ago, but I have not done with either of them. I came away from New York hugely contented that the good city had at least one expansive person within its expansive arms, and meaning to make much of my opportunities and write you many letters. But I be-

[25] The "Scroggen" of Goldsmith's *Description of an Author's Bedchamber,* often corrupted to "Scroggins," and used currently to mean an impecunious hack writer.

gan soon to accuse myself of improvidence in not really possessing myself of your points of view when you were stating them. It is surely best that conversation should be a luxury, and not a lesson. But when one sees a doctrinaire, and only once in many years, — taking notes would be pardonable. The next time I find you, I ought to make you repeat point by point all the salient angles and towering pinnacles, and redraw all the boundary walls of your citadel; for I am so unused to good company that each new stroke on my memory obliterates the last, and I bring home little but this regret for great losses.

It is sadly true. I had the feeling many times that we both had much to exchange, and I certainly saw that here was knowledge both critical and affirmative, which I wished to see to the end of. I shall not rest, then, until I have made another experiment. The book, I said, will contain these things. But it does not. Your writing is not as good a statement as your speech. At least, I think not. I do not pretend yet to have mastered the book. I read many fine things in it, and admirable special statements. But I am awed and distanced a little by this argumentative style: every technical *For* and *Suppose* and *Therefore* alarms and extrudes me. And moreover I find or fancy (just as Wilkinson finds me guilty of Unitarianism) that you have not shed your last coat of Presbyterianism, but that a certain catechetical and legendary Jove glares at me sometimes, in your page, which astonishes me in so sincere and successful a realist. Then lastly and mainly — a curious cavil, you will think, for me to make, — your statement is not made with that completeness which seems imperative on one broaching matters so vital and dear. Mr. Scroggins has gathered from you some valuable revolutionary hints, some fine gunpowder to explode the Capitol, but is not quite sure that he has the whole plan for building Atlantis. But grain for grain: for every atom of gunpowder you must send him a garden seed. I see very well that the book is full of nobleness, and bright with health and reason, and as I become better acquainted with it, perhaps it will defend and acquit itself. At all events, you, my friend, must and will.

I beg you to make kindest remembrances from me to your wife, and to your sister; and give my love to the boys. Your "Mercantile Library" [26] has many echoes, and I have not yet done receiving

[26] *Cf.* below, 68.

applications from its Jersey neighbours for lectures, and am seriously thinking of going to them, and, possibly, much farther — to Pittsburg and to Cincinnati, from whence I have summonses. Yours affectionately,

R. W. EMERSON

IV

LECTURES AND BOOKS

JAMES had met Carlyle in 1843, and was to renew his acquaintance in 1855. During both of these periods of residence in England he appears to have been a frequent and welcome visitor in the Carlyle household. After Carlyle's death in 1881 James published his "Personal Recollections," [1] incorporating detailed notes of Carlyle's talk which he had taken down in the early days. Although in this later article he testified to his "affectionate esteem" for Carlyle's memory,[2] the letters that follow prove that his first ardor for Carlyle in the book was somewhat cooled by Carlyle in the flesh, and that his admiration was qualified not only by dissent, but by an element of personal repugnance. Both men enjoyed denunciation, and used a full-blooded style of talk and writing; but James was fundamentally optimistic and eupeptic, Carlyle pessimistic and dyspeptic. Carlyle despised his fellow men, or when he loved them did so with a pitying eye for their weaknesses. "His own intellectual life," writes James, "consisted so much in bemoaning the vices of his race, or drew such inspiration from despair, that he could not help regarding a man with contempt the instant he found him reconciled to the course of history. Pity is the highest style of intercourse he allowed himself with his kind. He compassionated all his friends in the measure of his affection for them. 'Poor John Sterling,' he used always to say; 'poor John Mill, poor Frederick Maurice, poor Neuberg, poor Arthur Helps, poor little Browning, poor little Lewes,' and so on; as if the temple of his friendship were a hospital, and all its inmates scrofulous or paralytic." [3]

James, on the other hand, never forgot the Man in men, and his love was always flavored with respect, if not with reverence. He was a good American, especially when he was in England; while Carlyle did not hesitate to express his poor opinion of Americans

[1] *Atlantic,* XLVII (1881), 593; reprinted in *L.R.H.J.* For Carlyle's opinion of James *cf.* Warren, *op. cit.,* 50–1.
[2] *L.R.H.J.,* 422.
[3] *L.R.H.J.,* 424.

both collectively and singly. Carlyle, furthermore, heaped scorn upon reformers in general, and upon Fourier in particular. Here was the head and front of his offending — the lack of that faith and zeal which moved reformers, and to which Americans were by nature predisposed: "Nothing maddened him so much as to be mistaken for a reformer, really intent upon the interests of God's righteousness upon the earth, which are the interests of universal justice. This is what made him hate Americans, and call us a nation of bores, — that we took him at his word, and reckoned upon him as a sincere well-wisher to his species. He hated us, because a secret instinct told him that our exuberant faith in him would never be justified by closer knowledge; for no one loves the man who forces him upon a premature recognition of himself." [4]

Wilkinson, though he was not an American, *was* a reformer, and his reaction to Carlyle was not unlike that of James.

New York, Feb. 26, 1850

My dear Emerson, —

The postman brings me a letter this evening from Wilkinson with the enclosed notes for you. I suppose you have seen, or will soon see, in the English papers notices of Carlyle's new enterprise alluded to by Neuberg.[5] The extracts in the *Examiner* and *Spectator* are full of fury. He has stolen Fourier's imagination of Industrial Armies, and spoiled it in the stealing. And this is the only practical suggestion he makes. There is something unspeakably sad in this perpetual railing of our friend, vivified as it manifestly is by an earnestness which ought to effloresce in any amount of hope and jubilee. Apropos of this, you will be amused with the following scrap of Wilkinson's letter to me: —

"Carlyle came up here on Monday to see Neuberg, and spoke much of you, with very kind recollections. He remembered your metaphysics also, and asked with terrible solicitude whether they yet

[4] *L.R.H.J.*, 451. Writing in 1869 of her husband's opinion of James's criticism, Mrs. James T. Fields said: "[He] thinks his article on Carlyle too abusive, especially as he stayed in his house or was there long and familiarly. But his [James's] love of country was bitterly stung by Carlyle in 'Shooting Niagara and After.'" (M. A. DeW. Howe, *op. cit.*, 79.)

[5] Joseph Neuberg, a German by birth, and for many years a manufacturer in Nottingham, was introduced to Carlyle by Emerson in 1848. In 1849–50 he assisted Carlyle in the preparation of the *Latter-Day Pamphlets*. The author's violent attack on the idealisms as well as the respectabilities of the day was not calculated to please either Wilkinson or James.

persevered. I could not absolutely say that they did not, though I did my best to stammer out something about the great social movement. He was suffering dreadfully from *malaise* and indigestion, and gave, with his usual force, his usual putrid theory of the universe. All great men were most miserable; the day on which any man could say that he was not miserable, that day he was a scoundrel; God was a Divine Sorrow; to no moment could he, Carlyle, ever say Linger, but only Good-bye, and never let me see your face again. And all this interpolated with convulsive laughter, showing that Joy would come into him, were it even by the path of hysteria and disease. To me he is an unprofitable man, and though he gave me the most kind invitations, I have too much respect for my own stomach to go much into his company. Where hope is feeble, genius and the human voice are on the way to die. By the next boat I will endeavor to send you over my thoughts on his recent pamphlet, the first of a series of *Latter-Day-Tracts*. He is very rapidly falling out with all his present admirers, for which I like him all the better; and indeed he is driving fast towards social views, only his is to be a compulsory, not an attractive socialism."

Never was anything more false than this worship of sorrow by Carlyle, either. He has picked it up out of past history, and sports it for mere display, as a virtuoso delights in the style of his grandfather. It is the merest babble with Carlyle, as every one who ever talked an hour with him will acquit him of the least grain of humility. It is his way of distinguishing himself from the vulgar herd of literary men, who instinctively imbibe hope from their studies and learn to look upon sorrow and despair as childish and Pagan. The sun is obscured only by exhalations from the earth. So our spiritual obscuration is born not of destiny, but of our ignorance of it and lack of ready confidence. A man who has once uttered a cry of despair in the hearing of his fellow-men, should ever after clothe himself in sackcloth and ashes. Least of all men are *you* called upon to that humiliation! — but that cause does not come on this evening, and I hasten to subscribe myself, ever lovingly and faithfully, yours,

H. JAMES

New York, March 1, [1850]

My dear Emerson, —

I hope you will come and try that second experiment which you flatter me with the hope of, on the occasion of your visit to the

Jerseys. You shall find a heartier welcome, if that be possible, even than before.

I prize every word of your criticism of my book so highly, that I actually beg for more. It is a real delight that I should have said anything that does n't appear trite to you. But it is downright rapture that I have been able to make you shake your head, and ponder whether after all things be so or no. It is now clear that something has been said, and the meagre shapeless ill-draped bantling shall henceforth have better treatment from me than he has known since his birth. You find my statement incomplete, and ask me to acquit myself of doing injustice to vital interests. How I wish you had stormed a bit at me here, that I might exactly discover whereto the incompleteness attached! Do say one word more shewing my present conflict with any enduring interests, and I shall hasten to put myself right with my readers. I should rather have one word of criticism from you on this point than from all the world besides, because I shall be sure that the objection is not traditional entirely. I really beg this boon of you. I of course get the objection generally, but I want to see it put in form by you, that I may meet it in all its virus once and for all.

But if you are coming this way shortly, don't trouble yourself to write. I dare not *expect* you to come twice to my house, but if you should incline to, you will make us all happy enough. Be sure of one thing — to bring lectures enough with you, for I suspect a great effort will be made to detain you here. In great haste, yours faithfully,

H. JAMES

Concord, March 6, 1850

My dear James, —

You must check and abolish some of that superlative good nature of yours or it will lead the possessor into bogs and desarts. I am balancing whether to carry my popgun and thimbleful of paper bullets to Brooklyn, to New Jersey, and to the adjacent hamlet of New York, — forced to make a new answer, too, by a letter from Marcus Spring,[6] — and forthwith comes your welcome, wider than

[6] Marcus Spring, a Quaker philanthropist, who owned the large estate of Eagleswood near Perth Amboy, N. J., and developed there a "colony." He was a typical radical and reformer of the times. Henry Thoreau was engaged to survey Eagleswood, and while there made the acquaintance of Walt Whitman. George Inness, Bronson Alcott, Horace Greeley, and Steele MacKaye were other residents

the arms of Massachusetts Bay, and I rashly wrote to Mr. Spring yesterday that I would come next week. This morning I woke up wiser, and wished my letter unwritten. But my venture in it is so small, that I will persist now that I am in. I shall write today to two Jersey people, in Paterson, I believe, and in Newark, who have written to me; and for New York, — you, you, O unhappy man! must be my first counsellor. Mr. Greeley and Mr. Ripley assured me that I might find an audience. I think you must go to them, and ask them what kind of audience and what place and what manner of advertisement they contemplated, and they and you, or you alone, if you know him, must fix on some bookseller or factor that will do all but read the lectures for me. For the matter of lectures, I have, besides the two which I read to the Mercantile Library,[7] one on "Books," one on "Eloquence," one on "Natural Aristocracy," one on the "Superlative in Manners and in Literature," — a sort of sketch of the Eastern and Western races — and three lectures which I call "Natural History of the Intellect." Even at the bottom of my portfolio I find a lecture on "London," which, where there is no intellect at all, might be thought of. Out of this medley you see I might boldly promise a course of three or four chapters with some courage, and under some such programme as "Lectures on the XIX Century," which has served me before. With that name, however, my story on the "Spirit of the Times" would need to come in. Here you have all my story. If the omniscient *Tribune,* or if a good bookseller thinks that such readings in New York will pay my taxbills and bad gardening in Concord, I shall try the experiment. Do then, unfortunate man, whom heaven in its anger has afflicted with a good heart, go ask the question. I mean to come to New York, say, on the 13th. I shall go to the Astor House. Reproach me not with my ingratitude. It never was heard of in credible history that a man went twice in the same season to the

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or visitors. In 1846 Margaret Fuller accompanied Mr. and Mrs. Spring on a tour of Europe. *Cf.* Percy MacKaye, *Epoch,* 1926, I, 86–8.

[7] The subjects announced for these two lectures were "London" and "England." The Mercantile Library Association was founded in New York in 1820, and established branches in other cities. It was founded as "a literary institution, whose object is the dissemination of knowledge and the cultivation of intellect." This broader purpose, embracing the activities of a lyceum, has in later years been narrowed to the functions of a circulating library which it still conducts on a large scale.

house of his friend. I shall go to the Astor, that I may the more unblushingly spend the whole day at your house. Meantime I shall ripen all the nettleseed I can find on the subject of a late Book. With kindest remembrance to your tutelar gods, yours,

R. W. EMERSON

New York, Monday night [March 18, 1850]

My dear James, —

I have been looking through my "London," and on the whole I think it will not do to venture it on such short notice. It has been drained of its best things to cram the "England," and I could not, so soon as Wednesday night, make good these defects. If we must take Wednesday night, I think we must take "Books."

Another vexation for you. Mr. Spring sent up to C. S. Francis's bookstore this afternoon for a supply of tickets for Brooklyn, to eke out an imperfect supply already provided. I believe he got fifty tickets of Francis and, as I thought I heard, "all he had." Therefore Francis must immediately be provided with more, or you are a ruined benefactor.

R. W. E.

P.S. Alas! I have no postage stamps! they must come by and by to you. Meantime you shall pay!

From New York Emerson went on to Philadelphia, where he entered the following in his journal under the date of April 6, 1850: "I have made no note of these long weary absences at New York and Philadelphia. I am a bad traveller, and the hotels are mortifications to all sense of well-being in me. The people who fill them oppress me with their excessive virility, and would soon become intolerable if it were not for a few friends, who, like women, tempered the acrid mass. Henry James was true comfort, — wise, gentle, polished, with heroic manners, and a serenity like the sun." [8]

To James he wrote of his seeing, among others, William Henry Furness, then pastor of the First Unitarian Church of Philadelphia, and Lucretia Mott, Quaker preacher, temperance reformer, abolitionist, and advocate of women's rights: —

[8] B. Perry, *op. cit.*, 248.

Philadelphia, April 9, 1850

My dear James, —

I suppose you think I went to ruin as soon as I left your protection, and I confess I had had my share of sunshine, and was not entitled to any more good fortune for the present. Still the winds of heaven have not blown out all their odours and benefits and I have found some old and some new friends here. The weather was bad with rain and snow, but what a day was Sunday! I heard a sermon from William Furness, then dined with an old playmate of my infancy, Samuel Bradford, treasurer here of the Reading Railroad, and walked with him and an excellent Walter Langdon,[9] the whole delicious afternoon on the Schuylkill banks. Yesterday I spent with some Quakers of Germantown, Wistars and Fishers, well worth the seeing, in a park and old house worthy of England, and Lucretia Mott, too, is a benignity which is nature's ultimate in that kind. But I did not sit down to tell you my history, but only to make an effort to secure a meeting with you, on my way home. I have been indiscreetly persuaded this morning to stay one night more, namely, Thursday (beyond my plans hitherto), and repeat one of my grindings. It follows that I shall have no time to stay in New York if I mean, as I must, to get home on Saturday night. I am to carry with me Mrs. William Emerson, and it will take a little longer time for her to go, than if I went alone. I shall reach New York, I am told, about 11.30 A.M. on Friday, and will go then to the Astor House. I have written my brother that I will come thence immediately to his office and learn what route and hours he and his wife have decided to take — probably to New Haven, Friday afternoon. Then I shall go, say 12.30, to the Astor. Will you not see me there? If I do not find you, I shall go up to your house, and to Bancroft's also, and to one or two more, that I wish to visit. And it is plain you must leave me at the Astor House some note of your whereabout. So with all love and joy in you and in yours, I am,

WALDO EMERSON

[9] Samuel Bradford was a schoolmate and lifelong friend who had moved to Philadelphia in 1830, and whom Emerson frequently visited when he went to that city. Emerson's friendship with Langdon began at this time and continued till the latter's death in 1854. The Bancroft mentioned below is undoubtedly the well-known historian and diplomat, George Bancroft, who had shown Emerson many kindnesses in London in 1847–8, and who was at this time living in New York.

The years 1851 and 1852 were years of active lecturing, for James as well as for Emerson.

New York, Oct. 30 [1851]

My dear Emerson, —

Your note finds me on the eve of starting for Albany, whence I leave for Boston next Tuesday, meaning to lecture there Wednesday evening (Nov. 5) at the Masonic Temple. The second lecture takes place Saturday evening. The third (I believe) on Tuesday, but I have forgotten the arrangement, and Fisher's letter is destroyed, or mislaid in packing.[10] I should be greatly — appalled in some respects, but still — charmed to have you for an auditor, seeing thus an hundred empty seats obliterated; but I beg of you don't let any engagement suffer by such kindness to me.

Looking over the lectures again they horrify me with their loud-mouthed imbecility. But I hope they may fall upon less hardened ears in some cases. I am sure that the thought which is in them, or rather seems to me to struggle to be in them, is worthy of all men's rapturous homage, and I will trust that a glimpse of it may somehow befall my patient auditory. The fact is that a vital truth can never be transferred from one mind to another, because life alone appreciates it. The most one can do for another is to plant some rude formula of such truth in his memory, leaving his own spiritual chemistry to set free the germ whenever the demands of his life exact it. The reason why the Gods seem so powerless to the sensuous understanding, and suffer themselves to be so long defamed by our crazy theologies, is that they are life, and can consequently be revealed only to life. But life is simply the passage of idea into action. And our crazy theologies forbid ideas to come into action any further than our existing institutions warrant. Hence man leads a mere limping life, and the poor Gods who are dependent upon his manliness for their true revelation, for their real knowledge, are doomed to remain forever unknown, and ever denied by such solemn servants as Mr. Atkinson and Miss Martineau.[11] However I shall try to convert *myself,* at least, into an

[10] The reference is to James T. Fisher, manufacturer, who was a fellow member with Emerson of the Town and Country Club, and who helped to arrange the Boston lectures of Emerson as well as those of James.

[11] In 1851 a book appeared in London under the joint authorship of Henry George Atkinson and Harriet Martineau, entitled *Letters on the Laws of Man's Nature and*

army of Goths and Huns, to overrun and destroy our existing sanctities, that the supernal splendours may at length become credible and even visible. What do you think of Carlyle *vs.* Sterling?[12] It seems to me, from the little I know of Sterling, a very impudent performance. But the incidental matter is often very good. Good-bye till we meet in Boston, then, and cultivate your good nature according to my extensive needs. Yours ever faithfully,

H. JAMES

Emerson was evidently among his friend's auditors in Boston, in November 1851, since he wrote that "his [James's] lectures are really brilliant";[13] and it was of the all-too-brief duration of this tour that he complained in one of the letters that follow. Six lectures were announced, ranging over the subjects of art, property, democracy, and theology; but apparently the series was not completed. Pleading ill-health, James returned to New York, where he prepared his Boston lectures for publication under the title of *Lectures and Miscellanies,* and began work on his *Church of Christ Not an Ecclesiasticism.*

New York, Jan. 15, 1852

My dear Emerson, —

A great many people, as I hear, are made very glad by the announcement of your expected advent in this region in February, but I fancy none more so than I. Of course you will have something to say beyond the lectures already announced. It would be a contempt of experience unequalled, if, after your last winter's success here, you should go away without giving us a series of six or eight lectures at least. If I can be instrumental in any mode to the undertaking, I shall be cordially ready, and I shall do greatly better than I did last winter besides. For I have now got the wisdom accruing from those mistakes. And then what would put my happiness *au comble* would be to be allowed to house you again during your stay.

Development. It was a defense of the positivistic-atheistic position, with special reference to the dependence of mind on body.

[12] Carlyle's *Life of John Sterling* had appeared in 1851. It was natural that James, like many others, should have felt that Carlyle was ill-qualified to deal with Sterling's religious development or with the more sensitively spiritual side of his nature. For Emerson's opinion, *cf. Journals* (ed. by E. W. Emerson and W. E. Forbes, 1912), VIII, 261–2.

[13] E. W. Emerson, *op. cit.*, 325.

You shall have all imaginable freedom, and comfort to the extent of our means. But of course, follow your own unbiassed will. I am printing my lectures, and at the same time writing a book. O for some hour or two of occasional confabulation with you!

The "merciful ladies" dwelling in my house long to "tolerate you" again, and meanwhile send hearty remembrances, and I remain, ever faithfully, yours,

H. JAMES

Concord, Jan. [27], 1852

My dear James, —

Do not believe your letter lost, nor judge me by the diplomatic deliberation of my rejoinder. Your letter came in due time to gladden me with its welcome, — much needed, too; for I, as, I suppose, all solitary men, shudder as we approach New York, and cannot too palpably realize the existence of sociable angels in the great dreary squares. I shall bring my bag of paper, and you shall not perform a martyr's duty again. Twice to be sawed in two was not required, that I remember, of any saint in Fox's chronicle. If there is need, we will really dig up that often-delineated, somewhere-really-existing bookseller of the gods and of lectures. I wish so much to see you, that I cannot think of coming to your house; for I have noticed that a man ringing a doorbell feels exorbitant rights over the master of the house; but the man with a pass-key has no rights of an assailant, indeed, is as defenceless as the poor master himself. Let not this, however, be interpreted to deprive me of any of the fine privileges you offer me. But you are a grievous sinner, and I hope your great sin has, ere this, cut you to the heart. It is only a half-expiation — your printing and publishing. And the book will not be as good as if you had exposed it fully to our northern air. I have never been able to reach a more than Thomasian faith in the acute disease which drove you from Boston. I crave your wife's pardon for my infirm credulities, and do seriously send her my kindest respects, as I am always the debtor of her bounties. Remember me to your sister; and do not forget me to the boys.

Pity me this day also, for I am in the torments of extorting the lesson that is for next Monday night. Ever yours,

R. W. EMERSON

This was the year of Kossuth's famous tour. He went to Concord and was publicly greeted by Emerson as "the foremost soldier of freedom in this age." [14] It was also the year of the appearance of the *Memoirs* of Margaret Fuller, by Emerson, William Henry Channing, and James Freeman Clarke. Both the tour and the book were events in James's world, and are alluded to in the following letter to his friend Edmund Tweedy: —

New York, Feb. 24 [1852]

My beloved old Tweedius, —

Hang such weather! weather that overwhelms you with an hourly enchantment, and seduces you from the sacredest duties. How many letters have I written to you lately under its inspiration, to be sure not with mere vulgar pens and ink, but with the pen of my brain dipped into the inkstand of my heart! Ah! could you only get some of these letters! they would disqualify you for reading any of the present sort, as they do me for writing them. For my memory preserves only what is best and humanest of both of you, and I make you both sharers in imagination of all that is noblest and divinest in the life of my thought. . . .

Channing has done himself great credit, I am told, by his account of Margaret Fuller's last years. I have only read Emerson's narrative of her, which is first-rate and worthy of his youth. Ripley has been scanning the whole record with a very curious eye, in order to gather some light which the biographers did not possess, or perhaps withhold. He does *not* mean to report the result in the *Tribune*. The impression the book makes upon me so far, is that while Margaret was a person of fine intellect and aspiration, she was also a most uncomfortable neighbour, from the circumstance of her inordinate self-esteem. She thought herself somebody, and a somebody so large as to attract the gaze of the world, and perhaps bias human destiny. Omnibus drivers, and my splendid friend Derby the tailor, are sweet in comparison with that sort of pretension. . . .

Emerson is here lecturing — or rather he has suspended his lectures for a fortnight, in order to resume them when the public attention is less absorbed by other entertainments. I see a good deal of him. He expresses himself much interested in my ideas, only he thinks I am too far ahead. He read the proof of one of my

[14] G. W. Cooke, *op. cit.*, 121.

lectures the other day, now printing, and said many pleasant and apparently sincere things of it, only he would have it that I was (comparatively) "a modern gentleman in the Saurian era." This is because he has no faith in man, at least in progress. He does not imagine the possibility of "hurrying up the cakes" on a large scale. Indeed he denies that any cakes are baking upon any larger scale than that of the family griddle. He is much interested in the question of immortality, and pumps one dry thereon. — Curtis is getting better, having been shut up all winter with inflammation of the bronchia. He is first-rate in power. . . . Kate and the children are as well as usual. Kate is a partizan, and of course, a thorough one, of Kossuth, who on the whole will gain nothing by his motion in this country but private sympathy. Nothing will move us but the invasion of England by the powers of (Continental) darkness. Then I think we should fill all our ships. But I beg pardon for introducing political topics to a mere *virtuoso* and worldling like you. . . . Give Mary my deepest love, and believe me, with a royal hug for the baby, my dear good old Tweedius, ever faithfully, your

H. J.

A picture of this same year and of the New York house at 54 West 14th Street, from the memory of one who was then a child of six, is contained in a letter of Robertson James: "What a troop of figures come out of the shadows. . . . Uncle William from Albany, who throws his nightgown, nightcap, brushes, etc., from the omnibus window *en passant* from the Albany train to the lower Broadway from which he is to return late in the day, — signaling to the awe-struck servant on the steps that these things are his and that he will return for the night. 'Tell Henry and Mary' is lost in the rumble of the wheels on the high cobbles of the roadway. Charles Dana at Saturday dinners. George Ripley. Mr. Bayard Taylor, who tells of his frozen nose in the north. Mr. Bryant's son-in-law — name forgotten — but not forgotten the homeliest countenance in America which was his. Uncle Edward. John and Uncle Gus.[15] The McBrides, the Van Zandts, Grandma James, — her silk dress, peppermints, lace mittens and gentle smile. The Senters, the Costers, the Ironsides. Then also my mother, who

[15] William Cullen Bryant's son-in-law was Parke Godwin. William, Edward, John, and Augustus were brothers of H.J.'

walked down Sixth Avenue to Washington Market *with a basket on her arm* (*of this I am sure*) — every morning — for I tagged after her, aged six years, and held to her shawl. The Vanderpoels and the Vanderbergs come next. And then the dancing school. William will remember the name — Gen. Ferano — the master distinguished himself later on in our war as a soldier. . . . I might go on indefinitely writing you of these memories. Some of them are very plain like the sight of Gen. Kossuth seen in a procession of welcome on Broadway."

Emerson's suspended lectures, suspended because of the oversupply of celebrities in New York, form the theme of a number of brief letters exchanged with James in February and March of 1852. Daniel Webster, William Cullen Bryant, Horace Mann, Orville Dewey, Henry W. Bellows, and Edwin H. Chapin were among the lecturers with whom Emerson was obliged to compete for his New York audiences. The "oft-delineated bookseller" seems to have been discovered in the person of Charles T. Evans, and James's managerial duties were considerably lightened.

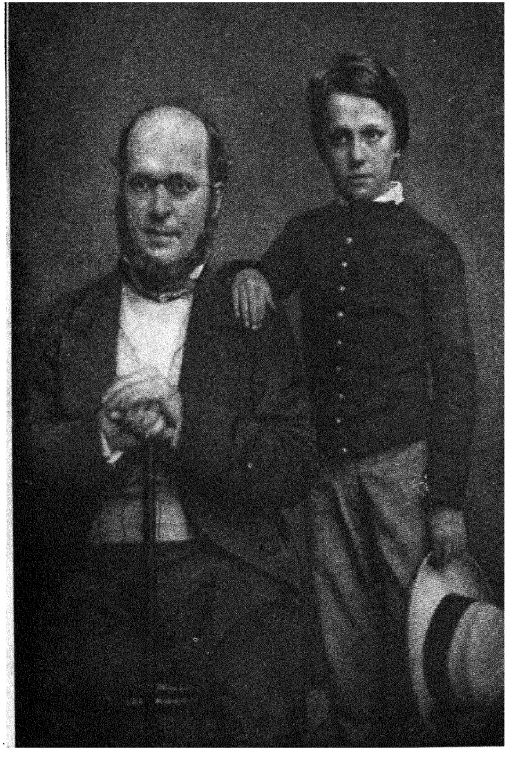
The next letter reports one of Emerson's annual pilgrimages to the West, whither he had gone armed with his friend's recently published tract, *The Church of Christ Not an Ecclesiasticism, A Letter to a Sectarian.*

Chicago, Feb. 8, 1854

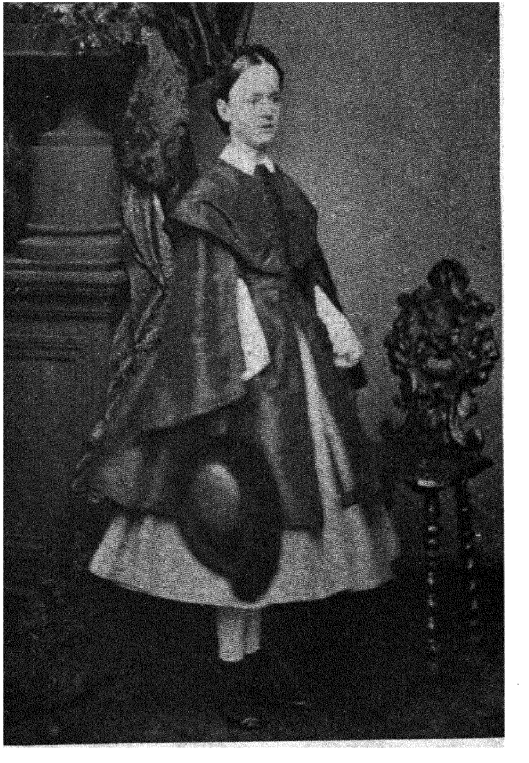
My dear James, —

Was I not to write you a line from Detroit? Well, to your ample vista the space betwixt Detroit and Chicago is inappreciable and if it were Nebraska it would be the same. And yet the material measures in this country are very impressive to one whose habit and acquaintance, like mine, have been wholly in corners. I have been for four or five days in Wisconsin, and, through a railroad accident, was forced to ride sixty or seventy miles in an open sleigh, through plots of sea-like prairie and huge stretches of "oakopenings." [16] There is nothing but size, or nothing else in winter; for the only variation is from stagnant to rolling prairie, and, on the last, all the trees are oak. I saw, in a whole day, only a few maples, a few hickories, and never a pine. Yet the farmers — a class which I

[16] In the dialect of the pioneer a thin oak grove devoid of underbrush was referred to as an "oakopening."



THE ELDER HENRY JAMES AND HIS SON HENRY, 1854



ALICE JAMES, ABOUT 1856

always respect — have here a new interest as colonists, and the historical importance of these days and of their work here, which the traveller cannot lose sight of, they too seem to have some dignified prevision of. And the courage and self-reliance which their work has required, I find in their faces. But they are all violently preoccupied, and there is no thinking or reading in all this Siberia. Harper, Putnam,[17] and the *N. Y. Tribune* are the gentle boundaries of the wings of the Illinois and Wisconsin muses. And yet, on Rock River, I found such warm and expectant watching of your genius, your proper opinions and career, that I was too glad to buy a welcome by sacrificing the "Letter to the Sectarian" (which you gave me for viaticum), to the ardour of a young clergyman who promised to read it to all the ministers of his town. I could safely praise it to him also, and mark the capital sentences, for I had read it well, though not enough. I told him what I had found, — that nobody accosted the truth so largely and adequately as this amateur writer, and with a sound humanity, too, which kept him from losing his way. Nay, it might be seen in this very tract, that he could take two or three consecutive steps in the same direction, — a feat scarce accomplished by another man in the century — and that, with so much wit, so much penetration, and so much right manly purpose he could only fail of being what we call a *classic,* from some apparent scorn of details and finish. I tried hard to keep my minister from too much admiration, by accusing the scholastic dress and dialect forms; but he was determined to be pleased, and I had to leave him. And, by this time, I doubt not, all Rockford is impregnated. And here is the end of my paper, and I not arrived at what I had to say. Affectionately,

R. W. Emerson

In 1855 Wilkinson wrote to James about his Icelandic studies, enclosing "a translation of one of the Eddaic songs, 'Hamar's Heimt,' — Thor's recovery of his hammer"; and suggesting that he might undertake a translation of the "Elder Edda." "It has for me . . . an interest," continued Wilkinson, "in that it is the earliest, the most hoar phenomenon, in the morning of our ages; while Swedenborg, also of Scandinavia, is the latest hour of the same day;

[17] *Harper's Magazine* and *Putnam's Monthly Magazine.*

and he who knows of both hears deep calling unto deep." [18] James sent both poem and letters on to Emerson: —

New York, April 24, 1855

My dear Emerson, —

Do read this translation of Wilkinson's; and give me your general impression of the enterprise as sketched in one of his letters herewith enclosed. Your voice is a real comfort to him, and I would fain back my poor appreciation with your robuster taste and judgment. I send you his last two letters which bear upon the poem.

No man I think of oftener than you, and of none with greater affection. I even commence many letters to you, which go unfinished, however, because I cannot assure myself sufficiently that they will fail to bore you. Indeed, I have altogether too much to say to you, to admit of my writing with any satisfaction. Let us wait hopefully, then, till we reach a world where speech is sincere and adequate. Are you coming this way this year?

When you have done with the poem and letters please return them. My wife desires her friendliest greetings to be given you. Believe me, ever, my dear Emerson, yours faithfully,

H. James

Concord, May 4, 1855

My dear James, —

Your letter was a blessing, but after your squandering way, it was loaded with double and treble weight of its own kind and of other kinds, love, science, poetry, from the oldest old, and the newest new. May I live long enough to receive such another envelope!

Wilkinson's wealth, if he only write a letter, begets wonder. His insight and his prodigal fancy advertise us of eras and revolutions close by. Things cannot go on long at their old job, if such wings as these exist, and can be furnished to another man, to other men. Revolution will be cheap, and ascension easy, if such a faculty is suffered to remain in the planet. 'T is droll to remember our canting disparagements of "the Age," which has a man who seems large enough to furnish two or three. His totally inadequate reputation proves well enough his exceeding dimensions. However, the fame runs and grows, from London, oversea to America, vibrating back

[18] C. J. Wilkinson, *op. cit.*, 87–8.

more violently to London again. They must all find him soon — I hope, before the man is quite out of their reach.

For the poem, I found it easy to read, and helpful, and the rather, that I have long had a keen relish for the Norse genius, having Dasent's "Younger Edda," and the "Heimskringla," and Mallet, and Thorpe, and Ker,[19] on my shelf. I rejoice in the authoritative verdict of Wilkinson. Yet, on the first reading, I thought it a little harsh, and that the skeleton must be made presentable by the least pulp or film of muscle and fat, even at the expense of pure strength. I wished readers, and I remembered the feeble interest I have found in various attempts to lend the "Younger Edda." But on reading the piece to my children three, at night, the success was surprising. At a second reading to the same audience, with additions, the next day, it was better understood and admired; and since the third reading to increasing numbers, it is a classic. It is to be recited at School I understand tomorrow . . . [incomplete]

The missing portion of this letter no doubt contained Emerson's opinion of James's latest book, *The Nature of Evil,* which was having an unexpected success. The book appeared in New York in 1855. It was composed in the form of a "Letter to the Rev. Edward Beecher, D.D., Author of 'The Conflict of Ages.'" Edward Beecher, brother of Henry Ward Beecher, was a Congregational clergyman, editor of the *Congregationalist* and writer on theological subjects. *The Conflict of Ages,* published in Boston in 1854, attempted to palliate God's severity towards human creatures, by supposing that man fell in a preëxistent state, as the result of "a temporary limitation of divine power in the early stages of his system,"[20] and so merited punishment. James would have none of this, but insisted that evil is a preparation of the creature for his "spiritual conjunction with God." It is not an accident or an effect of God's limitations, but a part of his beneficent plan and an expression of his infinite perfection.[21]

[19] G. W. Dasent, P. H. Mallet, and B. Thorpe, translators and scholars of Icelandic literature. The "Heimskringla" was commonly attributed to Snorri Sturluson. The allusion to "Ker" refers presumably to J. B. Ker's *Essay on the Archæology of Our Popular Phrases and Nursery Rhymes,* listed in the books found in Emerson's library after his death.

[20] Beecher, *op. cit.,* 475.

[21] James, *op. cit.,* 105.

V

EUROPE, CONCORD, AND NEWPORT

ANOTHER European trip, planned for a variety of personal and domestic reasons, including the children's education, took place in 1855. Although they had been friends for many years, James had never visited Emerson in Concord, or made the acquaintance of his family, and this happy event was to be postponed until the return some years later from his sojourn abroad.

New York, June 18, 1855

My dear Emerson, —

We depart in the *Atlantic,* which leaves the 27th instant for Europe; my wife, children and my wife's sister . . . who is also your good friend; in short my whole stock of Lares and Penates. I write chiefly to say that I feel more sentimental in the prospect of so wide a separation from you, than in any other feature of my exile. For though we do not often meet, the possibility of seeing you at will has always been amongst my most golden resources, and the country that owned you seemed by so much dearer than all other countries to me. For clearly the whole strain of your influence is to translate patriotism into humanity, and make one feel one's country to be that which harbours only the best men. You are the best and most memorable man to me here, whether the computation begin from my heart or my head, and your life has made clear to me many things in our future — or rather present and future. We should differ in our philosophy of the fact in question, for I am only an inveterate *doctrinaire* (I believe you call me) and you are an inspired poet; but the dear fact itself I love as one loves sunshine after rain, or a footing upon solid earth after a long tramp through bog and mire. In short your life is a very real divine performance to my estimation, and a still fuller prophecy. But enough. . . .

Is it worth your while to give me a letter or so to any one abroad? You know I am an unordained preacher of the gospel and would be

sorry to miss any neglected soul that really needs an inexpensive ministration. If you know anyone who is willing to believe in immortal things, and in the ultimate rest which these will all find in well-ordered mortal things, I beg you to commend me to him for our mutual benediction.

Your Wilkinsonian letter was too good. I sent it off to him forthwith, and doubt not that it has already refreshed them all, like airs from Paradise. What you say of my book is only another instalment of your unequalled generosity, and I am not taken in. I have only to hear the book named by you, to feel at once how desperately faulty its form is. But I am past regrets on this score. I will do better in future. But I have one astonishment to give you, which is, that the whole edition — 1000 copies — is exhausted. To think of a book of that dullness as to subject, and that *thereforeiness* as to treatment, being sold to this extent in four months, gives one new hope in humanity. I may yet perhaps be mentioned with Emerson, Dickens, Thackeray, Carlyle and other popular authors.

Both Mary James and I would dearly like to go on to Concord and make Mrs. Emerson's acquaintance, for whom we have long been cherishing the most expectant and blushing friendship. But the fates forbid it. And your children too, and your home altogether, have a beckoning fascination to my curiosity which I can hardly resist. But I must be content to love you all unseen, trusting somewhere to find the visible reality sweeter than all my anticipation even. — I feel a real pang, too, in going so far from Sam and Anna Ward. What blissful people there are in the world after all, and in America. I clearly feel they have more room to be blissful than anywhere else.

But don't fail to drop me a parting line. Both wife and sister entreat your remembrance, and pray that you will none of you die till we get back to pay that long promising visit. Good-bye, my dear, dear Emerson, and believe me ever faithfully, yours,

HENRY JAMES

Concord, June 25, 1855

My dear Henry James, —

I began a letter to you four days ago, immediately on receiving your farewells; but have since been flitting between Boston and Cambridge, and must take a new date, and speedily, too, lest it come

too late. I had already heard, with a certain terror, from Anna Ward of this resolved departure, and was holding back my speech from you that it should not be too full of patriotic anger and dirges of personal disappointment. When I was cool, I was to have written at large. But your letter disarms me with your radiant bonhommie, and would make old me young again with your loving romances. Of course, I dared not bring home to myself one drop of the beautiful poison. I remembered your phosphoric chromatizing ways. But reading on, I found you had quietly jumped the whole argument, namely, the causes of this astonishing exodus, and dexterously alighted on the interesting episode of your sister's accompanying you . . . [incomplete]

The fuller account of this fateful educational Odyssey belongs to a later part of our record, but the following letter gives a fragmentary glimpse of it, together with more of Carlyle and Wilkinson. It is natural to suppose that James bore a letter of introduction to Arthur Hugh Clough, whose friendship with Emerson, begun in England in 1848, had been firmly cemented in America in 1852. To Sir Arthur Helps, Clerk of the Privy Council for many years, a writer on historical and political topics with a special interest in America, and, like Clough, a friend dating from Emerson's English visit of 1847–1848, James presented the following: —

Concord, July 17, 1855[1]

My dear Mr. Helps, —

Mr. Henry James, a valued friend of mine, and as I am wont to think, the best man in the city of New York, for all its millions of bodies, goes to London and to France, and though he hinted a wish for letters to "souls in prison," I think he might also go to enfranchised and palatial souls. You will find him well versed in what is good in America, and with a compass in his thought and his love of men that is rare here. He is meaning, I believe, to put his boys in school in Switzerland. I think I cannot do either of you a greater kindness than to present you to each other. I wish he may add motives to the inclination you professed to visit your friends and readers in this country. With kindest regards, yours faithfully,

R. W. EMERSON

[1] *Correspondence of Sir Arthur Helps, K.C.B., D.C.L.*, edited by his son, E. A. Helps; 1917, 177.

London [1856]

My dear Emerson, —

I suppose if you had n't bestowed upon me so generous and noble a valedictory, I should have brought myself to your remembrance half a dozen of times at least. But your letter proved such a quickener of emotion, and so penetrated us all with a sense of the sweetness we had left behind, the sweetness that distils from the divine depths of the human bosom, that we were in some danger of precipitately retracing our steps, and I for my own part felt an actual depressing homesickness every time I thought of you. For really I find every want supplied here but that to which you minister, a want which grows, I hope, out of my American manhood, and which demands in one's cronies an openness of soul answering to one's own. This is certainly you, a soul full of doors and windows, a well-ventilated soul, open to every breeze that blows, and without any dark closets receptive of ancestral, political and ecclesiastical trumpery. I could sometimes wish indeed to find those gracious doors and windows a little more retentive of what comes in, or a little more humanly jealous of what goes too speedily out; I could wish, indeed, that those stately chambers should afford the hospitality of a frequent and spacious *bed,* in which the weary guest might lie down and sleep till the next breakfast time; but perhaps this is only my sensuality, and sure I am meanwhile that you are a matchless summer house, green with clambering vines, and girt with cool piazzas fit to entertain the democratic host as it marches from the old worn-out past to the beckoning and blossoming future.

But this is the lack of the men here, of all I know, at least. They are all of them depressed or embittered by the public embarrassments that beset them; deflected, distorted, or somehow despoiled of their rich individual manliness, by the necessity of providing for these imbecile old inheritances of church and state. Carlyle is the same old sausage, fizzing and sputtering in his own grease, only infinitely more unreconciled to the blessed Providence which guides human affairs. He names God frequently, and alludes to the highest things as if they were realities; but it almost looks as if he did it only for a picturesque effect, so completely does he seem to regard them as habitually circumvented and set at naught by the politicians. I took our friend McKay[2] to see him, and he came away greatly distressed

[2] There is an account of this interview in James's published recollections of Carlyle, *L.R.H.J.*, 446 ff. The friend is Col. James Morrison McKay (later changed

and *désillusionné*, Carlyle having taken the utmost pains to deny and decry and deride the idea of his having done the least good to anybody, and to profess, indeed, the utmost contempt for everybody who thought he had; and McKay, being intent upon giving him a plenary assurance of this fact in his own case. It strikes me that the Scotch nature does not easily lend itself to the highest conventional culture, and Carlyle would have fared better in personal respects to have remained a Cameronian preacher, if only government persecution had still left a bounty on that career, than to have descended into the circle of London amenities.

Arthur Helps seems an amiable, kindly little man with friendly offers, but I told him I had no intention to bore him, and would only apply to him now and then when I wanted to find a hatter or bootmaker, etc. He fancied a little that I was going to make a book, and might be indiscreet enough to put him in — at least I thought this was the case. However, I shall see him nearer some of these days. Clough I have not yet seen. Wilkinson knows him, it appears, and has given me his address. I shall go to see him soon.

Wilkinson disappoints me,[3] he is so eaten up with the spirits and all that. His imagination is so vast as to dwarf all the higher faculties, and his sympathy is as narrow as Dr. Cheever's or Brownson's.[4] No reasonable man, it is true, likes the clergy or the philosophers, but Wilkinson's dislike of them seems to be as envenomed as that between rival tradesmen or rival beauties. One can't endure the nonsense they talk, to be sure, but when one considers the dear human meaning and effort that are struggling at the

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to MacKaye), 1805–88, artist, abolitionist, and man of affairs, who moved from Buffalo to Newport about 1850. When James came to reside in Newport the two men became close friends, and James later rented McKay's house for two years (1860–61). William and Henry were schoolmates and playfellows of McKay's son, James Steele McKaye, the famous dramatist, actor, and theatrical manager, father of Percy MacKaye, the poet, and James MacKaye, the economist. (*Cf.* Percy MacKaye, *Epoch, The Life of Steele MacKaye*, 1927, I.)

[3] This impression of Wilkinson seems not to have affected his fundamental regard and affection for his old friend. Their correspondence continued on the old terms, and Wilkinson was received as a member of the family when he visited the United States in 1869. This was nothing more than a detachment which was the natural effect of distance and advancing years.

[4] Orestes A. Brownson was a characteristic exponent of the reform spirit of the '30s and '40s of the last century. He was associated with Emerson in the "Transcendental Club" (1837) and "The Friends of Universal Progress" (1840), but was never of his intimate circle. Rev. George B. Cheever was a Congregational and Presbyterian clergyman, temperance reformer, journalist, editor. and writer, first in New England and later in New York City and Englewood, N. J.

bottom of all that nonsense, you can't feel any personal separation from the men. Wilkinson's sarcasm is awful, and on the whole he seems to be sowing his intellectual wild oats at present, and will grow more genial in good time. This is it: I think he is now finding his youth. That which we on our side of the water find so early and exhaust so prodigally, Wilkinson is finding later, namely, emancipation from the shackles of custom; and the kicking up of his heels consequently is proportionate to his greater maturity of muscle. Mrs. Wilkinson is a dear little goose of a thing, that fancies the Divine Providence in closer league with herself than most people, giving her intimations of events about to happen, and endowing her with peculiar perspicacity in the intuition of remedies for disease, etc.; and Wilkinson, the great brawny fellow, sits by and says never a word in abatement of the enormous domestic inflation, though every visitor feels himself crowded by it into the most inconsiderable of corners. A sweet, loving, innocent woman like Mrs. Wilkinson ought not to grow egotistical in the company of a truly wise man; and this, accordingly, is another quarrel I have with W. In short, I believe I am getting to the time of life when one values his friends for what they *are* more than for what they *do*. I am just as much impressed as ever by Wilkinson's enormous power, but the goodness out of which it is born, and the wisdom by which it is nurtured and bred, these things I do not exactly see. To be is better than to perform, or rather all performance is in order to being, and this preliminary stage of development is apt to prove very unhandsome. But the peaceful evening will come for Wilkinson too, tremendous as he now is, when every fierce wind of controversy shall hum itself asleep, and every dusky cloud that hangs about the horizon shall blush and glow with the promise of a royal and endless tomorrow.

Don't let Caleb Cushing elbow us into the war.[5] Hang him rather. The people are dreadfully shocked at the menace of such a thing, and I have no doubt it would indeed prove the ruin of England, outright. It would send a famine through Lancashire and Staffordshire, and famine would send revolution before it, and revolution in England would be an unspeakably indecorous thing, I fear, the lower

[5] Caleb Cushing was at this time Attorney-General in the Cabinet of President Pierce. The allusion is presumably to his vigorous action in the matter of British military recruitment in the United States, leading to the dismissal of Crampton, the British Minister in Washington.

classes seem of such a brutal make. But who knows what lies before us! All that seems certain is that these depraved old nationalities are bound to be destroyed to make way for the humaner fellowship of men. The time may be now. But farewell, my dear Emerson, and believe me, ever devotedly, yours,

H. JAMES

James returned to America with his family in the summer of 1858, and spent a year in Newport, Rhode Island, where Edmund Tweedy was his neighbor. During this year he made frequent trips to Boston and resumed his old relations with Emerson and others of his circle.

Concord, Nov. 15, 1858

My blessed Henry James, —

I do not know what mortal sin I have done late or early, for which I should be tormented by these three sufferings, namely, the tantalization of three welcomest invitations from you all made of none effect by contretemps. The first letter reached me on my return home on Saturday night from Boston, — no cars thereafter and none on Sunday. The second was verbal and through Fisher, and I went to Boston armed and eager to stay through Sunday, having been assured you would arrive on Friday. But the weather was bad, and you had not arrived, and I came sadly home again. And now, on Saturday, as I hastened at noon to Boston to a certain business-meeting, in spite of a disgraceful cold wheezing through my head and lungs, I found your letter at the Post Office, too late to turn back even for a shirt, and with absurd and quite unnecessary engagements drawing me home for Sunday, and new ones again on Monday morning; — it was with bitter vexation that I read your cordial and head-and-heart-assuring invitations for this Sunday — now passed by me in quite less dignified and exhilarating company. I have told this long specification only to acquit me to you by showing you my penal Fate, which stood between and held me from you; and to entreat you, for the next occasion, to put your letter for me one post earlier into the mailbags, because I live in the country. I said when we parted, "Remember Saturday," because I had invited you to our Saturday club, for that last Saturday of October . . . [incomplete]

Boston, Nov. 25 [1858]

My dear Emerson, —

Here I am homeless near a thousand homes, and near a thousand tables pining and wanting turkey. If I had known that nobody in Boston would dine at the hotel today but me and Briggs (another New Yorker) I should have staid at home, where I had an invitation to dine with Tweedy. But I am going to John Dwight's this evening to get a cup of tea, and I have written a heart-rending letter to my wife and children, and I already begin to feel more comfortable. Still Thanksgiving does not appear hospitable. I would have gone down to Concord early this morning, if I had known how I should have suffered later in the day.

But here I am anyway, calling upon a physician, who gives me hope that I shall live to see your daughters both married and settled. I was proud of your sweet letter, and ran up breathless to Tweedius and his wife to read it, and make them proud also to be loved by a person who was loved by you. I will try and wait for you till Saturday, though I have never had such a separation from wife and weans before, and I feel bewildered. But it is truly delightful to expect your arrival, and I will be the best boy meanwhile in New England. God bless you and yours,

H. J.

The Saturday Club,[6] which grew out of the Town and Country Club, and of which Emerson had proposed James as a charter member, began its regular meetings in the winter of 1855–1856. It was a group of congenial spirits who dined together and dined well, at Parker's Hotel in Boston, at three o'clock in the afternoon of the last Saturday of each month. The original members were Louis Agassiz; Richard H. Dana; John S. Dwight; Emerson; Judge Ebenezer R. Hoar of Concord; Lowell; Motley; Benjamin Peirce, the distinguished Harvard mathematician; Samuel G. Ward, banker and patron of art and letters; Edwin P. Whipple, lecturer and essayist; and Horatio Woodman, the club's most active promoter and organizer. Among others who joined the club in its early years were Longfellow; Dr. Holmes; W. H. Prescott; Whittier; Hawthorne; John M. Forbes, merchant and builder of railroads; Charles Eliot

[6] For a delightful account of its early history and of its members, *cf.* E. W. Emerson, *op. cit.*

Norton; Reverend Frederick H. Hedge, Unitarian minister in Bangor, Providence, and Brookline, renowned for his knowledge of German literature and philosophy, professor of ecclesiastical history and afterwards of German at Harvard; Charles Sumner; John A. Andrew, Massachusetts's famous war-time governor; James T. Fields, publisher and friend of famous authors; Jeffries Wyman, professor of anatomy at Harvard; E. W. Gurney, professor of history and dean at Harvard; William Morris Hunt, the painter, who was a Newport neighbor of James; Charles Francis Adams. James, although he had returned definitely from Europe in the autumn of 1860, was not elected to the club until 1863, when he was about to transfer his residence from Newport to Boston.[7] Meanwhile, however, he had been present as an invited guest. On one such occasion, January 26, 1861,[8] he was a fellow guest with William Ellery Channing, the Concord poet. The following letter is an account of his impressions on this occasion, written in his raciest and most extravagant style. Its personalities are strictly Jamesian. He never hesitated to abuse his best friends, or to follow the impulse of his highly pictorial imagination at the cost of all sense of proportion. The fact is, of course, that he never quite meant it, and expected *that* to be understood. There was an unspoken tenderness that shone in his face, or was somehow intimated in the very absurdity of his invective, and which offset the literal meaning of his words.

Boston, Sunday night [1861]

My dear Emerson, —

I am going to Concord in the morning but shall have barely time to see you, if I do as much as that: yet I can't forbear to say a word I want to say about Hawthorne and Ellery Channing. Hawthorne is n't a handsome man nor an engaging one anyway, personally: he had the look all the time, to one who did n't know him, of a rogue who suddenly finds himself in a company of detectives. But in spite of his rusticity I felt a sympathy for him amounting to anguish and could n't take my eyes off him all the dinner, nor my rapt attention; as that indecisive little Dr. Hedge found, I am afraid to his cost, for I hardly heard a word of what he kept on saying to me, and

[7] James moved to Boston in the spring of 1864, and from that time on he was a frequent attendant. He liked Dr. Holmes above all his fellow members save Emerson.

[8] As recorded in Longfellow's journal, quoted by E. W. Emerson, *op. cit.*, 331.

felt at one time very much like sending down to Mr. Parker to have him removed from the room as maliciously putting his artificial little person between me and a profitable object of study.

Yet I feel now no ill-will to Hedge and could recommend any one (but myself) to go and hear him preach. Hawthorne, however, seemed to me to possess human substance and not to have dissipated it all away as that debauched Charles Norton, and the good, inoffensive, comforting Longfellow. He seemed much nearer the human being than any one at that end of the table, much nearer. John Forbes and yourself kept up the balance at the other end: but that end was a desert with him for its only oasis. It was so pathetic to see him, contented, sprawling Concord owl that he was and always has been, brought blindfold into that brilliant daylight, and expected to wink and be lively like any little dapper Tommy Titmouse, or Jenny Wren. How he buried his eyes in his plate, and ate with such a voracity that no person should dare to ask him a question!

My heart broke for him as that attenuated Charles Norton kept putting forth his long antennæ towards him, stroking his face, and trying whether his eyes were shut. The idea I got was, and it was very powerfully impressed upon me, that we are all of us monstrously corrupt, hopelessly bereft of human consciousness, and that it is the intention of the Divine Providence to overrun us and obliterate us in a new Gothic and Vandalic invasion of which this Concord specimen is a first fruits. It was heavenly to see him persist in ignoring Charles Norton, and shutting his eyes against his spectral smiles: eating his dinner and doing absolutely nothing but that, and then going home to his Concord den to fall upon his knees, and ask his heavenly Father why it was that an owl could n't remain an owl, and not be forced into the dimensions of a canary. I have no doubt that all the tenderest angels saw to his care that night, and poured oil into his wounds more soothing than gentlemen ever know.

William Ellery Channing, too, seemed so human and good, sweet as summer, and fragrant as pine woods. He is more sophisticated than the other of course, but still he was kin; and I felt the world richer by two *men,* who had not yet lost themselves in mere members of society. This is what I suspect; that we are fast getting so fearful one to another, we "members of society," that we shall ere long begin to kill one another in self-defense, and give place in that way at last to a more veracious state of things. The old world is

breaking up on all hands: the glimpse of the everlasting granite I caught in Hawthorne and William Ellery, shows me that there is stock enough left for fifty better. Let the old impostor go, bag and baggage, for a very real and substantial one is aching to come in, in which the churl shall not be exalted to a place of dignity, in which innocence shall never be tarnished nor trafficked in, in which every man's freedom shall be respected down to its feeblest filament as the radiant altar of God. To the angels, says Swedenborg, death means resurrection to life; by that necessary rule of inversion which keeps them separate from us and us from them, and so prevents our being mutual nuisances.

Let us then accept political and all other destruction that chooses to come: because what is disorder and wrath and contention on the surface is sure to be the deepest peace at the centre, working its way thus to a surface that shall *never* be disorderly. Yours,

H. J.

P.S. . . . What a world! What a world! But once we get rid of slavery and the new heavens and new earth will swim into reality.[9]

The relations between James and Emerson were further cemented, and extended to their families, when, after the return from Europe in 1860, the two youngest James boys, Wilkinson and Robertson, were placed in Mr. Frank Sanborn's school in Concord. A letter from James to Mrs. William A. Tappan describes this episode and at the same time contains a charming picture of Emerson at home: "Mary and I trotted forth last Wednesday, bearing Wilky and Bob in our arms to surrender them to the famous Mr. Sanborn. . . . Then we drove to Emerson's and waded up to our knees through a harvest of apples and pears, which, tired of their mere outward or carnal growth, had descended to the loving bosom of the lawn . . . until at last we found the cordial Pan himself in the midst of his household, breezy with hospitality and blowing exhilarating trumpets of welcome. Age has just the least in the world dimmed the lustre we once knew, but an unmistakable breath of the morning still en-

[9] This letter has been printed with omissions in Sanborn and Harris, *A. Bronson Alcott*, 1893, 465–8; E. W. Emerson, *op. cit.*, 331–2; and E. D. Hanscom, *The Friendly Craft*, 1908, 152–4. A passage in H.J.'s *Hawthorne* (1880, 78) is reminiscent of part of this letter of his father's: "He [Hawthorne] must have been struck with the glare of her understanding [Margaret Fuller's], and, mentally speaking, have scowled and blinked a good deal in conversation with her."

circles him, and the odour of primæval woods. . . . Still I insist that he is a voluntary Pan, that it is a condition of mere wilfulness and insurrection on his part, contingent upon a mercilessly sound digestion and an uncommon imaginative influx, and I have no doubt that even he, as the years ripen, will at last admit Nature to be tributary and not supreme. . . . Then and upon the waves of that friendly music we were duly wafted to our educational Zion and carefully made over our good and promising and affectionate boys to the school-master's keeping. . . . The short of the story is that we left them and rode home robbed of our plumage, feeling sore and ugly and only hoping that they would n't die, any of these cold winter days, before the parental breast could get there to warm them back to life or cheer them on to a better." [10]

As a result of the new contacts in Concord, Emerson's son Edward Waldo, who was just a year younger than Henry, Jr., spent several of his spring vacations with the James family in Newport. Alice James, now aged thirteen, was evidently prevented by her ill-health from paying a reciprocal visit to Emerson's daughters, Ellen and Edith, who were, however, considerably her seniors.[11]

Newport, March 26 [1861]

My dear Emerson, —

Only one word about Edward, the good boy who smiles like opening violets, but who is not near so robust as he ought to be, because he is allowed to study too hard, in order that he may enter college one year rather than another. I hated to see the beautiful boy so imprisoned by these baneful books: but of course I did not broach any heresy in his hearing. Our true learning is to unlearn always, and our best doing to undo: but this experience belongs to manhood alone, and even transcends it in many cases. But anyhow it is a sin and shame to starve the physical life out of any deference to the intellectual. I am sure you are as clear about this as any one: but I thought nevertheless I would take the liberty of this one word about Eddy. Swedenborg has a good illustration, by the way, of the evil in our education, though he speaks at the moment of moral education. He was talking one day with some angels about the singular cruelty of much of the moral discipline children are sub-

[10] These extracts are taken from the letter as published in *N.S.B.*, 221 ff. For a description of the Sanborn school, *cf. ibid.*, 215 ff.

[11] In 1860 Ellen Emerson was twenty-one, and Edith nineteen.

jected to on earth, in the snubbing of their innocent natural delights, which of course at that age are delights of sense; and while they were talking, the inward horror and aversion of the angelic mind was outwardly represented by the view of a woman combing the hair of a child (hair corresponding to the sensual life) and every time she drew the comb through its hair, *blood followed the comb.*

Remember me affectionately to all your heavenly household and believe me ever faithfully yours,

H. J.

P.S. I read a lecture here Thursday next which I call a "Philosophic View of the Crisis." [12] I have waited for you and other superior voices to make themselves heard, but I am tired, and shall propound my own squeak incontinently.

Concord, March 29, 1861

My dear Henry James, —

It is very lovely in you to be so tender and thoughtful of my boy. I was very content that he should read such a new and large page as your house would show him. At another time I should have hesitated when he brought such Arabian invitations from your boys, and might have doubted whether you had not sons enough, and what room for another? But Edward was eager to go, and I was impatient to change his air and scene, and thought nothing would so peremptorily break up his morbid tendency and "astonish nature," as to give him Newport and you. So I threw myself on your magnanimity as we always do on the Cid's. Thanks for your kindly thoughts of him. This weakening and fever are new in the last two years: — Dr. Bartlett says, come only from growing too fast. You may be sure I shall run no serious risks for such almanac advantages as joining one class or another. If he were not of a sensitive, anxious habit, he would go into college easily enough, without dragging his books and doomsday about with him to dinner and dance, and many things conspire to make it desirable to enter this year. But, against health, 't is not to be thought of. He has not yet come from Springfield, but he sent a joyful letter to his sisters of his Newport days. You have all made him very happy, and, if

[12] It is natural to suppose that this was an earlier version of the oration on *The Social Significance of Our Institutions,* delivered July 4, 1861. *Cf.* above, 34.

I read right, inflamed his imagination about pictures and painting.

I wish I might hear or read your thoughts on the crisis. It was thought a slight and easily self-adjusting disorder at first, but has shown graver symptoms and more general disease in the public every day till, I think, the whole Faculty are aghast and powerless. The silence of the Government looks ominous. How absurdly busy in filling offices, and negligent of alarming encroachments! What absence of men! It looks as if a single will might be a nucleus that would crystallize the entire population into a cube, were it great and wise — but now the pulverization has gone almost thorough.

I never thanked you by a written syllable for that happiest letter you wrote of the Club, so nobly true in its broad lights, that one was forced to forgive the perverse shadows you chose to throw on some of our quaintest statues; — but I insisted on reading the entire letter to Ellery Channing, who vainly endeavoured to disown his joy. Continue to shine on me, in spite of my ingratitude. If you should now and then send me a letter, I do not think contumacy or old age could long resist you, — the old heart would melt and flow at your command.

I ought to have told you how your letter about Edward moved my wife's thankfulness. She delights in you and in Mrs. James, and in all the boys, and in Alice, seen and unseen, ever since. Yours affectionately,

R. W. EMERSON

Newport, Dec. 22 [1861]

My dear Emerson, —

I did n't need Ellen's letter to teach me what angels you all are there in Concord, for few days pass without some memory or other coming up to suggest the knowledge; but I did need it, apparently, to convince me of my own comparative infernality. For I had no sooner heard the letter than I gave the palpitating Alice *carte blanche* to go at any expense of health, and got her expectations so exalted, that her more affectionate and truly long-suffering Mama found it one of the trials of her life to reduce her to the ordinary domestic routine. All I know is I am hopelessly wicked, and cheerfully postpone myself to the world-after-next for amendment. I tell Alice, by way of make-up, of the delights of heaven, and say that the Emerson house is only a foretaste of that festivity, the Emerson

girls being what they are only by an interior, most unconscious and unsuspected contact with benignities and generosities and sincerities that she shall there see one day, poor child, in beautiful human form. I think, however, the tears still trickle in solitude.

I am busy writing out my book for the printer. I call it "Substance and Shadow" or "Morality and Religion in their Relation to Life," — "An Essay on the Metaphysics of History." [18] I believe I shall dedicate it to you, unless you call upon the police, somewhat in this fashion:

"My dear E.

"I dedicate this book to you not in attestation of our old intimacy, but in hope of a superior future one. It can't help horrifying you at first sight, because it is so undisguised an attempt to prove that irreligion is now the truest tribute, the tenderest homage, a mind of any spirituality can render to God. For you being so blessedly 'irreligious' by nature, can afford to be extremely generous to 'religion' by culture, and will feel disposed to resent therefore my rude criticism. But when you reflect etc."

The idea did n't ocur till this moment, but it runs off so easily that I believe I shall cleave to it. Give my cordial love to all your household and believe me, ever faithfully,

HENRY JAMES

Newport, March 26 [1862]

My dear Emerson, —

Edward goes this morning homeward, tired of expecting letters, and desirous to learn about his western prospects. He is as good as ever I find (neither he nor anybody else I think can be better), and he diffuses such an odour of muskmelon among my pumpkins that our vine must seem impoverished when he plucks himself off. I see plainly that a new race is getting born, clean, sweet, innocent, without misgivings or distrust such as has palsied us in the past; and that the wilderness and solitary place are going at last to be glad with God's broadest smile in our nature. This little saint, *born such,* outstrips without pains and without even knowing it, the most labori-

[18] The book appeared in 1863 under this title except that "Physics of Creation" was substituted for "Metaphysics of History." It was not dedicated to Emerson.

ous culture of the church; or turns it into selfishness and ostentation. "It is the Lord's doing, and very marvellous," being done in the depths of nature itself. But what it calls for, to my mind, is not disbelief in the old maxims of individual regeneration, but for a spiritual resurrection of the truth, or its reproduction in the way of life, not of doctrine.

But Edward is going, and I only wanted to say how we all love him, and felicitate mother and father and sisters upon his possession. We have scarcely been hospitable to him: he is so good and merciful that he prevents our knowing that a stranger is in the house, and we go our ordinary ways. At the same time we have the ambition to be so, if he did n't anticipate us by a greater hospitality; and shall all cherish his stainless image in our tenderest memory. Love to all your household and believe me ever affectionately yours,

H. JAMES

The following letter probably refers to a passage which associates Emerson with Carlyle as caring more for artful civilization and conscious, individualized mankind than for that deeper solidarity of the race which is the burden of Swedenborg's message.[14] James's letters are now written from "Ashburton Place, Boston," where he had taken up his residence "early in 1864." [15]

Boston, Jan. 18, 1865

My dear Emerson, —

A foolish shamefacedness kept me from reciting in your presence when at Concord, a parallel which I had drawn in my lecture between you and Carlyle, but as I am going to read it tomorrow night here, I wish to make amends for that omission by sending you a copy of what I shall say. I don't know why I send it, unless it be that I have a sort of faint dread that you might — if you should ever come to know the facts — augur from my saying in Boston what I refrained from saying in Concord, that what I had to say was not altogether worthy of our friendship. The fact is I would have read the passage omitted, in Concord as well, if you alone had

[14] The passage was published as a note to *The Secret of Swedenborg*, 1869, note F.

[15] *N.S.B.*, 204.

been present at the lecture; but I did n't know but what it might embarrass the *placens uxor* and the beatified girls to hear your excellencies discussed in that rude company.

However here you have the whole story — poor as it is; but you will see at least my loyalty to you is near akin to — if not identical with — my loyalty to my ideas; and you would be sorry to see it anything more than this. Ever yours, my dear E——

H. J.

The Emersons followed the early development and European adventures of William and Henry James, Jr., with an almost familial interest. The proud father sometimes took his sons' letters to Concord and read them aloud. Emerson writes to Norton in Florence in 1870 that he had been getting news of him in this way through the home letters of the younger Henry.[16] The following letter addressed to William by his father two years before reveals Emerson's interest in William's impressions of Herman Grimm. It also contains another characterization of Emerson, whom James cannot mention without sketching his portrait: —

Cambridge, March 18 [1868]

My dear Willy, —

Everything goes on from week to week without shock or agreeable surprise to tell you of, so that one's letters become mere love messages. You get plenty of love from us all here, and your friends everywhere abound in your praises. Emerson wants me to take all your letters down to him that touch upon the Grimms to be read there in conclave, and I go next Saturday for that purpose. I happened to read one of your first letters there from Dresden about German women and the language, etc., and Ellen Emerson was near going into fits over the reading.[17] I hope she will escape a catastrophe on Saturday.

Emerson's unreality to me grows evermore. You have got to deal with him as with a child, making all manner of allowances for his ignorance of everything above the senses, and putting such a restraint upon your intellect as tires you to death. I can't find anything but a pedantic intention in him. He has no sympathy with

[16] *Letters of Charles Eliot Norton*, 1913, I, 340.

[17] Some of these letters will be found in *L.W.J.*, I, 86–98. The best letter about the Grimms is that of Oct. 17, 1867, in *ibid.*, 108.

nature, but is a sort of a police-spy upon it, chasing it into its hiding-places, and noting its subtlest features, for the purpose of reporting them to the public; that 's all. He is an uncommonly sharp detective, but a detective he is and nothing more. He never for a moment drops his office, loses sight of himself, and becomes drowned in the beautiful illusion, but is sure always to appear as a fisherman with his fish upon the hook. The proof of all this is that he breeds no love of nature in his intellectual offspring, but only the love of imitating him and saying similar 'cute things about nature and man. I love the man very much, he is such a born natural; but his books are to me wholly destitute of spiritual flavour, being at most carbonic acid gas and *water*.

The impeachment trial is preparing to come off, and in an orderly way, I suspect.[18] The truth is the Democrats would be as glad to have Johnson disposed of as the Republicans, if they don't lose any ground by it, and the opinion seems to grow that he will be disposed of. Mr. Chase has lost ground by a little political scheming, and all the prominent antagonists of Grant in the Republican party, I think have contrived to shelve themselves and leave him a free field.

Charles Norton likes your article,[19] Harry wrote you already; but it cannot appear before July. Holmes, *père et fils*, is very much pleased with your notice of his pamphlet, which I have read, and I agree with you in thinking the style of it capital.

Harry and Aunt Kate went to some private theatricals last night in Lyceum Hall, to see Alice Parkman[20] perform. They liked her, but the others were very bad. I suppose the reason private companies don't do better is that they act acting only. Alice is better on the whole, and we all — especially she — long for you consumedly. But stay on as long as you can. We hope for a letter today or tomorrow. Ever your loving DADDY

P.S. I send you the papers every week.

[18] The impeachment trial of Andrew Johnson had begun March 13 and continued through May 26. Mr. Chase is, of course, Chief Justice Salmon P. Chase.

[19] This article, a review of Bernard's *Rapport sur le progrès et la marche de la physiologie*, etc., was published in July 1868, in the *North Amer. Rev.* (CVII), of which Norton was then editor. It contained a qualified appreciation of Dr. Holmes's pamphlet entitled *Introductory Lecture* (Boston, 1867), in which the latter deprecated the increasing emphasis on science versus experience in medical study.

[20] Alice Parkman was the daughter of Rev. John Parkman of Boston, who was a cousin of Francis Parkman, the historian.

On October 27, 1868, James attended a lecture by Emerson on "Brook Farm." He found the lecturer "dreadfully seedy" and "full of affectation and coquetry." The harshness of this personal judgment was no doubt due to the lecturer's "ignorant denunciation of Fourier." Emerson's strictures on Fourier were evidently repeated in a lecture of November 16 on "Greatness," whereupon the *Springfield Republican* published an article from its Boston correspondents to the effect that Henry James was "very mad about Emerson's criticism of Fourier," since Mr. Emerson has never read that writer's works and "knows of them from extracts which Mrs. Emerson read to him while he was shaving." Whereupon James wrote indignantly to the *Springfield Republican* (November 29) admitting that he deemed Emerson quite incompetent to judge Fourier, and that he was "much shocked and chagrined at the monstrous misrepresentation Mr. E. gave of F.'s books, when he represented them as inculcating self-indulgence upon men, in place of self-control"; but vehemently denying that he had been "very mad," or had made any allusion to the matter of shaving. The following letter concludes the incident: —

Cambridge, Dec. 7 [1868]

My dear Emerson, —

I have been making a criticism of your Brook Farm lecture in the *Springfield Republican,* apropos of a scurrilous liberty taken with my name in that connection by the Boston correspondent of the *Republican;* and I send you herewith a copy of the paper containing my letter. I should have sent it before, but I could not at once command a copy of the paper. I sent also a short note to the *Commonwealth* which reproduced the scandal, but I have not a copy of that paper and it would not besides interest you.

I am to read a lecture this evening to the Woman's Club in Boston, which I call "The Prophecy of Woman." I am afraid from the meteorological aspect of things just now, that I shall have myself for sole auditor. I should be rejoiced to diffuse the excellent ideas of the lecture more widely; but this is not meant for a kick but only a hint to the sagacious Edward, who I doubt not has good reason to be circumspect in the interest of the Concord Fraternity.[21]

[21] Edward Emerson was at this time, as curator of the Lyceum, in charge of the lecturers.

Willy is at home (as you know by the letter I gave you of Grimm [22]) and he says a bookseller in Berlin told him that he had sold a great many copies of your *Essays* (English edition) and was continually doing so, owing to Grimm's enthusiastic recommendation. Yours ever faithfully,

HENRY JAMES

Wilkinson spent two weeks in America in September 1869, and was "impressed with the Divine Value of Money as distinctly opposed to the Aristocratic and Avaricious value of it, with the fact that every man is determined to make it by some services, to have it and to spend it." [23]

Boston [Sept. 10, 1869]

My dear Emerson, —

Wilkinson does not yet come. He may come tomorrow possibly: if in the morning, I will telegraph you; if in the evening, I shall try to keep him over Monday that you may see him at dinner or that day. But I am afraid that this bothersome "Sabbath" with its motionless cars may play us a trick. But I shall hope in a generous Monday all the same, and if that hope is balked, I shall owe Sunday a black-eye, and will pay my debt on the first suitable occasion, I warrant you.

What an awkward story the *Nation* today tells of Charles Sumner.[24] Charles' burly voice has always a dreadfully hollow sound, as if it came from a great copper vat, and I have always loved him with fear and trembling accordingly. But is he *really* like all American politicians, tricky, or is the *Nation* slanderous? Mr. Godkin is so careful about facts ordinarily, that I hardly dare hope the latter contingency to be true.

Carlyle nowadays is a palpable nuisance. He has long been, *only not-palpable,* to heaps of his private friends. If he holds to his

[22] *Cf.* below, 247 ff.

[23] C. J. Wilkinson, *op. cit.*, 111. The whole passage is well worth reading. It was written in Wilkinson's journal in the form of an imaginary answer to "Jonathan, Brother and dear Boy," who has asked him the usual question, "What do you think of our country?"

[24] The *Nation* stated that on Jan. 17 and 19, 1869, after the Alabama treaty had arrived in Washington, Sumner wrote to John Bright of the British Cabinet heartily commending it. On April 13, however, in a vigorous two hours' speech directed against it, Sumner so influenced the Senate that it rejected the treaty with but one dissenting vote.

present mouthing ways to the end, he will find no showman to match him on the other side, for I hold Barnum to be a much more innocent personage. I should n't wonder if Barnum grew regenerate in some far-off day, by force of his democracy. But Carlyle's intellectual pride is so stupid, that one can hardly imagine anything to cope with it. Conway is a bad omen.[25] He will do all he can to stifle angelic influx into the peccant bosom. Yours,

H. J.

Concord, Sept. 7, 1869

My dear James, —

I hear with great pleasure of Mr. Wilkinson's arrival. Why did you not tell me of his coming? I have never heard whisper of it, — and shall come, if wheels or feet will bring me, so soon as you send word that he is in your house.

I am keeping my outpouring of thanks for your book with its excellent name till I have some right of better knowledge to speak of it. I have in my present preoccupation only peeped instead of reading, and have witnessed with unmixed joy the pillorying of Mr. Dixon, and with manifold mixed sentiments the sketch of our wilful giant at Chelsea.[26] I think both you and he have a passion for perversity. Always yours,

R. W. Emerson

Cambridge, March 23 [1870]

My dear Emerson, —

Many thanks for *Society and Solitude,* of which I have read several chapters with hearty liking. But unfortunately just before the new volume arrived we had got a handsomely bound copy of the new edition of the old essays, and I had been reading them aloud in the evening to Mama and Willy and Alice with such delectation on all sides, that it was vain to attempt renewing the experience. They achieved a real success, doubtless, but they did not command the irresistible homage given to those younger off-spring of your muse. The difference, of course, between the two series is only that between

[25] The reference is to Moncure D. Conway, whose *Life of Thomas Carlyle* appeared in eight volumes in 1881.

[26] For "the pillorying of Mr. Dixon," *cf.* above, 37. As to Carlyle, he is here (note F) condemned as the exponent of *vir,* the conscious, moral individual, rather than *homo,* the unconscious race of mankind.

youth and age, or promise and fulfilment, the former leaving something to the imagination, the latter excluding it. The sunset is just as admirable in its way as the sunrise; but every one knows that the latter excites, and should excite, a very much more tender enthusiasm.

Edward was here yesterday, filling the room with an odour of spring, and he told me good news of Ellen, the exile of Milton.[27] *Laus deo.* And, moreover, of his mother's improvement in health, consequent upon his taking her out to drive. All of which is delightful. Give my love to her and believe me, my dear Emerson, ever your loving,

H. J.

P.S. Wilkinson sends love and congratulations to you on your appointment.[28]

It is evident that the intellectual and moral intimacy of James and Emerson (as well as their "tender enthusiasm") had steadily declined after the middle of the century. This, no doubt, accounts for the fact that the contemporary national crisis receives so little mention in their letters. These now become intermittent and "occasional." In 1872, thirty years from the date of their first acquaintance, James was asked to speak of Emerson at the house of Mr. and Mrs. James T. Fields. He read the paper which was afterwards edited by his son William and published in the *Atlantic Monthly* in 1904.

Cambridge, Feb. 13 [1872]

My dear Emerson, —

Mr. and Mrs. Fields requested me to write a short appreciation of you for their Friday Evening Salon, and I have written a paper on your evangelic significance which I intend reading the coming Friday. My heart has been very much in it, and my head, I hope, has not been entirely lacking. I should like very much to read the piece, not to you, for you have too dainty a taste in literature for my

[27] Ellen Emerson often visited her sister, Edith Emerson Forbes, at Milton.

[28] Referring probably to Emerson's invitation to give a course of "University Lectures" on philosophy at Harvard. Under the terms of this appointment he arranged to give sixteen lectures on "The Natural History of the Intellect" during the months of April and May, 1870. He was also at this time (1867–79) a member of the Board of Overseers at Harvard.

wares, but to Mrs. Emerson, say, and Ellen, and Elizabeth Hoar, or Miss Elizabeth Ripley, if they will grant me a hearing. What say they? I shall have no objection, of course, to their admitting any one they choose. If they say Aye, I will go to Concord some morning next week, read it to them after dinner, and come home in the evening train. I hope Mrs. Emerson won't fancy that I am vain of my essay, that I propose reading it to her — not at all. I simply feel that I owe it to her to say nothing of you, which her heart does n't also say, in some sort. Give my love to her and Ellen, and believe me ever faithfully, yours,

HENRY JAMES

Concord, Feb. 17, 1872

My dear James, —

Ellen has been busy with her friends in fixing the day possible to all of the sacred seven or eight that may be permitted to come to the *séance,* and finds Tuesday next the only surely available day in that week. So we all hope that you can and will dine with us on that day, leaving Boston at 11 o'c A.M. I sit, of course, happy that any cause will bring you here, extremely flattered that I can be a theme for such a matter, and promising the most childlike docility to the severest surgery. "That day," Ellen reiterates, for every day of the week after is filled with school examinations, etc., and life is too mythical to allow me to look beyond, until we learn that you find this inconvenient — which you shall not. In firm reliance, yours,

R. W. EMERSON

The paper, which James rehearsed on the appointed day, contains one of his many comparisons of Emerson and Carlyle. "I have diligently cultivated Mr. Emerson's acquaintance," said the author, "as I used diligently to cultivate Mr. Carlyle's. But Mr. Carlyle is an egregiously secular person, and you go to Chelsea, as you go to the theatre, for entertainment or diversion. Mr. Emerson, on the other hand, is an eminently sacred person, and you frequent Concord as you frequent the Cathedral — for self-recoil, self-examination, and reproof." [29]

There is no record of further correspondence. Emerson was failing; and each man had, no doubt, given to the other all that the

[29] *Atlantic,* XCIV (1904), 742.

other was prepared to receive. Each was to the other one of those "partial minds" which Emerson found his friends to possess, in place of that symmetry he had first looked for.[80] Both men died in the same year — in 1882; but before the end their attachment had already grown increasingly remote and reminiscent.

[80] In his journal for Oct. 1862, he says this of Thoreau, Charles Newcomb, Alcott, and Henry James. *Cf.* Bliss Perry, *Heart of Emerson's Journals*, 1926, 289.

VI

CAREER, INFLUENCE, AND CHARACTER

In the autumn of 1866 the James family moved from Boston to Cambridge, where they took up their residence at 20 Quincy Street, across the street from Harvard College.[1] Here they lived for fifteen years. James remained in close contact with his New England circle of friends and continued to attend the Saturday Club. Thus Charles Eliot Norton, writing to Carlyle in 1876, immediately after returning from one of its meetings, reports the presence of "your old acquaintance Henry James, with his Swedenborgian enthusiasms and eccentricities."[2] There is a certain pathos in this characterization. When these words were written he was working, at the age of sixty-five, with unabated energy and with unshaken conviction. *Society the Redeemed Form of Man,* a major book in his most vigorous style, was completed three years later, in spite of the paralytic stroke which had already marked the advent of declining health. When the end came in 1882 he was in the midst of a last restatement of his message,[3] no less triumphant than those which had preceded. But to the world at large, and to many who knew him well, he was only "enthusiastic and eccentric."

E. L. Godkin spent the years from 1875 to 1881 in Cambridge, where he had long been a frequent visitor, owing to his close association with Norton and Lowell in the founding and editing of the *Nation.* Towards the end of his life he wrote his recollections of "Old Cambridge," in which is again revealed the impression that James was indubitably a "character," with, however, an exceedingly dubious philosophy: —

"Henry James, the elder, was a person of delightful eccentricity, and a humorist of the first water. When in his grotesque moods, he maintained that, to a right-minded man, a crowded Cambridge

[1] This house afterwards became the Colonial Club, and has recently been torn down to make room for the new Faculty Club.

[2] *Letters of C. E. Norton,* 1913, II, 60.

[3] *Spiritual Creation,* published posthumously in *L.R.H.J.*

horse-car 'was the nearest approach to heaven upon earth!' What was the precise nature of his philosophy, I never fully understood, but he professed to be a Swedenborgian, and carried on a correspondence full of droll incidents with anxious inquirers, in various parts of the country. Asking him one day about one of these, he replied instantly, 'Oh, a devil of a woman!' to my great astonishment, as I was not then thoroughly familiar with his ways. One of his most amusing experiences was that the other Swedenborgians repudiated all religious connection with him, so that the sect to which he belonged, and of which he was the head, may be said to have consisted of himself alone. He was a writer of extraordinary vigor and picturesqueness, and I suppose there was not in his day a more formidable master of English style.

"His son, the author, then a youth of nineteen or twenty, was just beginning to try his literary wings. There could not be a more entertaining treat than a dinner at the James house, when all the young people were at home. They were full of stories of the oddest kind, and discussed questions of morals or taste or literature with a vociferous vigor so great as sometimes to lead the young men to leave their seats and gesticulate on the floor. I remember, in some of these heated discussions, it was not unusual for the sons to invoke humorous curses on their parent, one of which was, that 'his mashed potatoes might always have lumps in them!' "[4]

James, like Socrates, was picturesque and convivial. But like Socrates he had a mission to mankind — and even, unlike Socrates, a gospel. He can have enjoyed little conviction of the efficacy of his mission or of the acceptance of his gospel. He was not dismayed, nor ever doubted his faith, but it is not surprising that there should have been moments when he doubted himself. His wife wrote in 1874 to the younger Henry in Europe: "Father came back comfortably from his Providence spree, but rather discouraged, I think, as he always is, after giving a lecture. All that he has to say seems so good and glorious, and easily understood to him, but it falls so dead upon the dull or skeptical ears who come to hear him, that I do not wonder he feels so."

When the James family moved to Boston William James had just entered the Harvard Medical School. When they moved to Cam-

[4] *Life and Letters of Edwin Lawrence Godkin*, 1907, edited by Rollo Ogden. II, 117–8, reprinted with permission of the Macmillan Co.

bridge he was still engaged in his medical studies, and after 1873 he was a teacher in Harvard College. It was inevitable, then, that the interest of the parents should become more and more focused upon the institution at their door, and that their earlier circle of friends should be enlarged to embrace their present academic neighbors. In 1869 the great sensation was, of course, the election of Eliot to the presidency.[5] Writing to his son Henry, James said: —

"I send you the *Nation* now regularly, care of Barings. Arthur Sedgwick is one of its chief contributors in your absence, only he affects the political and economical rôle rather than the literary. He and we all are just now in the pangs of anxiety, he that Mr. Eliot should be elected President of Harvard, we that someone whom the world thinks better of, should be.[6] Charley Atkinson says that when he was a student under him in the Scientific School, he (Charles) was in the habit of carrying a leather bag in and out for his books, and that one day Eliot arrested him briskly and said, 'Mr. Atkinson, let me understand what you do with that bag.' He evidently thought Charley used it to convey away clandestinely certain valuable chemicals. . . . He is a man of the grossest lack of tact. . . . James Lowell was here a morning or two since, and tells me he wanted the Swiss Mission. But I see the place is filled otherwise. Charles Norton, too, was an applicant by his friends. But neither James Lowell nor he suspected that they were rivals."

In the spring of 1871 Emerson spent six weeks in California, with a party organized by his friend, that public and private benefactor of mankind, John M. Forbes. Garth Wilkinson James, the third of Henry James's four sons, was one of the group that went from Boston.[7] Jane Norton, to whom the following letter was addressed, was one of the older sisters of Charles Eliot Norton. "Shady Hill" (in "Norton's Woods") was the Norton residence in Cambridge, and it played an important part in the lives of two generations of the James family, both when the Nortons were at home and when, during their long absence in Europe (1868–1872), it was occupied by the Gurneys.

[5] That the opinion here expressed was shared by others appears in a contemporary letter of William James, printed below, 294.

[6] The two other men most prominently considered were Prof. A. P. Peabody and Prof. E. W. Gurney. Arthur Sedgwick, brother of Theodora Sedgwick, was a lawyer and (with O. W. Holmes, Jr.) co-editor of the *American Law Review*. Charles F. Atkinson was a fellow student in the Lawrence Scientific School in 1861, and for many years a friend.

[7] Emerson and Forbes, *Journals of Emerson*, X, 351. For an account of the trip, *cf.* J. B. Thayer, *A Western Journey with Emerson*, 1884.

Cambridge, May 28 [1871]

My dear Jane Norton, —

. . . Seriously, my dear Miss Jane, your letter is a generous cordial. I have often thought how good it would be to hear from you, but I refrained from inviting the pleasure because I knew how much you necessarily had to do in the way of correspondence, and I did not like to put a gratuitous strain upon your attention. The savour of your gracious name is sweet in all our hearts, and ever and anon some one cries out — O! for the light of that lovely face again! I can't afford to tell you how I personally should welcome its reappearance. Believe me I have seen nothing half so charming since I saw it last brightening the sunshine of our courtyard; and whenever the old ferryman nudges my elbow, and bids me prepare to take my seat in his boat, I quiet his impatience by saying — nay, nay, old fellow, *not* till Jane Norton returns once more, and gives back to my senses the light she robbed them of. He is not hard-hearted enough to resist that entreaty. . . .

I saw a letter from Mr. John Forbes yesterday dated in the Yosemite Valley, and giving a glowing description of its grandeurs. Mrs. George Russell [8] led the party, who were seven hours on horseback; Mr. Emerson was mounted upon a white horse, and wore a wide-awake hat. His appearance, Mr. Forbes said, was that of a spiritual Don Quixote. And he so far renounced his voluntary consciousness as the mighty scenery first burst upon their enraptured gaze, as to fancy himself again in his pulpit, and shout out, spontaneously, "This is the Lord's doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes." . . .

Come back soon, or you will never recognize Cambridge. The college grounds are growing as plethoric as an English plum-pudding, and scarcely any breathing space is left between the towering dormitories. Brattle Street is widening to meet the increasing demands of business, and it is supposed that in twenty years Cambridge will be as noisy with trip hammers as Worcester and Lowell are now. The Norton woods will be a memory merely by that time, and the Norton pockets inconveniently aggrandized. . . .

And what are all these recent European experiences a prelude to? [9] Doomsday seems to be upon us. Actually no voice of authority

[8] Mrs. George Russell was Sarah Shaw, sister of Francis G. Shaw, whom we have already met as a patron of the Brook Farm enterprise.

[9] In January Paris had surrendered to the German forces and soon afterwards the King of Prussia was declared German Emperor.

in either Church or State. I can find no one in Boston who really *believes* in anybody or anything. James Lowell, Mr. Longfellow, Mr. Godkin, appear to *hate* a good many bodies and a good many things, the former and the latter with a good old-fashioned hate. But what they *love,* that is, "what they believe *with the heart,*" which is the only belief that works righteousness, I can't in the least discover. Both J. R. L. and E. L. G.[10] would be willing to slay right and left the leading advocates of female suffrage, because they disbelieve utterly in any woman's ability to take care of herself, and suppose therefore that if women were legally emancipated from men's control, it would only be to subject themselves illegally to it. But on the reform side there seems a great deal of this belief of the heart, and one can hardly help feeling consequently that the fate of the world is in their hands. This vast international organization in Europe, which seems so menacing to the existing national life, must erelong bear stupendous fruit; and possibly you and I will not be surprised a few years hence to find ourselves seated together in one of Mr. Stiles' horse cars [11] on our way to Music Hall to take part in a meeting of the New Jerusalem. The world, or human nature, is capable of an *infinite* expansion, and no interest of man is going to be harmed by it, but that of our commonplace and traditional unbelief. . . .

All my family have given me messages of love and remembrance during the morning to send to you, and Harry, especially, wants me to acknowledge a letter just come from your brother, which gives him and gives us all great delight, and which he will answer shortly. My dear Miss Jane, be the soul of generosity you have always been to me, and keep me ever within the folds of your dewy and fragrant memory, that so I may always feel free to call myself yours most lovingly,

HENRY JAMES

The following letter, written to Henry James, Jr., gives a day of his father's social life at this time. Professor Ephraim W. and Mrs. Ellen Hooper Gurney were among the closer intimates. Gurney

[10] Lowell and Godkin.

[11] Mr. John C. Stiles was a familiar figure in Harvard Square, where he was the superintendent of the Union Railway Co., which operated horse cars from Cambridge to Boston. Dean L. B. R. Briggs, to whom I am indebted for this information, remembers him as an important and conspicuous personage, with cap and goatee.

was at this time professor of history, dean of the faculty, and right-hand man of President Eliot; and Henry Adams was an assistant professor of history — both, of course, at Harvard.

[Cambridge], Oct. 17, 1873

My darling Harry, —

Willy is spinning on his way to you in this the seventh day of his voyage,[12] and will probably reach you before this letter. I hope from the style of weather *we* have had since he left, that his voyage has been smooth, at least comparatively. Never was there such an autumn known for blandness in point of air, and gorgeous golden pomp in point of light. The heavens seem bent upon decorating the earth with new beauties every day, and such a sunset of blazing and dazzling crimson as we had last night was enough to make the very cattle cry out, Alleluia. . . .

I lunched in the morning with President Charles Eliot to meet a Mr. Broderick,[13] a writer for the *Times*. Godkin and Agassiz and Henry Adams made up the remainder of the members. Mr. Broderick is most peculiar in appearance and conversation, so much so in fact as to call out your tenderness, and make you wish that his mother and sisters would keep him at home. I think he asked as many as eighty distinct questions in the two hours we were together. Agassiz was in great force, stomach and brain both; Henry Adams, saturnine and silent; Godkin as usual, but sad, very; and Charles Eliot himself very courteous and hospitable. In the evening I dined at the Gurneys' with Mr. and Mrs. Agassiz, Henry Adams and Clover [Hooper],[14] and Godkin. Henry Adams, Clover and Ellen [Gurney] all asked with interest after you, and all expressed pleasure in your literary activity. The hosts, both, and the Agassizs were particularly expressive in regard to Willy, and Mrs. Agassiz desired me particularly to give him her love and say to him that if she had known he was going so immediately, she would have come in to say good-bye to him. . . . In the morning at lunch Mr. Broderick asked President Eliot what sect President Grant favoured. He replied, "The Methodist. At least I infer as much," he said,

[12] For further details of this voyage, *cf.* below, 351 ff.

[13] "Mr. Broderick" was George Charles Brodrick, Fellow and Warden of Merton College, Oxford, and leader writer on the *Times* (London) from 1860 to 1873. He was known in England for his sympathy with the cause of the Union.

[14] "Clover" Hooper was Marian Hooper, whom Henry Adams married in 1872.

"from a remark he made to me about his boy when he came to put him in college, where he now is. I asked him what profession he destined his son for. He said, 'I think he will be a minister, for he is a *pious* child.'" This raised a laugh among the company, but I liked it. I thought it showed Grant more *simplex munditiis* than the professors and critics about me. . . .

Good-bye, my lovely boys. I have been hearing so many things about you both of late, apropos of Willy's going away, that I am quite set up. Your loving DADDY

The period of the Quincy Street residence witnessed the growing absorption of the parents in the careers of the children, and especially of William and Henry. "It is a delight above all delights," wrote the father, "to see one's children turn out — as ours have done — all that the heart covets in children; and my delight is so full that I sometimes fancy my heart will have to burst for its own relief." [15] William lived with his parents (the intervals being spent in Europe) during the winter of 1866–1867, from the autumn of 1868 to the autumn of 1873, and from early in 1874 until his marriage in the summer of 1878 — after which he continued to reside in Cambridge in his own house, uninterruptedly until 1882. The younger Henry lived at the Quincy Street house from 1866 to 1869, from the spring of 1870 until the spring of 1872, and from the autumn of 1874 to the autumn of 1875; after which he definitely took up his residence in Europe and remained continuously until 1881, when he returned for a visit shortly before his mother's death. These were exciting and somewhat trying years of path-finding, and except for the relatively brief period when *neither* William nor Henry was in Europe, there were always letters from Cambridge reflecting the home life there and the watchful, sympathetic, apprehensive interest in the adventures of the distant voyager. Some of these letters we shall read later, since they form part of the story of William James's vocation.

The father, having left his sons entire liberty of choice, entered with the warmest interest into *their* interests. He became, together with Emerson, a member of the committee appointed to visit the department of "Moral and Intellectual Philosophy." [16] He com-

[15] To H.J.², Aug. 9, 1872.
[16] Harvard *Crimson*, 1876–7, 72.

municated with William's philosophical friends and Henry's literary friends in Europe.[17] Their Cambridge companions, Chauncey Wright, Oliver Wendell Holmes, Jr., Charles Peirce, W. D. Howells, became intimates of his household.[18] On June 26, 1873, apparently at the instigation of Emerson, he was elected an honorary member of the Harvard Chapter of the Phi Beta Kappa, his son William being honored by a similar election the same day.

The wife and mother of this family, Mary Walsh James, died on January 29, 1882, while Henry, her favorite son, was in America after an absence of six years. What his mother was to her children, and to him in particular, — sympathy and selfless love, "soundless and yet absolutely all-saving service and trust," — can be read in his *Notes of a Son and Brother.*[19] To Godkin he wrote on February 3: "My dearest mother died last Sunday — suddenly and tranquilly, from an affection of the heart. . . . You know my mother and you know what she was to us — the sweetest, gentlest, most natural embodiment of maternity — and our protecting spirit, our household genius."[20] What Mrs. James meant to her husband is revealed in the following letter. He had meanwhile changed his residence from Cambridge to Boston, where he was living at 131 Mt. Vernon Street with his daughter Alice and his sister-in-law, Mrs. Walsh. The "Alice" and "Aunt Margaret" are William James's wife and his sister-in-law, Margaret Gibbens, afterwards Mrs. Leigh R. Gregor. Henry, Jr., had just sailed for England: —

Boston, May 9 [1882]

My darling Harry, —

I went out early after breakfast to see William yesterday, and he came down from his bedroom *dancing* to greet me. He was apparently ever so much better. . . . It was delightful to witness the elasticity of his spirits, and we had a capital talk about Renouvier and Hodgson.[21] Dear Alice looked so burdened to sight by her new maternity, and her anxiety about Willy, and her solicitude in behalf of Harry, that all my compassion was drawn to her, and I expressed

[17] *Cf.* below, 147, 137.

[18] James's reception of one of William's students, George A. Gordon, is described in the latter's *My Education and Religion,* 1925, 196–7. The elder James was "a kind of glorified Greek Fury," says the author.

[19] 176–81.

[20] Godkin Collection, Widener Library.

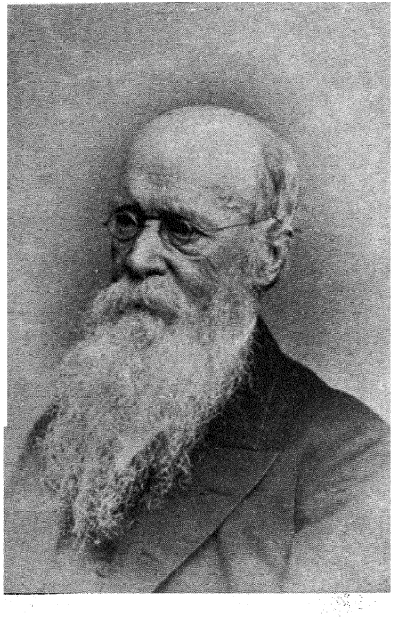
[21] For Charles Renouvier and Shadworth H. Hodgson, *cf. below,* Chs. XXXVIII–XLIII.

it very tenderly, I assure you. Harry[22] was incomparably sweet. I had met him in company with his Aunt Margaret Sunday afternoon in a Park Square horse-car, and he had been so preoccupied with the people in the car that he scarcely noticed his granddaddy. And I, in reproaching him with this remembrance before the family, got no satisfaction but what lay in these exact words: "Yes, I thought almost I would n't even speak to Grandpa." This *even* was too expressive. . . .

And now, my darling boy, I must bid you farewell. How loving a farewell it is, I can't say, but only that it is most loving. All my children have been very good and sweet from their infancy, and I have been very proud of you and Willy. But I can't help feeling that you are the one that has cost us the least trouble, and given us always the most delight. Especially do I mind mother's perfect joy in you the last few months of her life, and your perfect sweetness to her. I think in fact it is this which endears you so much to me now. No doubt the other boys in the same circumstances would have betrayed the same tender and playful love to her, only they were not called upon to do so. I am no way unjust to them, therefore, but I feel that I have fallen heir to all dear mother's fondness for you, as well as my proper own, and bid you accordingly a distinctly widowed farewell. That blessed mother, what a link her memory is to us all henceforth! I think none of us who remember her natural unaffected ways of goodness, and especially her sleepless sense of justice, will ever again feel tempted to do a dishonest or unhandsome thing. She was not to me "a liberal education," intellectually speaking, as some one has said of his wife, but she really did arouse my heart, early in our married life, from its selfish torpor, and so enabled me to become a man. And this she did altogether unconsciously, without the most cursory thought of doing so, but solely by the presentation of her womanly sweetness and purity, which she herself had no recognition of. The sum of it all is, that I would sooner rejoin her in her modesty, and find my eternal lot in association with her, than have the gift of a noisy delirious world!

Good-bye then again, my precious Harry! . . . We shall each rejoice in you in our several way as you plough the ocean and attain to your old rooms, where it will be charming to think of you as once

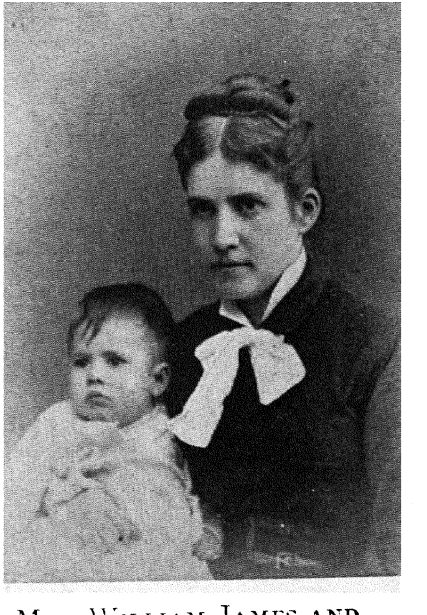
[22] Henry, the oldest son of William James.



THE ELDER HENRY JAMES, ABOUT 1880



MARY ROBERTSON WALSH JAMES, ABOUT 1880



MRS. WILLIAM JAMES AND HER SON HENRY, 1879

more settled and at work. I wish England itself offered a less troubled residence to you than it does. A lingering good-bye, then, dearest Harry, from all of us! and above all from your loving father,

H. J.

James did not long survive his bereavement. As the end approached he refused to take food. "Unfalteringly he claimed his right to the spiritual life, and most characteristically and consistently refused to nourish what he called death, saying *life* is fed by God Almighty." [23] When he died, on December 18, 1882, both of his elder sons were absent, William in London, Henry at sea vainly hoping to arrive before the end. The following letters from Henry in Boston to William in London describe their father's last hours.[24]

Boston, Dec. 26, 1882

My dear William, —

You will already have heard the circumstances under which I arrived at New York on Thursday 21st, at noon, after a very rapid and prosperous, but painful passage. . . . They told me everything — or at least they told me a great deal — before we parted that night, and what they told me was deeply touching, and yet not at all literally painful. Father had been so tranquil and painless, had died so easily and, as it were, deliberately, and there had been none — not the least — of that anguish and confusion which we imagined in London. . . . It appears to have been most strange, most characteristic above all, and as full of beauty as it was void of suffering. There was none of what we feared — no paralysis, no dementia, no violence. He simply, after the improvement of which we were written before I sailed, had a sudden relapse — a series of swoons — after which he took to his bed not to rise again. He had no visible malady — strange as it may seem. The "softening of the brain" was simply a gradual refusal of food, because he *wished* to die. There was no dementia except a sort of exaltation of belief that he had entered into "the spiritual life." Nothing could persuade him to eat, and yet he never suffered, or gave the least sign of suffering, from inanition. All this will seem strange and incredible to you —

[23] Mrs. Catharine Walsh to W.J., Dec. 23, 1882.

[24] W.J.'s reply to the first of these letters is printed below, 165. *Cf.* also *L.W.J.*, I, 16.

but told with all the details, as Aunt Kate has told it to me, it becomes real — taking Father as he was, almost natural. He prayed and longed to die. He ebbed and faded away — though in spite of his strength becoming continually less, he was able to see people and to talk. He wished to see as many people as he could, and he talked with them without effort. . . . Alice says he said the most picturesque and humorous things! He knew I was coming and was glad, but not impatient. He was delighted when he was told that you would stay in my rooms in my absence, and seemed much interested in the idea. He had no belief, apparently, that he should live to see me, but was perfectly cheerful about it. He slept a great deal and, as Aunt Kate says, there was "so little of the sick-room" about him. He lay facing the windows which he would never have darkened — never pained by the light. . . . He spoke of everything — the disposition of his things, made all his arrangements of every kind. Aunt Kate repeats again and again, that he yearned unspeakably to die. . . . Ever your

H. JAMES

Boston, Dec. 28, 1882

Dear William, —

I was not able yesterday to write you a second letter, as I hoped, as I was still suffering rather too much from my head; but this evening I am pretty well myself again, and shall endeavour to go on with my story. . . . Mainly, I can only repeat that the whole thing was tranquil and happy — almost, as it were, comfortable. The wanderings of his mind, which were never great, were always of a joyous description, and his determination not to eat was cheerful and reasonable, that is, he was always prepared to explain why he would n't eat, — that is, because he had entered upon the "spiritual life," and did n't wish to keep up the mere form of living in the body. . . . He spoke several times of Mother — uttering (intelligibly) her name: "Mary — my Mary." Somewhat before this Aunt Kate says he murmured — "Oh, I have such good boys —*such* good boys!" . . . Farewell, dear William. Ever yours,

H. JAMES

Both of his elder sons felt the disproportion between James's inward greatness and the little that he left behind. There was a sense

of sudden shrinkage. Thus when William first heard the news of his father's death, he saw in swift retrospect the events of that full and eager life and noted the comparative slightness of their surviving effects: "What remains is a few printed pages, us and our children and some incalculable modifications of other people's lives, influenced this day or that by what he said or did." [25]

The volume of *The Literary Remains of the Late Henry James,* which William edited and published in 1884, and for which he wrote a long Introduction, worthy alike of its subject and of its author, had a small and rapidly diminishing sale. This the author doubtless anticipated, for in the Introduction he had already written of his father's maladjustment to his age. Whether he came too late or too early is difficult to say — perhaps it amounts to the same thing.[26] In any case he brought a theological message to an untheological age. Those who believe theologically are not receptive to new ideas, "whilst those of us who have intellectual vitality are either apt to be full of bias against theism in any form, or if we are theistic at all, it is in such a tentative and supplicating sort of way that the sight of a robust and dogmatizing theologian sends a shiver through our bones. A man like my father, lighting on such a time, is wholly out of his element and atmosphere, and is soon left stranded high and dry. His effectiveness as a missionary is null; and it is wonderful if his voice, crying in the wilderness and getting no echo, do not soon die away for sheer discouragement." [27] The content was as unseasonable as the method. For James insisted upon the tragic essence of the Christian hope, upon death as the way of life, in an age which was disposed to see only good in both nature and man.

A letter from the younger Henry James, written to his brother after the appearance of the *Literary Remains,* expresses the same sense of the futility of their father's mission.

[25] *L.W.J.*, I, 221.

[26] In 1850 Wilkinson wrote apropos of James's *Moralism and Religion:* "Your book, then, has to me the great fault of being before the age, — of being an anachronism in the solution of the problem. I grant you that you are arraigned here in common with a goodly company — the Platos and the like. But still the new spirit is against you all alike; for it is science, art and demonstration that we want, and not anticipatory flights. These have been always so poor compared with the reality, that we are now convinced by experience of the futility of indulging in them. Moreover they foster the laziness of the soul, when all the while there is so much to be accomplished."

[27] *L.R.H.J.*, 11.

London, Jan. 2, 1885

Dear William, —

. . . Three days ago . . . came the two copies of Father's (and your) book, which have given me great filial and fraternal joy. All I have had time to read as yet is the Introduction — your part of which seems to me admirable, perfect. It must have been very difficult to do, and you could n't have done it better. And how beautiful and extraordinarily individual (some of them magnificent) all the extracts from Father's writings which you have selected so happily. It comes over me as I read them (more than ever before) how intensely original and personal his whole system was, and how indispensable it is that those who go in for religion should take some heed of it. I can't enter into it (much) myself — I can't be so theological nor grant his extraordinary premises, nor throw myself into conceptions of heavens and hells, nor be sure that the keynote of nature is humanity, etc. But I can enjoy greatly the spirit, the feeling and the manner of the whole thing (full as this last is of things that displease me too), and feel really that poor Father, struggling so alone all his life, and so destitute of every worldly or literary ambition, was yet a great writer. At any rate your task is beautifully and honourably done — may it be as great or half as great a service as it deserves to be, to his memory!

The book came at a bad time for Alice[28] . . . but though she has been able to have it in her hand but for a moment, it evidently gives her great pleasure. She burst into tears when I gave it to her, exclaiming, "How beautiful it is that William should have done it! Is n't it, is n't it beautiful? And how good William is, how good, how good!" And we talked of poor Father's fading away into silence and darkness, the waves of the world closing over this system which he tried to offer it, and of how we were touched by this act of yours which will (I am sure) do so much to rescue him from oblivion. . . . Love to all. Ever your

HENRY

Even liberal Swedenborgians, disposed to accept James's doctrines, were repelled by his paradoxes, and especially by the heartiness with which he condemned "moralism." Thus William White, Swedenborg's biographer,[29] wrote in 1867: "You have a rare power

[28] The sister Alice, at this time ill and living in London.
[29] Author of *Emanuel Swedenborg, His Life and Writings*, 1867.

of taking captive disciples. . . . I need not tell you what you very well know, that if you are a blessing to some souls you are a puzzle to others. On Monday I had for companion on the top of the Hampstead bus a New York publisher. We got to talking of your books when observed he, 'I never could understand James. He seems to me always set on proving there is no difference between good and evil; indeed, if he has a preference it is for evil.' I was so amused, that I vowed you should have the anecdote." [30]

Nevertheless those "other people," whose lives were "influenced this day or that by what he said or did," are not to be ignored. There were, for example, men like Charles Peirce, who read and reviewed him in the early days, and remembered him many years afterwards.[31] There was Dr. Holmes, who wrote to James R. Osgood, the publisher: —

Boston, Dec. 17, 1884

Dear Mr. Osgood, —

I have just received the volume of *The Literary Remains of Henry James,* and I wish to express my thanks to the sender, yourself, or Mr. William James. I greatly valued the friendship of Mr. Henry James. There was a sincerity and strong manhood joined to that deep power of reflection which was most attractive to all who were not afraid of his searching intelligence and outspoken honesty. This book of his will be by me for a long time, not so much to be read page by page as to be consulted as an oracle, often to be believed and always to be listened to.

Please let Mr. William James see this note, which belongs properly to him, if he sent the book. Yours very truly,

O. W. Holmes

There is similar testimony from W. D. Howells, who wrote thus to Alice James [32] in reply to a letter of condolence received at the time of the death of his daughter Winifred: —

[30] The letter continues: "Your friend Faraday the chemist died on Sunday. You had some curious intercourse with him which I wish you would place on record. If you are too busy to do so, I wish you would commit your memories to your son who writes for the press." One would like to know more of this "curious intercourse" between Faraday and Henry James!

[31] *Cf.* below, 533.

[32] From *The Life in Letters of William Dean Howells,* by Mildred Howells, copyright 1926 by Doubleday, Doran and Co., Inc.

New York, April 26, 1889

Dear Miss Alice, —

. . . It is strange, and not strange, either, that the greatest help and kindness in this bewildering grief of ours, should have come from your father's children; for your brother William said something that more than anything else enabled our hearts to lay hold on faith again, and supplemented with a hint of hope those perfect terms in which Harry had expressed our loss. And now your message, with its memory of another world, completely past, is an intimation that we may somewhere else survive that of today, too, and of all earthly morrows. I cannot tell you with what tenderness I recurred to those Sundays, when you mentioned them, and with what vividness your dear father's and mother's presence was with me again. I was greatly privileged to know such a man as he, and things that he said have enriched my life with a meaning that did not all appear in the moment. It consoles and encourages me that such a mind as his held fast to such a belief as his. . . . Yours sincerely,

W. D. HOWELLS

More striking than the influence on his own friends is the influence on a distant posterity which can only read him in his rare and inaccessible books. Mr. Samuel M. Ilsley, to whom William James wrote in 1888 that "the *Literary Remains* only sold one copy in the first six months of last year," has recently published a letter [88] which evoked favorable replies and discovered scattered and unsuspected Jamesians. The letter contained the following paragraph: "But nevertheless Henry James, the father of Henry the novelist, of William the philosopher, was a mystic of profounder mind than Emerson, an accepter of his fellow men with deeper understanding than Whitman, as fearless a scorner of the smug and conventional as Thoreau, and a more conscious plotter of an America that was no echo of an old rhapsody, but a New World indeed, than Poe ever dreamed of."

Never, in the case of a man of the world making the necessary concessions to social usage, were living and thinking more completely fused than in Henry James. In speaking once of the theological truths which he proclaimed, he said that they were "truths

[88] *New Republic*, Aug. 22, 1928.

of the very life of man";[34] and, as his son said of him after his death, *his* truths were *his life*.[35] Truth being revealed to him in the very living of it, he could not fail either to be what he affirmed, or to affirm what he was. Similarly, he valued others, including his children, for what they *were*, rather than for what they said or did. This profound integrity was the most characteristic thing about him. Such being the case, if the exigencies of consecutive exposition make it necessary to describe the man before we describe his ideas, we must be aware that either without the other is a misleading abstraction.

He was a man with a mission and at the same time dogged by a sense of futility. Like many single-minded men he exalted his cause and debased himself. He proclaimed his own beliefs and denounced other people's errors with the most unqualified dogmatism, but it was as though he were a vehicle and not an author of truths. Together with a positive and colorful individuality he had a "selfless detachment" which claimed no credit or superiority.[36]

Until ill-health began to tell upon him, there was nothing of the ascetic in James, either in his conduct or in his appearance; "a little fat, rosy Swedenborgian amateur," said Ellery Channing, "with the look of a broker, and the brains and heart of a Pascal."[37] He was full-blooded and robust, his invalidism, if such it can be called, being accidental and not constitutional. Speaking of his early boyhood, he said: "The common ore of existence perpetually converted itself into the gold of life in the glowing fire of my animal spirits."[38] Being crippled, he knew suffering and was permanently handicapped; but his animal spirits did not cease to glow. Behind his gifts of intellect and character there was always this organic exuberance. In society it made him, as Emerson said, "expansive," and not merely witty. He poured forth a profusion of animated talk. It made him playful, and contributed to that art of elaborate nonsense which was so characteristic of his family circle. It made him in all his human relations at one time romantically tender, at another almost boisterously bellicose, and often both at the same time. In fact a sort of bellicose tenderness, or beaming abu-

[34] *Nature of Evil*, D. Appleton & Co., 1855, 13.
[35] *L.R.H.J.*, 10.
[36] *N.S.B.*, 162.
[37] F. B. Sanborn, *Familiar Letters of H. D. Thoreau*, 1894, 145.
[38] *L.R.H.J.*, 183.

siveness, was one of his peculiar achievements. It appears in his intimate friendships with men of his own age, such as Edmund Tweedy, to whom he closed a letter with the words: "So good-bye, you dear old skinflint you, and believe me, ever tenderly yours, H. J."

Here is another letter to the same friend: —

London, May 23, 1856

My dear old Tweedius, —

Turbulent, quarrelsome, senile as you are, I cannot bear to think that your last letter, wrung out of you with so much effort as it was, should have so long remained unacknowledged. But the simple explanation is, that I have been so tired out this spring, so sick of pens and ink and paper, and so averse to believing that any rational soul could feel any otherwise in regard to them, that I willingly forgot you as the dear delightful scribe you are, and resolved until I was recruited, to remember you only as the idle, lazy, artistic, sympathetic, lounging, enjoying, suffering, but undoing devotee of the *dolce far niente,* which you sometimes — in very warm weather, for example — reveal yourself to be. . . .

We are off to Paris on the 3d of June . . . and we are now beginning the bustle of preparation for departure from these hospitable shores. We have really met with great kindness here, have made many acquaintances which one would gladly cherish, and on the whole have seen much that is admirable and lovable in brother Bull, and especially in sister Cow. There is no nobler ingredient going into the new humanity, than that which comes out of these shy, sullen, honest men, and these ill-drest, energetic, long-striding and unaffected women. . . . Remember me to all our friends, especially Ripleius. I have made an allusion to him, tell him, in a new edition of my tract on the church, just published here. Good-bye, and receive my wife and Aunt Kate's love for you and Mary, and believe me ever my dear, *dear* old friend yours *faithfully,*

H. J.

The following letter from "Ripleius" — George Ripley, fellow student with James at Princeton, and one of his closest friends for forty years — bears testimony not only to James's gift of friend-

ship, but to the respect in which he was held by one who was the friend of great men and himself of no mean stature.

New York, Oct. 18, 1875

My dear James, —

Your truly welcome letter reached me this time in due season, and if I have delayed replying to it for a few days, it is not because your expressions of friendship are not unspeakably precious, far more in fact than I deserve, or had any reason to expect. I know your kindly nature always leads you to idealize your friends, and while I am conscious that I fall far short of your gracious portraiture, it presents a standard at which, I confess, I have always aimed, though I have never reached it. My respect for your opinion might prompt me to accept your judgment as a proof of merit, were I not so painfully conscious how wide is the distance between aspiration and attainment. One thing I shall always take pleasure in, which is that my almost life-long acquaintance with you (at least the best part of my life) has enabled me to appreciate abilities which I did not share, and that the superiority of your gifts has never impaired the sincerity or the freedom of our friendship. Much to my surprise, I now find myself quite an old man; but in recalling my younger days, I have no brighter recollections than those of the hours I have passed in your society, in the study of your works, and the experience of your never-failing sympathy and kindness. I rejoice in the gleam of "sunshine," which your words have given me, and though I am always at fault in the command of expression, I am ever, dear Henry James, with the most cordial attachment, your devoted old

RIPLEIUS

The curious quality of James's friendships, as of his human relations generally, was not a temperamental accident, but sprang from that truth which was his life. He believed that mankind was one and divine, and that the weakness of mortals constituted a phase in their spiritual progress. Though he might see the individual's weakness with a discerning eye and describe it with telling epithets, he also saw beyond it to the mankind which he loved. All of his quarrels were family quarrels. Hence he could combine reprobation with indulgence — with jollity and warm affection, and even

with respect. Such was his magnanimity that he could reconcile passionate loyalty to his ideas with a most delicate avoidance of pressing them either intrusively or despotically upon others.[39] He had uncompromising convictions and an unusual power both of advocacy and of denunciation, but so strong was his humanity that nothing aroused real hostility in him — except inhumanity. Otherwise difference of opinion might excite his condemnation but not his resentment. It was because of his offended humanity that with Dr. Holmes he "backed very heartily" Mrs. Stowe's defense of Lady Byron.[40] It was because of his humanity that he lost his sense of humor long enough to find fault (he, of all persons!) with the severity of Wilkinson's animadversions upon the clergy and the philosophers; and to reproach James T. Fields for "slaying his young" in the *Atlantic Monthly*.[41] It was his humanity, his warm and outwardly expressive humanity, that was offended by the English character. The following letter was written to his old friend Edmund Tweedy in acknowledgment of Emerson's *English Traits*, which had just appeared: —

Paris, Sept. 14, 1856

My dear Tweedius, —

Many thanks for Emerson! It came in most apropos to a great desire which I felt after it, and which had led me to go down to the Palais Royal bookseller the day before to look after it, but in vain. I am somewhat disappointed now that I have read it; the appreciation is so overdone. The study has been too conscientious. The manners — the life — he was investigating, have n't the depth either for good or evil he attributes to them. His own stand-point is too high to do justice to the English. They are an intensely vulgar race, high and low; and their qualities, good or evil, date not from any divine or diabolic *depths* whatever, but from most obvious and superficial causes. They are the abject slaves of routine, and no afflatus from above or below ever comes, apparently, to ruffle the surface of their self-complacent quietude. They are not worth studying. The prejudices one has about them, even when they are

[39] This was very notably illustrated by his attitude to his children. *Cf. N.S.B.*, 157.

[40] J. T. Morse, *Life and Letters of Oliver Wendell Holmes*, II, 228. The reference is to Mrs. Stowe's article, "The True Story of Lady Byron's Life," *Atlantic*, XXIV (1869).

[41] *N.S.B.*, 52.

unjust, are scarcely worth correcting. There is nothing better supplied by the actual truth of the case, to put in the place of them. They belong, all their good and their evil, to the past humanity, to the infantile development of the mind, and they don't deserve, more than any other European nation, the least reverence from a denizen of the new world. They are a solider, manlier race than the French, according to the old ideas of manhood: that is, they do not lie, cheat, commit adultery and murder with half so much good-will: but of the spiritual causes out of which these evil things proceed, pride and self-love and the love of domineering, they have their full share, and perhaps more than most other people. They lack heart. Their love is clannish. They love all that wear their own livery, but they don't even *see* anyone outside of that boundary.

Mrs. Cranch [42] wondered the other day, upon some new experiences of French perfidy, "what the Lord *would* do with these French people." I wonder what He will do with any European people. Or rather I don't wonder: for I see that they are all destined to be recast and remoulded into the form of a new and *de-nationalized* humanity, a universal form which, being animated by God's own infinite spirit, the spirit of human fellowship, will quickly shed all the soils it has contracted in the past. Thackeray was in here yesterday, and told Mary that he had just heard of an atrocious thing that happened to two American friends of his, by the name of Duncan, two very handsome women he said, or at least one was so: they had been invited to dine the day before with some English grandee living in Paris, and when they entered the drawing-room they were introduced to nobody, nor was any person requested by host or hostess to see them to the table, in consequence of which they were left, when the company were summoned to dinner, swinging their feet upon a sofa, until two good-natured fellows, looking back at them, and pitying their desolate state, returned and escorted them to the table. They ought to have left the house instead, for no milder hint will penetrate either Mr. Bull's or Mrs. Cow's hide, and bad manners will consequently maintain the ascendant. American disorder is sweet beside European order: it is so full of promise. But that reminds me that I sent last week a letter to the London *Leader,* headed "The Order in American Disorder"; and yesterday's *Leader*

[42] Mrs. Christopher P. Cranch, whose husband, having passed from poetry and preaching to painting, was at this time living in Paris.

has just come to hand with the letter shockingly mutilated. . . .

Good-bye, my dear old Tweedius, and believe me ever faithfully yours,

H. J.

The same painful impression of the English, received in 1855 and 1856, also inspired the following passage: —

"I lived, recently, nearly a year in St. John's Wood in London, and was daily in the habit of riding down to the city in the omnibus along with my immediate neighbours, men of business and professional men, who resided in that healthy suburb, and fared forth from it every morning to lay up honest, toilsome bread for the buxom domestic angels who sanctified their homes, and the fair-haired cherubs who sweetened them. Very nice men, to use their own lingo, they were, for the most part; tidy, unpretending, irreproachable in dress and deportment; men in whose truth and honesty you would confide at a glance; and yet, after eight months' assiduous bosom solicitation of their hardened stolid visages, I never was favoured with the slightest overture to human intercourse from one of them. I never once caught the eye of one of them. If ever I came nigh doing so, an instant film would surge up from their more vital parts, if such parts there were, just as a Newport fog suddenly surges up from the cold remorseless sea, and wrap the organ in the dullest, fishiest, most disheartening of stares. They took such extreme pains never to look at one another, that I knew they must be living men, devoutly intent each on disowning the other's life; otherwise I could well have believed them so many sad well-seasoned immortals, revisiting their old London haunts by way of a nudge to their present less carnal satisfactions." [43]

[43] *Social Significance of Our Institutions*, 14, 15.

VII

FATHER AND SON: STYLE AND CRITICISM

For James the most natural form of art, if art it can be called, was talk. Of all the arts, unless it be dancing, talk is the directest and most contemporaneous form of expression, the least detached and externalized. It is infused with bodily heat: like a blush or a gesture it reflects the feeling and the insight of the moment as it passes. The style of the natural talker is emphatic and mobile — meant to be listened to, with a brief and constantly shifting focus of attention, and not designed for contemplation. When this style is transferred from the spoken to the written word, it takes on an aspect of exaggeration, so that while James's talk was full-blooded, his writing at times seems plethoric. Nevertheless, as representing style of this intensely vital sort, he ranks high among English writers, despite the forbidding character of his subject matter. It is doubtful if Carlyle or Melville [1] could have done better with James's theme. He was a humane Carlyle, an optimistic Melville, writing on theology and metaphysics.

His two elder sons, to each of whom style was a vocation, have set down their impressions of their father's peculiar quality. His books, resembling his talk and his character, could not fail, says Henry, "to flush with the strong colour, colour so remarkably given and not taken, projected and not reflected, colour of thought and faith and moral and expressional atmosphere." [2] We find him, says William, "in the effortless possession of that style . . . which, to its great dignity of cadence and full and homely vocabulary, united a sort of inward palpitating human quality, gracious and tender, precise, fierce, scornful, humorous by turns, recalling the rich vascular temperament of the old English masters, rather than that of an American of today." [3]

[1] It so happens that Melville attended the Albany Academy shortly after H.J.'s. *Cf.* C. H. Grattan, *op. cit.*, 18, 24.

[2] *N.S.B.*, 163.

[3] *L.R.H.J.*, 9.

Wilkinson not only knew James but could himself vibrate to the same pitch. "As to the style and manner of your paper," he wrote to his friend in 1850, "it is the best that I have seen even from you; full of consecutiveness, throwing up the right images in the right places, and warm and stroke-full with your choicest blood and animal spirits." And, later, "If eulogy were necessary, I could tell you how I have been dragged along at the chariot-wheels of your snorting-sentences, with my hair all streaming out behind, while you were lashing on the speed in front; an attempt too ineffectual, to go my own way, while fastened by the feet to your impetuosity." [4]

The visceral quality of James's style must not be taken to mean a lack of artistry. He had what can only be described as a *command* of the English language. He creates the impression of using language, or even of abusing it, rather than of accommodating himself to it. He departs from accepted usage in phrase and word, but always willfully — as though to say, "This is mine, and I may do with it what I like." Or, if this makes his procedure appear more self-conscious than it was, then let us say that in the heat of his conviction language was melted out of its stereotyped forms and remoulded or even amalgamated to his thought. Artful he certainly was not. But he had the artist's gift and the artist's flair. Once started on a period he elaborated and embroidered with evident creative joy. He let himself go.

He had a special, almost obsessive, interest in portraiture, and this sometimes betrayed him. The following letter from Dr. Holmes refers to James's acknowledged gift of representation: —

Boston, April 27, 1881

My dear Mr. James, —

You must let me, for my own sake, tell you what keen delight I enjoyed in reading your paper on Carlyle in the *Atlantic*.[5] It is a very long time since any article in any of the reviews and magazines which now hold so much of the boldest and most brilliant thought of the time has given me so many thrills of pleasure. There is a great deal of truth to be told about Carlyle, who, whatever else he was, had the one quality of being an *interesting* character to study.

[4] The references are to James's *Moralism and Christianity;* the former to Lecture I, "The Divine Man," as it appeared in the *Massachusetts Quarterly;* the latter to the book as a whole.

[5] *Atlantic,* XLVII (1881).

One portrait cannot give the whole of him, but for a single portrait I doubt if any will be as effective, as well as truthful, as your own. If Rembrandt were alive to add his face as he would paint it, the pen and the brush would seem to belong together. Faithfully and sincerely yours,

O. W. HOLMES

Rembrandtesque he no doubt was, but without that master's balance. He seized some aspect of his subject which coincided with his present emphasis of feeling or conviction, and subordinated the rest. Hence, while his portraits were bold, their coloring was sometimes livid, and their extravagant emphasis gave them the quality of a cartoon or even of a caricature.

Despite his acknowledged mastery of style, it was a common complaint that James was obscure. He spoke and wrote as one having a message too great for his powers of expression. Benjamin Paul Blood, of Amsterdam, New York, whom we shall meet again as one of William James's discoveries, wrote to the latter in 1882: "I have a fancy for your family name. The first man of genius I ever saw alive was Henry James. It is a long while ago. He preached in the Presbyterian Church here. I received the impression that he was not a regular minister. And I forget the topic, but he seemed overpowered at the impossibility of uttering something. I remember that he thrilled me, and was badly 'enthused' himself. But he had that knack of saying the whole of a thing in a few words that has since been a study with me. . . ."

"Oh, that I might thunder it out," James once exclaimed, "in a single interjection that would tell the *whole* of it, and never speak a word again!"[6] Despite that gift for instantaneous wholeness to which Blood testifies, he found himself compelled to return again and again to the same task, and neither he nor his audience ever felt that he had said what it was in him to say. Obscurity was the price he paid for being a philosopher. Both his talk and his writing were the vehicle of his ideas, and these ideas were inherently difficult to grasp. He was not satisfied to communicate anything less than their full depth and subtlety. No one could understand him who was not prepared to think as searchingly and as boldly as he did. There were many, therefore, who found his manner and his

[6] *L.R.H.J.*, 16.

wit entertaining but were baffled by his doctrines, feeling that there was a recondite and hidden meaning that escaped them — as indeed there was.

James's very versatility hampered his achievement. His son Henry felt his style was "too philosophic for life, and at the same time too living . . . for thought." [7] His doctrinal and intellectual preoccupation stood in his way not only as a man of letters, but as a practical or emotional leader of men; he was too dialectical to be a seer, and too fervid and dogmatic to be a philosopher of the modern critical school; while as to being the founder of a new religion, he had, alas! too good a sense of humor.

That William James resembled his father in personal flavor and genius is unescapable. It was said of his father that he was "aninted with the isle of Patmos" [8] — that he was, in other words, both Hibernian and apocalyptic. The son was not apocalyptic, but he was Hibernian. Like his father he was warm-blooded, effervescent, and tenderly affectionate. Both men were unstable and impatient, though in neither case did this quality prevent long periods of intense and fruitful application. Alice James testified to this common quality of her father and her brother. She was writing in 1889 of William's European wanderings: "William, instead of going to Switzerland, came suddenly back from Paris and went home, having, as usual, exhausted Europe in a few weeks, finding it stale, flat and unprofitable. The only necessity being to get home, the first letter after his arrival, was, of course, full of plans for his return *plus* wife and infants; *he is just like a blob of mercury* — you can't put a mental finger upon him. Harry and I were laughing over him, and recalling Father, and William's resemblance (in his ways) to him. Though the results are the same, they seem to come from such a different nature in the two; in William, an entire inability or indifference to 'stick to a thing for the sake of sticking,' as someone said of him once; whilst Father, the delicious infant! could n't submit even to the thralldom of his own whim; and then the dear being was such a prey to the demon homesickness." [9]

According to the daughter's judgment the cause in the father's

[7] *N.S.B.*, 180.
[8] Howe, *op cit.*, 47.
[9] *L.W.J.*, I, 289–90.

case was a sort of rebelliousness against control, and in the son's case a chronic infirmity of will — the lack of a capacity for laborious routine. Beyond a similarity of temperamental physiognomy which is immediately recognizable, any explanation in terms of deeper biological causes must remain entirely speculative. Both were fond of laughter. Both were men of extreme spontaneity, with a tendency to embellishment and immoderate affirmation; both were mobile or even erratic in a degree that made it impossible for them to drive readily in harness or to engage easily in organized, long-range, institutionalized activity.

Based on this sameness are two marked differences. The father was fundamentally robust, the son relatively frail, with long periods of bodily disability and neurasthenia. There was more of sheer aboriginal force in the father, while the son depended more on the temper and edge of his instruments. The other difference is no less unmistakable, but more difficult to describe. The father was, as we have seen, an eccentric. His originality was more self-contained — he conceded less. William James was more mundane, more highly socialized, and had more of what men call "taste." He had queer ideas, but *he* was not queer. With all his philosophical detachment he knew instinctively how to meet the world on its own terms, how to make himself understood, and how to be free and spirited without ever transgressing the accepted norms of convention or polite intercourse. While the father had his moments of spiritual inebriety, the son was more securely restrained. There was a warm and explosive emotionality in both men, but in the son the outward expression was further removed from the central fire — more highly elaborated and more subtly controlled.

Their similarity of temperament predisposed father and son to the same style of utterance. William was also a talking writer, with a genius for picturesque epithets, and a tendency to vivid coloring and extreme freedom of manner. William, too, was one who wrote primarily in order to express convictions, giving the result a peculiar quality of sincerity. Like his father he presented philosophy in the form of literature, and invited the attention of lovers of literature, who thereupon found themselves unequal to the philosophy. Hence W. D. Howells, accustomed to literature rather than to philosophy, found that William's *Pragmatism* was brilliant but not clear, "like his father, who wrote the Secret of Swedenborg and

kept it." [10] Both, when once launched upon the expression of a conviction, became interested in the expression for its own sake, and were also disposed to exaggeration by a sort of gathering enthusiasm, as though the blood were warmed by exercise. But while both were necessarily obscure to the one who, finding entertainment and looking for more of it, was in no mood to think metaphysically, there was a difference. The son might be puzzling, but he was not, like the father, recondite or cryptic. He had a better control of his instrument and an infinitely better understanding of his audience. The father was quite capable of delivering jeremiads to an unhearing or even unlistening age; the son would have found any unreciprocal and noncommunicating relation intolerable.

The outstanding fact is the son's loving admiration of his father as a man. It was not only a filial love — it was an idealizing love. He loved the kind of man his father was. And such being the fact he could not fail to grow like him, in his habits, his feelings, his appraisals, his attitudes. There is a letter written by William four days before his father's death and never read by him to whom it was addressed: —

"In that mysterious gulf of the past into which the present soon will fall and go back and back, yours is still for me the central figure. All my intellectual life I derive from you; and though we have often seemed at odds in the expression thereof, I 'm sure that there 's a harmony somewhere, and that our strivings will combine. What my debt to you is goes beyond all my power of estimating, — so early, so penetrating and so constant has been the influence. . . . As for us; we shall live on each in his way, — feeling somewhat unprotected, old as we are, for the absence of the parental bosoms as a refuge, but holding fast together in that common sacred memory. We will stand by each other and . . . try to transmit the torch in our offspring as you did in us, and when the time comes for being gathered in, I pray we may, if not all, some at least, be as ripe as you. As for myself, I know what trouble I 've given you at various times through my peculiarities; and as my own boys grow up, I shall learn more and more of the kind of trial you had to overcome in superintending the development of a creature different from yourself, for whom you felt responsible. I say this merely to show how my *sympathy* with you is likely to grow much livelier,

[10] Quoted by C. E. Norton in *Letters*, 1913, II, 379.

rather than to fade — and not for the sake of regrets. . . . It comes strangely over me in bidding you good-bye how a life is but a day and expresses mainly but a single note. It is so much like the act of bidding an ordinary good-night. Good-night, my sacred old Father! If I don't see you again — Farewell! a blessed farewell!" [11]

Turning from the man to his ideas, it is natural to speak first of the elder James as a critic. He criticized by the application of his doctrines, and this procedure was peculiarly characteristic of him. But in his criticism, much of it impromptu, his doctrines appear in the closest fusion with his personal traits.

First of all, he *was* a critic, an inveterate critic, both of men and of ideas. Criticism pervaded his talk; and the interest of his talk lay largely in the fact that he had emphatic, startling, not to say sensational, opinions on any topic that arose. In stating these opinions he was no respecter of persons. Never was a man more opinionative than he who believed that "the curse of mankind, that which keeps our manhood so little and so depraved, is its sense of selfhood, and the absurd, abominable opinionativeness it engenders!" [12] "Truth," he said, is "essentially combative" — and he evidently rejoiced in the fact.[13]

The following random recollections of Mrs. James T. Fields will convey something of the quality of the criticism that came most naturally to his lips: "Mr. James looked like an invalid, but was full of spirit and kindness. He not infrequently speaks severely of men and things. Analysis is his second nature. . . . He did n't fail to whip the pusillanimous clergy, and as the room was overstocked with them, it was odd to watch the effect. Mr. James is perfectly brave, almost inapprehensive, of the storm of opinion he raises." He seemed to take a special pleasure in baiting Bronson Alcott, whether in his presence or in his absence: "They got into a great battle about the premises, during which Mr. Alcott talked of the Divine paternity as relating to himself, when Mr. James broke in with, 'My dear sir, you have not found your *maternity* yet. You are an egg half hatched. The shells are yet sticking about your

[11] Dec. 14, 1882; printed in full in *L.W.J.*, I, 218–20.
[12] *L.R.H.J.*, 62.
[13] *The Church of Christ Not an Ecclesiasticism*, 1854, 3.

head.' To this Mr. Alcott replied, 'Mr. James, you are *damaged goods* and will come up *damaged goods* in eternity.' . . . He [Mr. James] said: 'In Mr. Alcott the moral sense was wholly dead, and the æsthetic sense had never yet been born!' " [14]

In his journal for August 1853, Emerson refers to James's criticism of Thackeray, who was at that time in New York: "In New York, Henry James quoted Thackeray's speeches in society, 'He liked to go to Westminster Abbey, to say his prayers,' etc. 'It gave him the comfort, — blest feeling.' . . . He thought Thackeray could not see beyond his eyes, and has no ideas, and merely is a sounding-board against which his experiences thump and resound: he is the merest boy." [15]

Two more examples of James's free handling of personalities, the first in a letter to Mrs. James T. Fields: "I am reading Theodore Parker's life with edification. I can't help feeling continually what a capital thing it had been for Theodore if he could only once or twice have honestly suspected what a poor puddle after all his life was, even when it most reflected his busy activity. But this is strictly between ourselves, as the saints must have public reverence."

The second is extracted from a letter written in 1868 to Wilkinson, who has just seen Elizabeth Peabody in London: "Elizabeth Peabody is a very odd personage in every point of view, as you must have observed; but her judgment in my estimation is her feeblest part. She is enthusiastic for everything exceptional, and has a contempt for the commonplace which will condemn her to dark corners to all eternity, if she does n't look out betimes." [16]

As can easily be imagined, James's methods of criticism have not always been approved. Referring to the relatively flattering picture of Hawthorne contained in the Saturday Club letter of 1861,[17] Hawthorne's biographer speaks of "the late Henry James" as "a humorous rhetorician, over-frank in his besprinkling of adjectives, which sometimes escaped the syringe at random, and hit no mark." [18] It will be recalled that in speaking of his friend's harsh

[14] Howe, *op. cit.*, 79, 80, 76, 82.
[15] Bliss Perry, *op. cit.*, 263.
[16] Elizabeth Palmer Peabody was an important figure in the Boston circle of reformers, one of the founders of the kindergarten movement in America, editor of *Æsthetic Papers*, and author of *Reminiscences of Dr. Channing*.
[17] *Cf.* above, 88.
[18] F. B. Sanborn, "The Friendships of Hawthorne," in *The Hawthorne Centenary*, 1905, 192.

comments on Carlyle, Emerson accused him of a "passion for perversity." But James's attacks were neither random nor perverse. They were reckless, but they invariably had a meaning and pointed a moral. They were for the most part directed against arrogance or complacency. As William James said, "Nothing so endlessly besotted in Mr. James's eyes, as the pretension to possess personally any substantive merit or advantage whatever, any worth other than your unconscious uses to your kind! Nothing pleased him like exploding the bubbles of conventional dignity, unless it was fraternizing on the simplest and commonest plane with all lowly persons whom he met. To exalt humble and abase proud things was ever the darling sport of his conversation, — a conversation the somewhat reckless invective humor of which, when he was in the *abasing* mood, often startled the good people of Boston, who did not know him well enough to see the endlessly genial and humane intuition from which the whole mood flowed." [19]

William James went on to quote the opinion that his father's "abasing" was at bottom an abasement of himself: "He was of such an immense temperament, that when you took him to task for violating the feelings of others in his talk, he would score you black and blue for your distinctions; and all the while he made you feel that the origin of the matter was his divine rage with *himself* at still being so dominated by his natural selfhood which would not be shaken off. I have felt in him at times, away down at bottom of the man, so sheer a humility and self-abasement as to give me an idea of infinity." [20] In other words, there is a phase of spiritual development in which man must first learn to despise the very selfhood which he has first to acquire; and James's amiable ferocity was an exercise in contempt for selfhood, on his own part and in behalf of others. I have been tempted to say that his attacks were impersonal. Perhaps it would be better to say that they were *merely* personal, for he continued to smile lovingly upon the universal humanity incarnate in the individual object of his disapprobation.

If there was an implied philosophy in James's extemporaneous derogation of persons, there was an explicit philosophy in his more deliberate criticism. There was, in the first place, a clearly recognizable attitude to art. Inasmuch as, of his two oldest sons, William

[19] *L.R.H.J.*, 75–6.
[20] *L.R.H.J.*, 76.

had a predilection for the art of painting and Henry for the art of letters, this was a matter of some importance in the domestic circle. Fundamentally, James's disparagement of art expressed his sense of the overwhelming importance of religion. This, I take it, underlay his reiterated opinion that art was too "narrowing" — literature, or any other art, is so much less than life! His comments on Italy suggest that he had a weakness for art. He was writing in 1869 to his son Henry, who was then discovering Italy and was overwhelmed with shameless joy. In its half-guilty turning from pleasing spectacles to reform and salvation, this passage is as profoundly characteristic of the son William as of his father: —

"It is very good to get your first impressions of Rome, and I can sympathize with you very fully. I feel that I myself should be horribly affected there by the historical picturesque. I should be extremely sensitive to it objectively, and would therefore all the more revolt from it subjectively, as hearing underneath it all the pent-up moaning and groaning soul of the race, struggling to be free or to come to consciousness. I am glad on the whole that my lot is cast in a land where life does n't wait on death, and where consequently no natural but only an artificial picturesque is possible. The historical consciousness rules to such a distorted excess in Europe that I have always been restless there, and ended by pining for the land of the future exclusively. Condemned to *remain* there I should stifle in a jiffy." [21]

The failure of art consists in being spiritually sterile — a mere reiteration of nature and echo of worldliness: "It is melancholy to see the crawling thing which society christens art, and feeds into fawning sycophancy. It has no other conception of art than as polished labor, labor stripped of its jacket and apron, and put into parlor costume. The artist is merely the aboriginal ditcher refined into the painter, poet, or sculptor. Art is not the gush of God's life into every form of spontaneous speech and act; it is the talent of successfully imitating nature — the trick of a good eye, a good ear, or a good hand. It is not a really infinite life, consubstantiate with the subject and lifting him into ever new and unpremeditated powers and achievements; it is an accomplishment, a grace to be learned, and to be put off and on at one's convenience. Accordingly society establishes academies of art, gives out rules for its prosecu-

[21] For letters of H.J.[s] written from Italy at this time, *cf.* below Ch. XVIII.

tion, and issues diplomas to the artist, by which he may be visibly discriminated from ordinary people. But always on this condition, that he hallow, by every work of his hands, its existing prejudices and traditions; that he devote his perfectly docile genius to the consecration of its morality." [22]

Furthermore, the artist is peculiarly prone to commit the cardinal sin of attaching importance to himself. The following extract is from a letter written by James in 1854 to his niece, Catharine James, who has asked his help in behalf of a friend with literary ambitions: —

"I suppose your friend would n't thank me for any advice on the general subject of making literature a profession, and accordingly I will keep any I might otherwise have to give, diligently to myself. But I may say to *you,* once and away, that literary leisure does not seem to me a boon to be highly coveted. The literary class, as a class, are not respected, because they are not respectable. Individuals among them, like Mr. Irving, Miss Sedgwick, Mr. Emerson, and a few others, all of whom could be easily named, adorn the profession by their own honesty and uprightness, but literary people are generally very despicable. Their 'motive power' is intellectual vanity for the most part, and the machinery by which it works is lying, theft, fraud and every species of unmanliness and unwomanliness. If you knew the literary people I know, people of name, moreover, you would sicken at the words. There are two very bad things in this American land of ours, the worship of money and the worship of intellect. Both money and intellect are regarded as good in themselves, and you consequently see the possessor of either eager to display his possessions to the public, and win the public recognition of the fact. But intellect is as essentially *subordinate* a good as money is. It is good only as a minister and purveyor to right affections, and whenever therefore it puts on airs of independence, and frequents public places, it is as sad and vulgar a sight as to see the kitchen-maid exalted to the parlour, and diffusing the aroma of her culinary presence over the sacred precinct."

In attacking art as it exists, James, like Plato, was thinking of art as it ought to be. A fundamental fault of what the world calls art, and esteems as such, is its divorce from honest conviction. Speaking of Swedenborg, he said: "There seems a ludicrous incongruity,

[22] *Moralism and Christianity,* 63–4.

for example, between his grim, sincere performances and the enamelled offspring of Mr. Tennyson's muse, or the ground-and-lofty-tumbling of an accomplished literary acrobat like Macaulay. It is evident that he himself never once dreamed of conciliating so dainty a judgment. It would be like tying the mainsail of a man-of-war by a cambric handkerchief. His books are a dry, unimpassioned, unexaggerated exposition of things he daily saw and heard in the world of spirits, and of the spiritual laws which these things illustrate; with scarcely any effort whatever to blink the obvious outrage his experiences offer to sensuous prejudice, or to conciliate any interest in his reader which is not prompted by the latter's own original and unaffected relish of the truth." [23]

The true artist, then, will "give natural body to spiritual conception"; he will work "only to satisfy an inspiration, thus from attraction, and therefore divinely" — his business being "to glorify MAN in nature and in men." But art, even in the higher sense, must always be inadequate: "The poet, painter or musician is not the perfect man, the man of destiny, the man of God, because the perfect man is so pronounced by his life or action rather than by his production. He is not constituted perfect by any work of his hands however meritorious, but simply by the relation of complete unity between his inward spirit and his outward body, or what is better, between his ideas and his actions." [24]

Such being James's theory of art and literature, his considered judgments of literary men will naturally turn on the extent to which these are vehicles of truth. Thus Thackeray was ignorant of true religion, but in creating Becky Sharp he builded better than he knew: "His philosophy of man is not up to his instincts. Thus in attempting to paint a very wicked woman, he, much to his own surprise, leaves her free of any hearty condemnation. . . . What is the explanation of this fact, whether Mr. Thackeray be aware of it or not? Why do we justify Becky in our inmost hearts, even while condemning her vicious methods? Because it is entirely transparent throughout the book that her evils have not their source in herself, but only in her externally defective fellowship with others. . . . Her whole life was a struggle to get a position, to become herself, to burst the sepulchral environment in which she was born, and come

[23] *Substance and Shadow*, 104.
[24] *Lectures and Miscellanies*, 1852, 117, 118, 125, 126–7.

forth into God's genial and radiant air. You might as well expect a drowning man to respect the tails of your coat, if they come within his reach, as expect so vital a soul as this to rest content in that stifling atmosphere, or forego any chance, however conventionally denounced, of freeing herself from it. . . . No, it is sheer error to pronounce the actions ascribed to Becky in this book, *hers*. They were not hers. She was the hand that executed them, but the soul that animated or inspired them was the inharmonic society in which she was born and matured." [25]

As between Dickens and Thackeray, James preferred the latter. Dickens's moralism, being trite and shallow, must needs be seasoned with exaggeration: "Dickens has no suspicion of astral depths in man. Life is to him a pure surface, bounded on the north by the head, on the south by the belly, on the east by the heart, on the west by the liver, and whatsoever falls without these palpable limits is double-Dutch and moonshine. . . . When one's whole conception of the mystery and majesty of life is limited to the obvious antagonism of virtue and vice, of the church and the play-house, it is evident that the conception will not carry him a great way, and that the jaded palates of novel-readers will speedily crave a more piquant refection. Hence you find all Dickens's virtue to be necessarily tainted. His virtuous men are like game on the turn, appetising to a sophisticated taste, but revolting to a healthy one." [26]

The following letter to Turgenev [27] turns again on that idea of racial solidarity which must qualify our judgment of the individual. He likes Turgenev because he is radically pessimistic. Since the way to the heights leads through the depths, the sooner one descends to total disillusionment the sooner can one mount again to hope.

Cambridge, June 19, 1874

My dear Sir, —

It seems a pity that you should be ignorant of the immense appreciation your books have in this region, and the unfeigned delight they give to so many good persons. I am not myself a representative reader, but I have some leisure at least, which all your readers

[25] From a review of *Vanity Fair*, in the *Spirit of the Age*, edited by William H. Channing, I (1849), 50, 51.

[26] *N. Y. Tribune*, Nov. 13, 1852.

[27] There is no "correct" spelling of this name. The owner of the name himself, in his letters to H.J.[1] and H.J.[2], uses "Turgeniew," "Turgèniew," and "Tourguéneff."

have not got, and I may therefore without presumption perhaps, constitute myself your informant on their behalf. My son (Henry James, Jr., now in Europe) lately published a critical sketch of your writings in the *North American Review,* which I think he sent you a copy of. But this was only an individual token, and what I want to say to you is, that my son's high appreciation of your genius is shared by multitudes of very intelligent people here.[28] . . . Your books came out here some five or six years ago in German and French translations, and became known at once to a few appreciative readers, and in a very brief while made their way to the acquaintance of all the reading world. They have indeed made themselves so widely honoured, that whatever you write is now immediately translated for our periodicals, or for independent publication, and the only matter left for the public to differ about is the pronunciation of your name. And some recent events lead me to hope that even this controversy, though still lively, will not be as protracted, nor as envenomed as that over Homer's birthplace.

I think the verdict of the large circle of admirers you have in this place is, that the novel owns a new power in your hands, a deeper fascination than it ever before exerted. Doubtless in this realm also it is true, *vixere fortes ante Agamemnona.*[29] Men and women of great and surprising genius have made romance an instrument second only to the drama, as an educative power over the emotions. But it must be said of the greatest of these, that the most they do is, either like Scott to give us stirring pictures of human will *aux prises* with outward circumstance, and finally victorious over it; or else, like George Sand, Thackeray and George Eliot, to give us an idea of the enervating and palsying effect of social convention upon the conscience, in rendering men sceptical, self-indulgent and immoral. But you as a general thing strike a far deeper chord in the consciousness of your reader. You sink your shaft sheer through the world of outward circumstance, and of social convention, and shew us ourselves in the fixed grasp of fate, so to speak, or struggling vainly to break the bonds of temperament. Superficial critics revolt at this tragic spectacle, and pronounce you cynical. They mistake

[28] H.J.'s long review of Turgenev appeared in the *North Amer. Rev.,* CXVIII (1874). He praises the author's representation of life, leniently deprecates his pessimism, but does not make his father's point. For the later friendship between H.J.'s and Turgenev, *cf.* below 366, and consult Index of *L.H.J.*'

[29] Horace, Ode "To Lollius."

the profound spirituality of your method, and do not see that what touches the earnest heart of man, and fills it with divinest love and pity for its fellow-man, is infinitely more educative than anything addressed to his frivolous and self-righteous head.

Such, in a measure, is the tribute we pay your sympathetic genius, when we talk of you here in the evening on the piazza of the house, facing the setting sun. One of the young ladies present wonders whether an eye so at one with nature as yours, will ever do for American landscape what you have done for Russia; and her companion, whom I sometimes fancy is worthy to take her place beside some of your own heroines, wonders whether our humanity will ever be so defined as to justify an observer like you coming over to look at us. I can only emphasize their wonder by adding my own. But should you ever cross the ocean, you must not fail to come to Cambridge, and sit with us on the piazza in the evening, while you tell us between the fumes of your pipe what the most exercised and penetrating genius of the old world discerns, either of promise or menace for humanity in the civilization of the new.

Please look kindly on my intrusion, and believe me, my dear Sir, with the greatest esteem and admiration, yours,

HENRY JAMES

Turgenev's reply completes the incident, though it sheds no light save on the writer's modesty: —

Carlsbad, Aug. 10, 1874

My dear Sir, —

Three days ago I sent to J. Osgood, the editor of the *North American Review*,[80] a letter to your son, Mr. Henry James, Jr., whom I supposed in America; and today I receive your letter which you have addressed to my editor in Riga, Mr. E. Behre. My doctor has ordered me to Carlsbad, which seems to be very good for gouty people; and I have just had a violent attack in Russia, where I passed the last three months.

Your letter is too flattering by far, my dear Sir. I am very happy indeed to find such benevolent readers in America and I am proud of your sympathy; but you place me on a much too high level.

[80] J. Osgood was *publisher* of the *North Amer. Rev.* The editor at this time was Thomas Sergeant Perry.

Modesty is an awkward thing; people don't believe in its sincerity — and people are generally right: I hope it is not modesty, but an exact appreciation of my own faculties, which tells me that I am not *ejusdem farinæ* with Dickens, G. Sand or G. Eliot. I am very content to fill a second or even a third place after these truly great writers.

Nevertheless accept my heartfelt thanks for all the good and kind things you say to me in your letter; and let me assure you, that it would make me the greatest pleasure not to "smoke my pipe under your verandah" — I don't use tobacco — but to enjoy a quiet and pleasant conversation with the intelligent men and women of your society. Will this pleasure be ever realized? That I cannot say with certitude. I am rather too old now and too weak in health for undertaking such long journeys — but I still cherish the idea of a visit to your new world, so different from the old one. But all this is yet very uncertain. Believe me, my dear Sir, yours very truly,

IVAN TURGENIEW

Of much more serious importance was James's criticism of Emerson and Carlyle. It is natural to couple these two men together [31] as familiar divinities in the James household. Father and sons must deal with them, and each must settle his account. With the father they end by becoming symbols of partial truths, transcended in that completer truth of which he felt himself a vehicle. This completer truth was already outlined in his mind when he met them, and served as a standard by which they were judged: "Before I knew Emerson my intellect had been fully aroused to discern the great mystery of the spiritual creation, or the truth of incarnate Deity, and I never felt disposed, accordingly, to look upon Emerson in any other light than as a feeble, tentative first-fruits of a spiritual Divine resurrection in our nature which would one day be universal." In other words, James regarded Emerson as a spiritual manifestation, and not as a source of ideas. Even as an imitation of perfection, he could not satisfy James because of what the latter thought to be a personal incompleteness, an absence, namely, of "conscience." Emerson embodied innocence of the prenatal sort, rather than the

[31] "There's a surprisin' contrast between Emerson and me," said Carlyle — according to C. E. Norton. See the remarkable entry for May 15, 1873, in Norton's journal, in which he summarizes his conversation with Emerson on their return voyage from Europe. *Letters of C. E. Norton*, 1913, I, 502 ff.

seasoned blessedness that accrues from conflict and struggle. Having no conviction of sin, he was incapable of repentance, and therefore could not know that supreme joy of being united with God, which is the highest moment of life and the purpose of creation: —

"My recently deceased friend Mr. Emerson . . . never felt a movement of the life of conscience from the day of his birth till that of his death. . . . He appeared to be utterly unconscious of himself as either good or evil. . . . I am satisfied that he never in his life had felt a *temptation to bear false-witness* against his neighbour, *to steal, to commit adultery,* or *to murder;* how then should he have ever experienced what is technically called a conviction of sin? . . . I myself had known all these temptations — in forms, of course, more or less modified — by the time I was fourteen or fifteen years old; so that by the time I had got to be twenty-five or thirty (which was the date of my first acquaintance with Emerson) I was saturated with a sense of spiritual evil — no man ever more so, possibly, since I felt thoroughly *self*-condemned before God. . . . The only holiness which Emerson recognized, and for which he consistently lived, was innocence." [32]

Carlyle, like Emerson, was too little of a philosopher to satisfy James. "He is an artist, a wilful artist, and no reasoner. He has only genius." [33] But he differed from Emerson in being an extravagant manifestation of that very conscience which Emerson lacked. If Emerson was a premature synthesis, Carlyle was a belated antithesis. It was to Carlyle's credit that he recognized evil and pitted the moral will against it, but he never rose to that higher understanding in which their opposition is seen as the necessary condition of a fuller spiritual growth. Like the voice from the gallery that hisses the villain, he lacked an æsthetic sense of the dramatic whole: —

"The main intellectual disqualification, then, of Carlyle, in my opinion, was the absoluteness with which he asserted the moral principle in the human bosom, or the finality which his grim imagination lent to the conflict of good and evil in men's experience. He never had the least idea, that I could discover, of the true or intellectually educative nature of this conflict, as being purely ministerial to a new

[32] *L.R.H.J.*, 293, 294, 295–6, 299, 302. It will be noted that this was written, in part, at least, after Emerson's death, and therefore in 1882, the last year of James's life.

[33] Howe, *op. cit.*, 73.

and final evolution *of human nature itself* into permanent harmony with God's spiritual perfection. . . . On the contrary, he always expressed himself to the effect that the conflict was absolutely *valid in itself;* that it constituted its own end, having no other result than to insure to good men the final dominion of evil men, and so array heaven and hell in mere chronic or fossil antagonism. . . . He was mother Eve's own darling cantankerous Thomas, in short, the child of her dreariest, most melancholy old age; and he used to bury his worn, dejected face in her penurious lap, in a way so determined as forever to shut out all sight of God's new and better creation." [84]

In short, while Emerson was nonmoral, and Carlyle moral, the truth as James himself saw it was supermoral. The quality of Emerson's life was an anticipation of perfection, in its spontaneity and perfect faith. Carlyle, through the bitterness of his moral dualism, adds content but loses form. True blessedness is a higher flight in which the form is recovered and envelops the richer content.

It is clear that James did not conceal his opinions of men and of ideas, and although these opinions were not commonly addressed to his sons, they were overheard and taken to heart. When William wrote from Brazil in 1865, apropos of nothing but the current of his own nostalgic reverie, "I think Father is the *wisest* of all men whom I know," he meant that he trusted his father's impromptu judgment. It was the same trust which impelled him to write, immediately after his father's death: "It is singular how I 'm learning every day now how the thought of his comment on my experiences has hitherto formed an integral part of my daily consciousness, without my having realized it at all. I interrupt myself incessantly now in the old habit of imagining what he will say when I tell him this or that thing I have seen or heard." [85]

This sympathetic responsiveness to his father's habitual utterances accounts for two of William James's most characteristic habits of thought. In the first place, he had a constitutional distaste for orthodoxy. As soon as ideas became established, or were proclaimed with unction and airs of authority, they became repugnant. You could spoil any good thing for him by converting it into an institution. That was the way the elder James felt about Swedenborgianism and Christianity, and the younger about science. Closely as-

[84] *L.R.H.J.*, 457–8.
[85] *L.W.J.*, I, 60, 222.

sociated with this first attitude is a disposition to champion the weak and assail the strong. Look over the list of those whom William James attacked most severely, of those for whom he refused to make allowances, and they will prove to be men with some pride of office — some touch of insolence, smugness, self-importance, or complacency. In short, William, like his father, was sometimes in an "abasing mood."

How far William James shared, or was affected by, his father's judgment upon art will appear more clearly in the sequel. It belongs to the story of his vocation. Suffice it to say that his abandonment of painting for science and philosophy was in his father's favor, since it meant a search for truth and the use of style as a vehicle of ideas. We shall also learn more later of William James's opinions of literature, since these opinions came to clearest expression in his intercourse with his brother. But his attitude to Carlyle and Emerson concerns his relations with his father. These men were his father's friends and contemporaries, and they became known to the son through the medium of his father's highly interpretative and peculiarly personal characterization of them.

What gifts, then, did these fairy godfathers bestow on William James in his youth? Neither gave him his philosophy, both gave him precepts and apt quotations. They both influenced his style in his most impressionable period.[36] He responded to Emerson in his acquiescent or optimistic moods, to Carlyle in his warlike moods. In 1903 he reread Emerson extensively, "volume after volume," in preparation for his Centenary address at Concord. In that address he confirmed his father's opinion that Emerson was a seer rather than a thinker. What, then, did this seer see? For William James, Emersonian truth consisted essentially in the vision of a deeper unity behind multiple appearances. Even the individualism or nonconformism of Emerson, which was "the hottest side of him," was not pluralistic. If he separated one individual from other individuals morally, it was only to unite them all on their cosmic side, as being potentially "mouthpieces of the Universe's meaning."[37] This teaching is allied to James's teaching of the unique preciousness and valid claim of each individual, however obscure or despised; but

[36] For unmistakable, though seemingly unconscious Emersonian echoes in James, *cf.* F. I. Carpenter, "Points of Comparison between Emerson and William James," *New England Quarterly Review*, II (1929), 464, 466–9.

[37] *L.W.J.*, II, 190, 196–7; *Memories and Studies*, Longmans, Green, & Co., 1911, 25, 32.

it is a different teaching, divided by all that separates monism from pluralism. For whatever concessions William James made to monism, and he made many, he never conceded that the world had one meaning, indivisible and authoritatively perfect, of which human individuals are the channels. These reserves, together with the suggestion (again reminiscent of his father) that Emerson did not sound the depths of the religious experience, appear in the following letter to W. C. Brownell, written apropos of the latter's *American Prose Masters:* —

Cambridge, Sept. 2, 1909

Dear Mr. Brownell, —

I have read your splendid essay (on Emerson) and return it. . . . It seems to me wonderfully true both in its praise and its restrictions, but I think it might gain in places by a little consideration. . . . The word "religion" is very ambiguous, but there is an immense field of what it denotes that lay outside of Emerson's nature, so I agree with your strictures on Woodberry's claim.[38] I agree also entirely in your light estimate of his monistic metaphysics, and his Platonic philosophy in general. He evidently had no capacity whatever for metaphysic argument, but he found that certain transcendentalist and Platonic phrases *named* beautifully that *side* of the universe which for his soul (with its golden singing sense that the vulgar immediate is as naught relatively to the high and noble, gleeful and consoling life behind it) was all-important. So he abounded in monistic metaphysical talk which the very next pages belied. I see no great harm in the literary inconsistency. The monistic formulas do express a genuine direction in things, though it be to a great extent only ideal. His dogmatic expression of them never led him to *suppress the facts they ignored,* so no harm was done. (See, *e.g.*, the last couple of pages of his essay on history.[39]) Of course to me they seem simply *weak,* those Platonic formulas, but there are readers whom they inspire, so let them pass! . . .

Thanking you for the pleasure the essay has given me, I am very truly yours,

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[38] In his *Life of Emerson* (1907), George E. Woodberry had maintained that Emerson was essentially religious.

[39] In these pages Emerson stresses the irreducible (or at any rate unreduced) variety of life and nature — all that escapes the unities and generalizations of history. *Cf.* the Centenary Edition of Emerson's *Works,* II, 39–41.

The heat which he missed in Emerson, William James found in Carlyle. The essays published in 1898 under the title of *The Will to Believe* were composed in part as early as 1879, and they prove how deeply in his youth their author had drunk of Carlyle. When the moment of solution comes it is often Carlyle that provides the solvent. Especially is this true of the problem of evil, where the solution is found in the "gospel of work, of fact, of veracity." "The only escape," writes James, "is by the practical way. And since I have mentioned the nowadays much-reviled name of Carlyle, let me mention it once more, and say it is the way of his teaching. No matter for Carlyle's life, no matter for a great deal of his writing. What was the most important thing he said to us? He said: 'Hang your sensibilities! Stop your sniveling complaints, and your equally sniveling raptures! Leave off your general emotional tomfoolery, and get to WORK like men!' "

In adopting this gospel William James specifically and with deep conviction rejected that very solution which was his father's: the transcendence, namely, of moral distinctions in a higher or æsthetic flight of the spirit. The father had reproached Carlyle for grimly accepting the finality of the moral struggle; the son says, *with* Carlyle, that "it feels like a real fight." [40]

[40] *W.B.*, 61, 87, 173–4.

VIII

FATHER AND SON: PHILOSOPHICAL METHOD AND DOCTRINE

We have found that in proportion as we pass from temperament and personal traits to ideas, the influence of Henry James upon his son William becomes attenuated. When we turn to philosophy itself this thesis receives additional proof. First, a word as to their *conceptions* of philosophy, its purpose and method.

By his own contemporaries the elder James was commonly referred to as "the philosopher." When Thomas Carlyle, in parting with him, said, "James, I advise you to get rid of your metaphysics," he assumed that James had one. William James and his friend Shadworth Hodgson, on the other hand, agreed that the elder James was neither a philosopher nor a metaphysician — they accused him, in short, of much the same deficiency as that with which he himself charged Emerson and Carlyle!

Now there are a good many ways of being a philosopher or a metaphysician, and Henry James's was the way of conviction and intuition. This was not an inadvertence on his part. He *believed* in believing: "For he is far likelier to prove a wise man in the long run, whose negations are fed by his beliefs, than he whose beliefs are starved upon his negations." As to intuition, man has "an inward law or light telling him what good and evil, truth and falsity, respectively are, and so insuring all the possibilities of his spiritual destiny." "Truth indeed! How should a beggar like me be expected to discover it? How should any man of woman born pretend to such ability? Truth must *reveal itself* if it would be known; and even then how imperfectly known at best!" [1]

The upshot of it is that the deepest truth has to be lived and can never be adequately thought. When, in 1881, Hodgson read *Society the Redeemed Form of Man,* he wrote to William James, "It is

[1] *Substance and Shadow,* 445; "Faith and Science," *North Amer. Rev.,* CII (1865), 369; *L.R.H.J.,* 63.

not metaphysic; but it is fine, profound, and noble." [2] This comment was forwarded by James to his father, and evoked the following reply: —

"I send you *Mind* by post. And I enclose in this, Shadworth Hodgson's letter, which though conclusive against Renouvier and yourself, is still more conclusive against his own position, or shows his own fundamental weakness (intellectually) to be the substitution of logic for life, or the confounding of *being* with *knowing*. Truth, *in its infinitude,* can only be the creative truth, which is God's *natural* humanity, that is to say, his incarnation in our nature. Now when men conceive or reproduce this truth in themselves, like a woman conceiving children, they do so only by virtue of nature's coöperation, sensibly imprinting on their understanding certain fragmentary, imperfect, incomplete forms or seminal beginnings of truth. But when they *perceive* truth, they don't need this natural mediation; for they do it directly, or by its own light, reflected from the infinite *good* which *is* the *universal* heart of man. The first requisite, then, of a man being a philosopher, is not to *think,* however comprehensively or profoundly, but *to become a living man* by the actual putting away of selfishness from his heart. For philosophy is not a system of thought reflecting the universe — this part belongs to science; it is an actual life of God in man's finite consciousness, marrying the two poles of nature indissolubly together in a way forever to baffle and humiliate the scientific understanding. . . .

"Shadworth Hodgson is plainly a man very deeply interested in the problem of the divine life in man; otherwise he would not have got so far on as he has, looking down, as he does, from a *rightful* eminence upon all philosophers, so-called. But he lacks one thing more, which is: to sell all that he has, and frankly acknowledge God's omnipotence, which will at once spiritualize nature to him, and so release him from the vain contention . . . between monism and dualism by making it a contention of no intellectual meaning." [3] . . .

In 1885 William James sent to Hodgson a presentation copy of his work of filial piety; and received the following acknowledgment: —

[2] *Cf.* below, 619.
[3] Aug. 7 [1881].

London, Feb. 7, 1885

Dear James, —

I have delayed thanking you for the *Literary Remains* which you so kindly sent me, till I should have read the book, which I have now done. It has interested me extremely. Your own Introduction makes a great deal clear which would otherwise be very difficult to understand. You know, I think, that I had read previously the *Society the Redeemed Form of Man,* which (I imagine) your father was good enough to send me himself. So I was not wholly unprepared for the contents of the present book. What strikes me most forcibly and continually, as I read, is the reflection which constantly occurs to me: What a pity that all this deep and true insight into the moral and spiritual nature and wants and aspirations and faiths of man — man collectively — should be unaccompanied with a correspondingly complete framework of ideas and thoughts about the universe of things logically worked out and organised. The want of such a scheme of thought — a *philosophy,* in one word — is what makes the book, as also the *Society* book, such terribly hard, and in a sense unsatisfactory, reading. The *whole* thinking is done with the sole aid of *theological* terminology; I mean that the ideas dealt with are in the form which the religious sects or churches have preached to them from their pulpits and read to them from their Bibles. . . . I must say however one thing, — how exquisitely fresh and full and racy is your father's style of writing! It makes one wish to shriek with delight every now and then. . . . Ever most sincerely yours,

SHADWORTH H. HODGSON

Cambridge, Feb. 20, 1885

My dear Hodgson, —

Your letter of the 7th was most welcome. Anything responsive about my poor old father's writing falls most gratefully upon my heart. For I fear he found *me* pretty unresponsive during his lifetime; and that through my means any post-mortem response should come seems a sort of atonement. You would have enjoyed knowing him. I know of no one except Carlyle who had such a smiting *Ursprünglichkeit* of intuition, and such a deep sort of humor where human nature was concerned. He bowled one over in the same careless way. He was like Carlyle in being no *reasoner* at all, in

the sense in which philosophers are reasoners. Reasoning was only an unfortunate necessity of exposition for them both. His *ideas,* however, were the exact inversion of Carlyle's and he had nothing to correspond to Carlyle's insatiable learning of historic facts, and memory. As you say, the world of his thought had a few elements and no others ever troubled him. *Those* elements were very deep ones, and had theological names. Under "Man" he would willingly have included all flesh, even that resident in Sirius or etherial worlds. But he felt no need of positively looking so far. He was the humanest and most genial being in his impulses whom I have ever personally known, and had a bigness and power of nature that everybody felt. I thank you heartily for your interest. I wish that somebody could *take up* something from his system into a system more articulately scientific. As it is, most people will feel the *presence* of something real and true for the while they read, and go away and presently, unable to dovetail it into their own framework, forget it altogether.[4] . . .

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Truth is revealed to the heart. It cannot be "reasoned into" a man, but, being revealed, is freely and lovingly adopted.[5] This James professed. But being by temperament impatient, he was irresistibly impelled to help truth out and hasten its victory. Like all mystics when they turn advocates, he fell to formulating, reasoning, and arguing.

He seemed to be applying recondite truths to questions of the day, and to ignore the practical difficulties. For this Thoreau complained of him: "I met Mr. James the other night at Emerson's, at an Alcottian conversation, at which, however, Alcott did not talk much, being disturbed by James's opposition. The latter is a hearty man enough, with whom you can differ very satisfactorily, on account of both his doctrines and his good temper. He utters *quasi* philanthropic dogmas in a metaphysic dress; but they are for all practical purposes very crude. He charges society with all the crime committed, and praises the criminal for committing it. But I think that all the remedies he suggests out of his head — for he goes no farther, hearty as he is — would leave us about where we

[4] Printed in full in *L.W.J.*, I, 241–2.
[5] "Swedenborg's Ontology," *North Amer. Rev.*, CV (1867), 109.

are now. . . . It is not so easy a thing to sympathize with another, though you may have the best disposition to do it. There is Dobson over the hill. Have not you and I and all the world been trying, ever since he was born, to sympathize with him (as doubtless he with us), and yet we have got no farther than to send him to the house of correction once at least; and he, on the other hand, as I hear, has sent us to another place several times. . . . You and I are Dobson; what will James do for us?" [6]

It would have been more correct to say that James was offering metaphysical dogmas in philanthropic dress. His truths really belonged to another universe of discourse, and their homely application, instead of making them appear more intelligible, only added an aspect of paradox — giving to James's utterance something of the unreality of millennialists, who confuse eternity with the day after to-morrow.

He also offered metaphysical dogmas in *logical* dress. It was this union of mysticism and logic that impelled him toward that Hegelian dialectic of thesis, antithesis, and synthesis which makes a virtue of paradox. A man must first be alienated from God in order thereafter to be united with him. Although when thus formulated the process seems an unnecessarily indirect way of arriving at one's starting point, in the religious experience it has all the poignancy and rapture of the prodigal's return. William, too, felt a lifelong sympathy with mysticism, and came in later years to concede a modicum of insight to Hegel. But he was fundamentally an empiricist, pledging his fidelity to given facts, while his father was governed by an equal and opposite loyalty to the affirmations of his own inner consciousness. The father did not leave sense experience out of the account altogether, but he held that spiritual truths could be sensibly revealed only by "correspondence" and "symbolism." The use of these methods so pervaded his everyday discourse that his son Henry could write: "The literal played in our education as small a part as it perhaps ever played in any, and we wholesomely breathed inconsistency and ate and drank contradictions." [7]

It is evident that William James could not thrive in the same intellectual element with his father, or with those of his father's contemporaries who argued freely from analogy, took figures of speech

[6] *Familiar Letters of H. D. Thoreau,* edited by F. B. Sanborn, 1894, 402–3.
[7] *N.S.B.,* 235–6; *S.B.O.,* 216.

literally, and produced a blend of poetry and science which was neither the one nor the other. William contracted at an early age the scientist's standard of parsimony, which forbids one's spending more in the way of belief than one's income in the form of fact. It was not that he confined himself to this procedure, — he defended faith and speculation, and indulged in them freely, — but rather that he knew the difference, and was prevented by taste and training from mixing his forms. Although he took liberties with science, he had scientific scruples. To the father science was anathema, as were all those thinkers, Sir William Hamilton, Mansel, Herbert Spencer, Comte, Taine, and Mill, who tried to be scientific in philosophy. William's scientific training, on the other hand, predisposed him from his early years in favor of precisely these philosophers. Hence, however harshly he might criticize science elsewhere, before his father he was its champion. When, in 1868, he studied with Helmholtz at Heidelberg, he wrote that "in his company your despised child can well afford to let rebound the shafts of your ridicule." [8]

Shortly afterwards he wrote to his brother: "I have been reading *Moralism and Christianity* and *Lectures and Miscellanies*. Father is a genius certainly, — a religious genius. I feel it continually to be unfortunate that his discordance from me on other points, in which I think the fault is really his — his want or indeed absence of *intellectual* sympathies of any sort — makes it so hard for me to make him feel how warmly I respond to the positive side of him."

When William affirms that his father has no "intellectual sympathies," or that he is no "reasoner," or wishes something could be taken up from him into "a system more articulately scientific," he did not mean to deny that his father philosophized. He meant that his father did not *earn* his beliefs, but freely helped himself to them. "A sceptical state," said the elder James, "I have never known for a moment." [9] But philosophy in the modern and critical sense familiar to William *begins* with skepticism, and must perpetually be tested by it. It will, perhaps, be objected that William James was also a believer — that he credited the mystical experience, and that he accepted life as more revealing than thought. All this is true,

[8] *Cf.* below, 283.
[9] *N.S.B.*, 235.

but it only serves to emphasize the profound difference of philosophical method that divided him from his father. For William said none of these things either easily or loosely, but only after years of painstaking analysis and with their meanings scrupulously guarded and defined.

There remains one fundamental sense in which William James derived his philosophy unqualifiedly from his father. Immediately after his father's death he wrote: "For me, the humor, the good spirits, the humanity, the faith in the divine, and the sense of his right to have a say about the deepest reasons of the universe, are what will stay by me." [10] This insistence on having his "say about the universe" is the profoundest motive of William James's thinking, as well as of his filial gratitude.

As we turn from the method of philosophy to its doctrines, we find father and son divided by sharp differences. The philosophy of the elder James is essentially a *Christian* metaphysics; in other words, a philosophy in which the ideas of creation, incarnation, and redemption are employed, quite independently of their historic revelation, as providing a rational explanation of nature, man, and God. The doctrine is really indivisible, consisting in one essential and (to its author) all-revealing insight. It was because of this indivisibility that James was perpetually tortured by the feeling that he must give it out *all at once*. A philosophical insight, no matter how unified, must, if it is to serve its purpose, be elaborated and applied successively. But as it flashed upon James's inward eye there was just the one great and glorious truth, at the same time illuminating and exalting: God's division and alienation of himself for the sake of a free and loving reunion. In expounding this theme and in noting the points of William James's divergence, it will be convenient to consider first its more technical aspect — namely, the metaphysics of creationism; and later that aspect which lies closer to familiar experience, namely, its antimoralism, or transcendence in religious consciousness of the ordinary opposition between good and evil.[11]

The fundamental problem which confronts any creationist phi-

[10] *L.W.J.*, I, 221.

[11] I shall expound both of these topics freely, using such terms as "being," "existence," etc., in their vulgar senses. An admirable exposition may be found in Warren, *op. cit.*, which also contains some of the letters here published. For an earlier but accurate exposition *cf.* J. A. Kellogg, *Philosophy of Henry James*, 1883.

losophy is the problem of evil, or the problem of deriving what is not divine from God. "What people in general wish to know," says James, "is, not how God may justly condemn evil, but how the opportunity either for condemning or pardoning it arises under his perfect administration." [12] Why, if creativeness involves so great a difficulty, should one entertain the doctrine at all? Because, apparently, spirit is *essentially* creative; this is its prerogative, which places it first in the order of being and in the order of value. There is a second and more explicit reason. God is love, and this implies an object to love as well as to be loved by. As the Puritan metaphysics is a dramatization of justice, so the Swedenborgian metaphysics, as interpreted by James, is a dramatization of love; and of love in the sense of that passionate tenderness which, being the deepest trait of James the man, prescribes also the form of his piety.

Examining James's doctrine of creation more closely, we find that its central feature is man, who is the link between God and nature. "Nature, when philosophically regarded, expresses the lowest form of the human intelligence. . . . It is a mere hallucination of nascent intelligence." "It has no existence save to a finite intelligence, an intelligence whose knowledge is derived through the senses." [13] So long as the human mind pursues knowledge subject-object-wise, — that is, by sense and by logical systemizations, — there is no escape from naturalism. Such escape comes only through direct resort to that higher form of knowledge in which man is revealed to himself as spirit — individual, free, and creative. But in thus emancipating himself from nature, and declaring his rights as a spiritual being, the individual man first overreaches himself, denying his neighbor and his God. He achieves spirituality, in other words, by the very violence of his self-assertion. To correct this last and highest error is the office of religious insight. Having first achieved a self to surrender, man surrenders himself; his surrender being both loving and voluntary.[14]

Two features of James's view of creation are deserving of further

[12] *The Nature of Evil*, 51.

[13] "Faith and Science," *North Amer. Rev.*, CI (1865), 353; *Lectures and Miscellanies*, 332.

[14] The historic Christ is the prototype and symbol of this transition. He "let in eternal daylight upon the soul, by steadfastly expanding in his private spirit to the dimensions of universal humanity, so bringing, for the first time in history, the finite human bosom into perfect experimental accord with the infinite Divine love." (*L.R.H.J.*, 110–1).

remark — his insistence that creation is progressive, and his emphasis on its negative moment. Creation by God must result in the production of something Godlike. The creation is not finished, therefore, until the creature is perfected.[15] Hence creation is *going on now* in the gradual Godward development of the human race, the evidence of which is to be found in the growing sense of human solidarity. But creation also implies something which is *not* the creator. There must be something-not-yet-but-to-be-God — a void which God shall fill, a block which God shall fashion. This must be conceived as having a kind of existence, and yet such as shall not compromise the exclusive being of God. James attempts to meet the difficulty by saying that this other-than-God is appearance *taking* itself to *be,* relativity *mistaking* itself for absoluteness, or dependence *claiming* independence. In short, human impiety is an essential phase of creation.

Restating the doctrine in theological terms, we may say that it is a simplification of Calvinism. According to that older view, the creature springs perfect from the hand of God, and then, having sinned, is punished or redeemed. There are three movements in this process: a horizontal movement in which a sinless God creates a sinless man, a downward movement or fall, succeeded (in the case of the elect) by an upward movement or reconciliation to God. In James's theology, on the other hand, there are two and only two movements, down and up, or alienation and return. The fall is the beginning of creation, for a mere passage from perfection to perfection would be a meaningless repetition. And it is God himself who has fallen: God become ignorant and depraved, or God undone, in the illusory, carnal, and selfish moments of actual human experience.

Since the fall is God's own, and is not, as in Calvinism, an act of treason or ingratitude, the whole system of sentiments evoked by the older view is now out of place. There is no ground for divine wrath and vengeance, man is not "to blame," and God is not put in the ridiculous position of punishing the innocent Jesus in order that, his desire for revenge being assuaged, he may then acquit the guilty. The criminal and penal codes have no application to God's dealings

[15] Even for God there is no royal road to this consummation. "Creation is no brisk activity on God's part, but only a long patience or suffering." (*L.R.H.J.*, 38.)

with man, nor do they apply in any but a relatively superficial sense to human relations. All men, whatever their condition, are mere creatures — that is, manifestations of God at some level of negation or reaffirmation. In themselves and actually, they are equally nothing; in their potentiality, as vehicles of God, they are equally everything.

To this last aspect of James's thought, his tendency to belittle personal distinctions, we shall return presently, after considering the attitude of William James to the creationist metaphysics which has just been set forth. In Berlin during the autumn of 1867 William James read two of his father's articles, one on "Faith and Science," and the other on "Swedenborg's Ontology," [16] and wrote out his impressions at length in a series of letters. His own mind was as yet unformed, and he was predisposed by early influences as well as by the state of his health to acceptance of his father's saving faith. His dissent, prompted by scientific studies and proclivities which had already given him a standard of critical judgment, is therefore the more notable.[17]

The fundamental ground of divergence appears clearly in the last letter: "I cannot attain to any such 'inexpugnable testimony of consciousness to my spiritual reality' as that you speak of, and that must be a decisive moment in determining one's attitude toward such problems." In other words, the father feels conviction where the son does not. This is largely an effect of association. The terms which the one conjures with have no such magic for the other. The thoughts of the theologian, "interwoven through and through as they have been by long brooding," have acquired a "substantialness and vividness," and naturally take on a "positiveness and absoluteness of expression" to which the uninitiated and resistant mind of the younger man must fail utterly to respond. Where the one soars on the wings of faith, the other hesitantly treads, step by step, the rough and dubious path of critical knowledge. What is to the one all warmth and luminousness of insight is to the other only a begging of the question or a speculative leap.

The indictment is more specific. The creationist theory claims to be coherent, and may properly be judged as such. But it falls

[16] These had appeared in the *North Amer. Rev.*, CI (1865), and CV (1867).

[17] Inasmuch as they constitute the only extant record of a consecutive philosophical discussion between William James and his father, these letters, despite their abstruseness and defects of style, are reprinted below, Appendix I.

into serious contradictions. Nature is held to consist of appearances to man, while at the same time man himself evolves from nature, as something higher than the mineral or the plant. In what sense do those merely apparent prehuman stages of nature exist, since that to which they appear has not yet come into existence? We seem forced to say that while they seem now to have occurred, they never did occur. In short, our higher insight corrects and supersedes our lower. But then what becomes of man? He, too, only seems to exist — apart from God. It may be characteristic of man that he nourishes the illusion of his independent selfhood, but that does not make it any the less an illusion. Truth supersedes error, and therefore man does *not* exist apart from God. If one argues that at any rate there are genuine errors, which have an indefeasible title to being, then unless we are prepared to attribute error to God we must be prepared to qualify our creationism and admit a realm outside him. We must, in other words, be either pantheists or pluralists, so far as concerns the logic of the matter. Otherwise there remains only the alternative of a creationism that is frankly magical, and which is content to win the adherence of faith without claiming to satisfy reason.

William James's examination of his father's metaphysics on its more technical side revealed at this comparatively early date his logical or theoretical objections to monism. By its dialectic of self-negation and self-recovery, of exile and return, monism claims to move — whereas, in fact, it only stands still. By its distinction between being and appearance, it pretends to provide for otherness and diversity, whereas it really offers nothing but identity.

The theme which the elder James most frequently reiterated, which crept into his most spontaneous utterances, and which sprang most directly from the feeling of his own heart, was his *antimoralism.* That his son should differ from him here meant not only a difference of opinion but a difference of nature. The father's antimoralism has already become familiar to us, since we cannot have known *him* without knowing *it.* Morality, he affirmed, is essentially self-approbation, a sense of merit: the greater one's conviction of morality, the greater one's sense of personal achievement and superiority. Hence the more virtuous a man is the more is his soul in danger of starvation for lack of human and divine fellowship. Morality gives men selves, which is a necessary preliminary

step; but, having selves, the next step is to loathe them. The instrument here is "conscience." "The sole mission of conscience (which is a limitation of the moral sentiment, the sentiment of what is due to oneself, by the social sentiment, the sentiment of what is due to one's neighbor) has been to give us true self-knowledge, and so qualify us for the true knowledge of God. . . . Its efficacy is however distinctly purgative, not nutritive." [18] Having through conscience conquered self, our way is open to the union of ourselves with our fellows in that perfected and unified (perfected *because* unified) humanity which is God.

Two things are quite clear. In the first place, all of the vicissitudes of the spiritual life, and not merely its consummation, are God's work. "We have walked the weary road we have walked, and suffered the bitter things we have suffered, not because God hated or condemned us, or had even the faintest shadow of a quarrel with us, but solely because He loved us with unspeakable love, and wooed us in that unsuspected way out of the death we have in ourselves to the embrace of His own incorruptible life." [19]

This appears even more emphatically in the following passage from an unpublished letter: "For we being absolute creatures of God are without any substance in ourselves, and hence are what we are, laugh and cry, eat and drink, love and work, aspire and triumph, only by virtue of His infinite tenderness imparting, or, as Swedenborg phrases it, *communicating,* Himself to us; and permitting us, if we please, to put His love to the basest uses, in order that at last we may through sheer disgust of our own loathsome performances, turn ourselves freely to Him and demand with humble hearts at last the guidance of His unerring laws. . . . For the power by which all this deviltry is enacted is literally God in us. . . . He is really our life at all times, when we are going down to hell as much as when we are ascending to heaven: only in the former state He is humiliated, despised, trodden under our clownish feet, crucified by all our selfish and cruel lusts: and in the latter glorified, exalted above the heaven of heavens, by the heartiness of our spiritual gratitude and adoration." [20]

That God should himself enact, in and through us, all that we hold most odious, even that very selfhood which is the blackest of

[18] *Substance and Shadow,* 148–9.
[19] *Ibid.,* 155.
[20] To Mrs. Francis G. Shaw, May 26, 1860.

sins, does not in James's eyes make him any less divine. He cannot endure the thought of a goodness without evil, a heaven without hell: "Think of a spiritual existence so wan, so colourless, so miserably dreary and lifeless as this; an existence presided over by a sentimental deity, a deity so narrow-hearted, so brittle-brained, and putty-fingered as to be unable to make godlike men with hands and feet to do their own work and go their own errands, and content himself, therefore, with making spiritual animals with no functions but those of deglutition, digestation, assimilation. . . . These creatures could have no *life*. At the very most they would barely *exist*. Life means individuality or character; and individuality or character can never be *conferred*, can never be *communicated* by one to another, but must be inwardly wrought out by the diligent and painful subjugation of evil to good in the sphere of one's proper activity. If God made spiritual sacks, merely, which he might fill out with his own breath to all eternity, why then of course evil might have been left out of the creature's experience. But he abhors sacks, and loves only men, made in his own image of heart, head and hand." [21]

Here is the crux of the matter, both of the meaning and of the difficulty. To the elder James there was a sort of delicious excitement in the whole stormy voyage of the soul. To know God was to feel and relish this peculiar excitement. It takes a man with a strong stomach and a hardy constitution to do it; and these James had. But there is a difficulty. There are two conceptions of the divine life: the voyage and the haven; the victory and the victor; the good which embraces evil, and the good which excludes it. Apart from the ambiguity, which is serious enough from a theoretical point of view, there is a condoning of evil, which is more serious from a practical point of view. The moral consciousness impels us to mortal combat with evil, while the religious consciousness impels us to keep evil alive for the glory of the overcoming. The religious consciousness whispers to the moral consciousness: "Fight evil for the sake of the fight, — not to exterminate it. That which in action you treat as though it ought never to have been, is after all the necessary condition of your very ecstasy of conquest." To William James this ulterior reflection could not fail to unnerve the moral will, and blunt the edge of moral judgment. Here, as we have seen,

[21] H.J.[1], probably to Mrs. Francis G. Shaw, Dec. 22 (year unknown).

he was on Carlyle's side against his father. He felt that the naïve sense of the absolute evil of evil was more to be trusted than the æsthetic or religious idea of its complicity in good.

To what shall this dissent be ascribed? There is no doubt an intimately personal cause. William James lacked the exuberant vitality of his father, hence it was more difficult for him to believe that the mere living through of the spiritual drama was good enough to justify its tragic and painful episodes. He was too sensitive to evil, as felt by himself and by others, to be willing to accept it at any price. But he himself, in an interesting letter written from Dresden in 1868 to Thomas W. Ward,[22] speaks of the decisive influence of Goethe and of paganism: —

"I am just beginning to break through the skin of Goethe's personality and to grasp it as an unity. Hitherto he has always annoyed me by apparent contradictions, such as a want of humor and (absurd as it may sound) a want of *intuition* in æsthetical things and in the matter of personal character — [a] tedious clinging to minute details of apparently no essential importance. . . . This impression, which he had made on me, has recently vanished altogether without my being able to give any exact account of how it has happened.[23] He *is* a perfect natural-born *collector,* as much as Agassiz, and he does hate to lose *anything* in creation. . . . When he gives you chaff, it is only thrown in extra out of his superabundance. The man lived at every pore of his skin, and the tranquil clearness and vividness with which *everything* painted itself on his sensorium, and found a cool nook in his mind without interfering with any of the other denizens thereof, must have been one of the most exquisite spectacles ever on exhibition on this planet.

"Apart from that general and undefined refreshment and encouragement which accrue to us from the sight of great resources and possibilities in human nature of any kind, I have drawn from Goethe a special lesson lately which is not easy for me to define in black and white, but which may be called a lesson of theoretical patience and respect towards the objective. Contrasted with the attention he vouchsafed to every phenomenon that infringed upon his

[22] Most of the remainder of this letter will be found below, 276. Thomas W. Ward, the son of Samuel Gray Ward of the circle of Emerson and the Saturday Club, was one of the closest intimates of William James's youth. They were companions on the Brazilian voyage under Agassiz in 1865–6.

[23] In the original the last sentence is in French.

senses, with the deep and worthy stillness in which every voice of nature seemed to be listened to by his soul, *our* petulance and worry, our love of taking short cuts to the truth, making quick generalizations, our resorting to 'summary' views of the great outspread universe, seem trivial and frivolous, to say the least; and the partiality and disrespect which almost all of us show towards *some* department of experience, our rooted habit of not being able to raise x in our estimation except by lowering y, of 'setting' off one thing *against* another in our judgments, seem low traits. Goethe, of course, had his task made easy for him by the unexampled perfection of his faculties. . . . Through every individual fact he came in contact with the world, and he strove and fought without ceasing ever to lay his mind more and more wide open to nature's teaching — more and more to efface those subjective wrinkles in which we all force the objective matter nature gives us to lie in our minds. The judging of things by a subjective standard which we all are born with, he seems to have hated as if it were the very brand of original sin within us. Of course his natural gifts cannot be communicated to the reader, but this enthusiasm can in some measure, and I think that the glimpse of it I have got in reading his *Wilhelm Meister* again, and especially his *Annalen* (a sort of autobiography of his later years) and some other things I cannot signalize, is one of the important experiences of my own mind.

"Of course, an optimistic faith lies at the bottom of it; but if one can set out with the supposition of harmony among phenomena as the *summum bonum,* and look upon the world as a progressive development, I don't know whether such a faith be not the best. It seems to be so practically at any rate. And if the philosophy of Mill, Bain, etc., ever becomes victorious, a terrestrial harmony *must* become our *summum bonum.* Perhaps a new, simple and classical era may so be inaugurated for us after the fever of the Christian and barbarous period. . . . I remember your saying on the ship coming from Pará [24] after reading that little book, *Du Polythéisme,*[25] that the characteristic of the Greek *'Weltanschauung'* was its optimism. . . . Evil was synonymous with perishability. And the peculiarity to us of the Greek attitude is that it accepted these two

[24] The Brazilian port from which W.J. sailed on his return from the Agassiz expedition.

[25] Louis Ménard, *Du Polythéisme hellénique,* Paris, 1863.

hostile elements of creation as simply given, without feeling that unquenchable desire to reconcile them which we barbarians are beset with. We seek in some way to 'get around' the contradiction between good and evil, and to fuse them both in some higher unity. . . . Altogether the wiping out of border lines, the fantastic creations and devices which are made necessary as soon as men refuse to accept the two elements in their primitive contradictory shape, introduce the confusion, the irony, sickliness and general absence of distinctness which separate us from the Greeks. You will be able to furnish examples of the difference in detail for yourself.

"I think you will understand and agree with what I have said about the Greeks with very little trouble. I don't know whether I have expressed myself so clearly with regard to Goethe. . . . For my own part I do not feel like giving adhesion to the whole of what I understand Goethe's philosophy to be, any more than I feel like rejecting it. I merely feel far better than hitherto what a respectable rotundity it has — and how eminent its claims will be if it is ever decided that our standpoint for contemplating the world must always be more or less of a *parti pris*. I have grown up, partly from education and the example of my Dad, partly, I think, from a natural tendency, in a very non-optimistic view of nature, going so far as to have some years ago a perfectly passionate aversion to all moral praise, etc., — an antinomian tendency, in short. I have regarded the affairs of human life to be only a phantasmagoria, which had to be *interpreted* elsewhere in the kosmos into its real significance. But of late the sturdy realism of Goethe and the obdurate beauty and charm of the Greeks have shaken my complexion more than anything else. If we can only bring ourselves to accept evil as an ultimated inscrutable fact, the way may be open towards a great practical reform on earth, as our aims will be clearly defined, and our energies concentrated."

A few years later, in a notebook, James again contrasted his father with Goethe, the former's uncompromising spiritualism and theism with the latter's naturalistic pantheism. Here, again, it is clearly the view of Goethe that he finds the more congenial and the more healthy-minded: "Goethe's ego was so polygonal that every stream that flowed turned his mill wheel, and every road that ran brought its travelers to pay toll at his gates. So he never was left high and dry and abandoned by the tide as most men often are, only

to be rescued from conscious annihilation by willingly forgetting their plight and taking no interest in it further, but looking out and sympathizing with the distant game, or with the tides as they flow. The obstructive ego says, unless I win (more or less) I won't play. Goethe always did win without saying so, and lost the discipline in 'disinterestedness' which poorer natures have a chance to gain."

The "confusion, the irony, sickliness and general absence of distinctness" to which William James alludes in the letter to Ward are quite unmistakably imputed by him to the position which his father represents. But he rarely made the application specifically to the man himself, since the father *was* neither ironical nor sickly; his genius being fundamentally moral rather than æsthetic, and his temperament healthy-minded rather than morbid.[26] The elder James was capable of the most shattering moral indignation. He denounced selfishness, pride, and inhumanity with a downrightness not in the least compromised by his professed belief that precisely these qualities were manifestations of God's love. He was too much of a fighter to contemplate the battle with detachment — too earnestly intent on victory to be satisfied with the mere experience of the struggle.

The next letter reveals William's feeling for his father's warm Christian partisanship, and expresses the belief that to accept the realistic dualism of good and evil it is not necessary to possess a pagan hardness of heart. He was traveling in Italy with his brother Henry: —

Rome, Nov. 30, 1873

My dearest old Dad, —

We left Florence day before yesterday and had splendid weather for the extremely picturesque railroad ride to this settlement — passing on the way by a set of little towns perched on hill spurs which would have brought from your moral consciousness certain hearty and picturesque expletives that I would have been glad to hear; so wicked and venomous did they look, huddled together and showing their teeth as it were to the world, without a ray of anything visible

[26] In *L.R.H.J.*, William James says that his father's conception of God is "monistic enough to satisfy the philosopher, and yet warm and living and dramatic enough to speak to the heart of the common pluralistic man" (115). Henry James the *person*, his emotions bursting the bonds of his thought, achieved both of these things, but his conception of God would seem to be monistic to the *exclusion* of pluralism. Indeed W.J. himself goes on to admit as much in the context.

externally but the search for shelter and security. The "picturesque"-ness that *we* now find there was the last thing present to the utilitarian minds of those who built them, and they make one realize how man's life is based historically on sheer force and will and fight, and how the inner ideal world only grows up inside and under the shelter of these brute tendencies. It was a cloudless night lit by a half-moon, and after partaking of supper at the Hôtel de Rome, Harry's old abode, he proposed that we should stroll along to the Coliseum, etc. I had arrived at Rome with no more sentiment or expectation than if I were going to East Boston, and when in ten minutes after having left the modern shop-lit street, I found myself passing the old wreck-strewed Forum, and advancing under a line of trees in what seemed a common country road with a few distant lamps against the sides of houses, and right and left huge looming shapes of tumbled walls and ruins, not a living being, biped or quadruped, to be seen or heard — and finally when we entered under the mighty Coliseum wall and stood in its mysterious midst, with that cold sinister half-moon and hardly a star in the deep blue sky — it was all so strange, and, I must say, inhuman and horrible, that it felt like a nightmare. Again would I have liked to hear the great curses which you would have spoken. Anti-Christian as I generally am, I actually derived a deep comfort from the big black cross that had been planted on that damned blood-soaked soil. I think if Harry had not been with me I should have fled howling from the place.

Yesterday a superb sunshine and another "unsympathetic" experience, *viz.* St. Peter's, to complete the enjoyment of which I again needed your denunciatory presence. The building, — *i.e.* its skeleton, is one of the titanic acts of the human mind; but it so reeks as it stands now with the negation of that Gospel which it pretends to serve, is so perfectly explosive a monument of human pride, insolence, presumption or whatever other words express transgression of those "bounds where all must pause," that for the moment I felt fully like Martin Luther or any modern evangelical fanatic who sees in Rome the incarnation of Satan. It was strange to feel that with all that outward show of force, the real force, if you give it time, is in the hands of the simple modest principle which animates the Tuscan pre-Raphaelite paintings, for instance, and inspires from them. This moral way of taking things may seem very narrow-

minded, but one may as well make the most of these moments when he has them, for other lights and occasions, and the blunting finger of time, all end by filling up the chasm, and supplying, as Harry quotes from George Eliot, the suppressed transitions that unite all contrasts, and take away the edge of one's emotional reactions. . . . Lots of love to all. Your

W. J.

In the concluding pages of the Introduction to his father's *Literary Remains,* William James made his most considered statement of this issue. The "most serious enemy" to his father's religious monism, he says, is "the *philosophic* pluralist," [27] the ally of moralism. While monism appeals to the sick soul (or to all souls in their moments of sickness) as providing an assurance of well-being, pluralism appeals to the healthy-minded mood in which one accepts evil at its face value and proposes to cope with it by the exercise of will: —

"Any absolute moralism is a pluralism; any absolute religion is a monism. It shows the depth of Mr. James's religious insight that he first and last and always made moralism the target of his hottest attack, and pitted religion and it against each other as enemies, of whom one must die utterly, if the other is to live in genuine form. The accord of moralism and religion is superficial, their discord radical. Only the deepest thinkers on both sides see that one must go." [28]

The writer suggests that the choice between the two be determined by their fruits; and expresses the hope that the "friends of philosophic moralism" may serve *their* ideal with the same fidelity as that which marked his father's devotion to religion. This William James himself undertook to do. Writing in 1903 to a European inquirer, he said, "I wish I could see that my philosophy came from my father." [29] His impulse, always strong, to credit other persons with his ideas would have been doubly strong in the case of his father. But the difference was too profound to be annulled even by filial devotion. The issue between monism and a pluralistic moralism was always to the younger James the gravest of philosophical

[27] *L.R.H.J.,* 116.
[28] *Ibid.,* 118–9.
[29] His correspondent, M. Bovet, was at this time offering a course on James's philosophy at the Academy of Neuchâtel, perhaps the first such course to be given.

issues, and here, so far as theory and profession went, he and his father were on opposite sides.

But this does not mean that William James unqualifiedly renounced his father's religious philosophy. He set out in another direction. He achieved his own philosophical majority and his own personal salvation through the gospel of moralism. So much is unquestionable. But he did not forget that earlier way of thinking which he had learned at home. In 1897 he remarked, quite casually and parenthetically, "Religion is the great interest of my life." [30] Since it would be unjust to hold a man strictly to a statement made in an unguarded moment, let us say that religion was *one* of the great interests of his life. That being the case, it was not surprising that his father's influence should have been both deep and permanent. For his father was to him the most vivid instance of that religious experience which consists in "an acute despair, passing over into an equally acute optimism, through a passion of renunciation of the self and surrender to the higher power." [31]

The following paragraph was written in 1883 in reply to his brother's description of their father's death:[32] "Your eagerly awaited letter came yesterday. . . . What would I not give if I could have seen the dear old man lying there as you describe him, culminating his life by this drama of complete detachment from it. I must now make amends for my rather hard non-receptivity of his doctrines as he urged them so absolutely during his life, by trying to get a little more public justice done them now. As life closes, all a man has done seems like one cry or sentence. Father's cry was the single one that religion is real. The thing is so to 'voice' it that other ears shall hear, — no easy task, but a worthy one, which in some shape I shall attempt."

In short, the father testified most eloquently and memorably to the *reality of religion,* and the son was supremely interested in religion. How was he interested? Not merely as a collector and describer, as might be inferred from the fact that he was a psychologist and wrote a book called *The Varieties of Religious Experience.* No — he was interested in the *justification* of religion. His interest was never an external one, but was the interest of one who

[30] *L.W.J.*, II, 58.
[31] *L.R.H.J.*, 72.
[32] Written in reply to the letter from H.J.[s] to W.J. of Dec. 26, 1882, printed above, 113. Other parts of this letter appear below, 386.

felt religion and was concerned for it. He wanted to save a place for his own generalized religious feelings, but above all did he want to save a place for the more concrete beliefs of those more intensely pious fellow creatures with whom he sympathized. Like his father, he believed that religion was real, in the sense of being true and valid. But it is not to be supposed that the religion which William James justified was that "absolute religion" which in 1885 he set down as irreconcilably opposed to moralism. He wrote in 1891, "Father would find in me today a much more receptive listener — all *that* philosophy has got to be brought in." [33] What he evidently meant was that his father's religious philosophy, or some portion of it that was sound and true, should be accommodated within a system that should at the same time provide both for the facts of science and for the integrity of the moral will.

[33] *L.W.J.*, I, 310.

PART II

EDUCATION AND CAREER

IX

BOYHOOD, AT HOME AND ABROAD

THE youthful development of William James, and his education in the larger, continuing sense, are woven of three strands — schooling, travel, and vocation. His brother Henry, only a year younger, was having a similar threefold experience at the same time, so that the story of the education of the one embraces his intercourse with the other. The whole is a process of immense complexity issuing in two highly individualized human products. The elements of this process one may hope with reasonable completeness to present — the chemistry of their synthesis must largely escape us.

In any such inventory first place must be given to the unconscious influence exerted by the parents: the influence of their being what they were — loving, and unworldly. The children remembered "their pure, simple lives, with souls unruffled by the ways of men, like special creatures, spiritualized and remote from coarser clay, — Father ringing the changes upon the Mother's perfections, he not being of the order of 'charming man who hangs up his fiddle outside his own front door,' for his fireside inspired his sweetest music; and Mother's words breathing her extraordinary selfless devotion, as if she simply embodied the unconscious essence of wife-and-motherhood." There were immense differences between father and mother, one of which is illustrated by the fact that, as Alice expressed it, the father "used to spoil our Christmases so faithfully for us, by stealing in with us, when Mother was out, to the forbidden closet and giving us a peep the week or so before." [1] The father's love was a more spoiling love, and his unworldliness more rebellious, as became his more ardent and contentious nature. But love and unworldliness emanated from them both, and entered into the composition of their children.

The schooling of William and the younger Henry James seems

[1] A.J., *Journal*, Jan. 29, 1890; Dec. 29, 1889. This journal has been published in *Alice James. Her Brothers. Her Journal*, edited by Anna Robeson Burr, 1934.

in retrospect to have been a series of accidents, but that this should have been the case was not itself altogether an accident. It bears a significant relation to their father's domestic philosophy. He was, as we have seen, both restless and radical. It was not to be expected that he would be satisfied with the ordinary institutionalized routine, in education or in anything else. He had apparently acquired an antipathy to college from his own experience, so that his sons were never definitely "headed" in that direction.[2] He *believed,* furthermore, in the liberty of his children, for what were to him the best of reasons. "I desire my child to become an upright man, a man in whom goodness shall be induced not by mercenary motives as brute goodness is induced, but by love for it or a sympathetic delight in it. And inasmuch as I know that this character or disposition cannot be forcibly imposed upon him, but must be freely assumed, I surround him as far as possible with an atmosphere of freedom."[3] Parental affection is a dangerous passion, he thought, tending to become possessive. Parents would ideally have no claims upon their children, but would share them with others and recognize their belonging to society as a whole. Speaking of his own father, William of Albany, he said: —

"My father was weakly, nay painfully, sensitive to his children's claims upon his sympathy; and I myself, when I became a father in my turn, felt that I could freely sacrifice property and life to save my children from unhappiness. . . . What sensible parent now thinks it a good thing to repress the natural instincts of childhood, and not rather diligently to utilize them as so many divinely endowed educational forces? . . . For my own part, I delight to witness this outward demoralization of the parental bond, because I see in it the pregnant evidence of a growing spiritualization of human life, or an expanding *social* consciousness among men." [4]

The atmosphere of liberty which pervaded the James household was not, however, a mere effect of parental renunciation. The children were free not only from parental tyranny but, through their parents, from the tyranny of the world. There was a general absence of institutional authority. Thus Alice wrote: "How grateful we ought to be that our excellent parents had threshed out all the ignoble superstitions, and did not feel it to be their duty to fill our

[2] *N.S.B.,* 112 ff.
[3] *The Nature of Evil,* 1855, 99.
[4] *L.R.H.J.,* 170–1.

minds with the dry husks, — leaving them *tabulæ rasæ* to receive whatever stamp our individual experience was to give them, so that we had not the bore of wasting our energy in raking over and sweeping out the rubbish." [5]

Henry James tells us that his father checked the vocational ardor of his sons, and prevented an abrupt decision in favor of this or that alternative, by asking whether it were not too "narrowing." [6] He subordinated doing to being, having the philosopher's idea of vocation, that men's first calling is to be men. This father of a great writer and of a great scientist was an outspoken opponent both of letters and of science, because he regarded both of these vocations as belittling, — as limiting the fullness of life to one of its mere vehicles. Despite their careers the sons unconsciously obeyed his injunction. Both William and Henry became men before they became anything else, and there is always a peculiar inadequacy in referring to the one as a "psychologist" and to the other as a "novelist," as though to name them by what they did rather than by what they were. The application of such a standard alters the aspect of this extraordinary educational process. That which, when conventionally regarded, is called incoherence becomes variety and depth of living. The very mistakes, even when they teach no evident lesson, become a part of that pathos of life, of that incompetence of the individual to achieve his own destiny, which is the mark of his humanity and the beginning of his salvation.[7]

It would be a mistake, however, to regard the domestic influence as negative — as a mere safeguarding of liberty, or as a mere withholding of parental influence in order that nature and circumstance might govern the outcome. The father, as we have seen, was unconsciously commanding and infectious. The region of family life was not empty, but was charged with palpable and active forces. If in view of what has gone before any such negative impression can have remained, it will be readily removed by the following description written by Edward Emerson and based on the impressions of one of his holiday visits to Newport in 1860 or 1861: —

" 'The adipose and affectionate Wilkie,' as his father called him, would say something and be instantly corrected or disputed by the

[5] A.J., *Journal*, Dec. 31, 1890.
[6] *N.S.B.*, 50–2. *Cf.* above, 134.
[7] *Cf. N.S.B.*, 110.

little cock-sparrow Bob, the youngest, but good-naturedly defend his statement, and then, Henry (Junior) would emerge from his silence in defence of Wilkie. Then Bob would be more impertinently insistent, and Mr. James would advance as moderator, and William, the eldest, join in. The voice of the moderator presently would be drowned by the combatants and he soon came down vigorously into the arena, and when, in the excited argument, the dinner knives might not be absent from eagerly gesticulating hands, dear Mrs. James, more conventional, but bright as well as motherly, would look at me, laughingly reassuring, saying, 'Don't be disturbed, Edward; they won't stab each other. This is usual when the boys come home.' "[8]

I have been informed by another and surviving witness of these family scenes that there was a certain method in this seeming madness. The father would propound some provocative idea, and throw it into the midst of his brood in order that they might sharpen their teeth on it and, in their eagerness to refute him or one another, exercise themselves in the art of combative thinking.

A man choosing his vocation is like a man swimming in a flood. He is propelled by the currents and eddies in which he is immersed. He is buffeted by the driftwood which floats about him. But he can swim against the current and reach the shore, even though his course be diagonal; and the same driftwood that bruises him becomes the buoy or raft by which he saves himself. The choice of William James is worthy of attention because it was the choice of a gifted man, and because it was prolonged and difficult; above all, however, because his choice was a *choosing* in which a highly conscious will struggled with inheritance and circumstance, thus revealing both its own inner motives and the scene of the action.

The emergence of William James's rational will from the vaguer dispositions of inheritance and childhood is the central fact. He was the creature or victim of circumstance in none but the most superficial sense. He *fed and nourished himself* upon circumstance. It is true that he complained of his education, or lack of it, but he referred to formal schooling, and his complaint is in any case evidence of his chronic discontent rather than of any real lack of

[8] E. W. Emerson, *op. cit.*, 328.

nutriment. William James began to be William James at a very early age, and began to find and appropriate the food which his characteristic appetites required. But this, it may be added, was not less true of his brother. Getting "settled in life" was a long and painful process for both. With William it was chiefly the question "what," with Henry the question "where" — but neither question was taken lightly or abandoned to fate. The result of this prolongation of choice was that a good many early crops — of deed, or judgment, or other mode of self-expression — were ploughed in, to the greater enrichment of the soil. In neither case was its fertility ever exhausted.

Although there was only a year's difference of age between them, William was definitely the "big brother." It was, in fact, not a question of age. Henry, in speaking of his "very first perceptions," says: "One of these, and probably the promptest in order, was that of my brother's occupying a place in the world to which I could n't at all aspire . . . wherever it might be that there was a question of my arriving, when arriving at all, belatedly and ruefully; as if he had gained such an advance of me in his sixteen months' experience of the world before mine began, that I never for all the time of childhood and youth in the least caught up with him or overtook him." [9]

It was not, then, a question of temporal age, but of temporal quality, or of tempo. William was more "vividly bright," more daring, and prompter to respond.[10] He was funnier — and so tended to hold the centre of the stage, the younger brother taking his place among those who laughed. "In fact," says the latter, "almost no one but W. J. himself, who flowered in every waste, seems to have struck me as funny in those years." Laughter was a very important element in the family life, and William, next after his father, was its most copious source. When the children and their friends played comedies in the attic, it was William who first composed them and then played the leading rôle.[11] This he did not through self-assertion, but rather through quickness of wit. When William once put off his brother with the words, "*I* play with boys who curse and swear!" [12] he was using, quite unconsciously, words

[9] *S.B.O.*, 8, 9.
[10] *S.B.O.*, 16, 22.
[11] *S.B.O.*, 204, 253.
[12] *S.B.O.*, 259.

that symbolized his greater capacity to meet the world on its own terms, his habit of always being equal to the occasion.

Henry James has left a most illuminating and characteristically chivalrous account of their difference of attitude toward humankind. William, who showed a discriminating taste otherwise, could stomach almost anything in his social relations. It was not that he overcame his repugnance to this person or that, but rather that he had none. "No man can well have cared less for the question, or made less of the consciousness, of dislike." Now whatever this might imply as to William's judgment, it undoubtedly qualified him for intercourse with his fellows. Henry may have had a more delicate social palate, but William had a stronger social appetite. Hence where Henry shrank away William would enter in with relish and hearty good-will.[13] In later life Henry was often shocked by William's disregard of conventions. The latter did not care what kind of hat he wore at week-end parties, and he climbed a ladder in order to peer at Chesterton over the garden wall.[14] Being less concerned with appearances, he excelled the more circumspect Henry in the freedom and boldness of his action.

In other words, the stage seems to have been set for an "inferiority" complex. Incredible as it may seem, nothing of the sort happened. The younger brother accepted the situation quite serenely, without either resentment towards William or loss of confidence in himself. That this should have been the case points to his possessing qualities less glittering perhaps, but not less pure, than his brother's. His unselfishness and goodness were proverbial in the family and earned him the epithet of "angel," employed in all sincerity by his parents, and with teasing but amiable irony by William. He lacked initiative, and the capacity for bold and decisive action; but since his inclination here ran with his capacity, he suffered no self-disparagement. He was not envious of what he did not possess, having unassuming but sturdy confidence in what he did possess.

The difference between these two minds is profound, and evident at so early an age that it passes from the view of the retracing eye

[13] *N.S.B.*, 323–7. Speaking of his brother Henry, just after the latter had arrived for a visit in 1904, James said: "His manners, speech, and voice have become thoroughly Anglicized. He is a shy fellow. I suppose it is a phenomenon of protective coloration."

[14] H. G. Wells, *Experiment in Autobiography*, 1934, 453–4.

and disappears behind the closed door of temperament and heredity. The younger son, in accounting for the fact that his own and his brother's lack of orderly and consecutive education did, nevertheless, somehow educate, says that the indispensable and sufficient condition of anything's being educative is that it shall arouse "some subjective passion." [15] Each of them had such a subjective passion almost from the time when he became an individual. Each had his own spiritual metabolism, his characteristic way of appropriating and incorporating the experiences that he encountered.

As regards the comparative degrees to which the two boys possessed such a subjective passion, appearances are misleading. Henry engaged in literary and dramatic composition from childhood, just as William engaged in juvenile forms of science and art.[16] But William's characteristic genius showed itself boldly, Henry's furtively. William's educational career was a series of raids, from which he returned sometimes laden with spoils, sometimes empty-handed; but, in any case, he took the initiative. Henry's subjective passion, on the other hand, showed itself in resistance rather than in attack. They tried to make a scientist of him, and they tried to make a lawyer of him. He allowed himself to be moved about as these experiments required. But in the end he tired his educators out and had to be allowed to achieve his own destiny. Meanwhile he accomplished his education not by trying this or that himself, but by keeping his eyes open and taking notes on life and literature, while others tried unsuccessful educational experiments upon him.

Henry demanded "just to *be* somewhere — almost anywhere would do — and somehow receive an impression or an accession, feel a relation or a vibration." [17] Experience afforded patterns or *scenes,* having for him some mysterious affinity of order or rhythm, by which they were apprehended feelingly as units, and by which they became possessions to be stored against the day of their literary use. William shared this passion, but though an insistent, it was always a subordinate motive. His own proper and deeper passion was to look *behind* the scenes for causes, or to look beyond in behalf of governing purposes. The one mind was con-

[15] *S.B.O.,* 26.
[16] *N.S.B.,* 122, 260.
[17] *S.B.O.,* 25.

templative, the other inquisitive and operative. It would not be untrue, were it not so inadequate, to say that the one was an æsthetic, the other a scientific mind. There is a contemporary philosophical verbiage which suits the matter somewhat better. Henry's interest was in "essences." The standard of his art was veracious reporting — the representation and communication of integral experiences — with the most scrupulous delicacy both in the apprehending and in the conveying of their specific quality. William had the same strain in his being. He had a painter's eye. He had a capacity, perhaps never equaled, of seizing and exposing the evanescent moments and fugitive sequences of conscious life. He could see most cunningly out of the corner of his eye. But he never indulged this interest without a revulsion against it, a revulsion that took one or the other of two forms — either *action* or *explanation.* He was forever harping on the need of an explanatory psychology; and though he collected varieties of religious experience with rare connoisseurship, he rushed impatiently on to what was to him the *real* question, "What shall we say or do about them?"

So while Henry was content with essences, William was avid of existence, of the "that" rather than the "what." In the presence of a problem Henry was interested in its problematic *aspect,* William in its solution. He asked questions about everything. What is the meaning of things, the substance of things, and the destiny of things? What is the good of things, and how may it be brought about? It was this same quality which made William James quite indifferent to ideas as such, as so many specimens or archetypes of thinking. He had no archæological or museographical interest. Although he came to define truth as satisfaction, it is certain that a final truth already arrived at would never have satisfied *him.* Every new insight or theory superseded those that went before, as the best available belief; there being only one important question — namely, what, according to the completest available evidence, is true? But the intellectual life would have made no appeal to him had it not been for the fortunate fact that all solutions promptly required revision.

It is impossible that William James should have written his brother's autobiographical works. He remembered, but what he *merely* remembered did not interest him. "He professed amaze-

ment and even occasionally impatience," writes Henry, "at my reach of reminiscence — liking as he did to brush away old moral scraps in favour of new rather than to hoard and so complacently exhibit them." [18]

Their difference is nowhere more evident than in their accounts of their father.[19] To Henry he was a character and a mind, represented by half-forgotten impressions to be revived in their unique concreteness and experienced quality, altered only by a perspective of laborious recollection. To William, too, his father was a dear and singular being. But beyond this he was a symbol and a source of ideas whose truth had to be judged and if possible perpetuated. It would be unjust to say that Henry and William are related to their father as Xenophon and Plato to Socrates. But to say it and withdraw it leaves just the slight savor of truth which the comparison possesses. To the one his father was an image to be enshrined, to the other he was an oracle to be interpreted and judged.

Travel was a fundamental fact in the history of the James family. It was habitually resorted to as a means of education for the young and as a remedy for the old, whatever their affliction, whether of body or of mind. The incidents of travel ceased to be incidental. The frequent exposure to natural scenery, with its various themes of primeval ruggedness or of human culture, became a staple in William James's diet. The comparison of the several types of European civilization, and above all the comparison of Europe with America, became almost an obsession. A facility in the reading and speaking of European languages was acquired early enough to fructify the whole cycle of development. Books were read, books of every description, because books can be read wherever one may be, or even while one is on the way. The very rhythm of travel seems to have entered into the soul of William James, where conditions were already favorable to its reception. He was scarcely out of his infancy before he began to be a nostalgic cosmopolitan, flying from perch to perch, now yearning for home, now equally eager to escape — liking it where he was and longing for the better far away.

We shall first witness the travels of William and Henry, Jr., in the

[18] *S.B.O.*, 68.
[19] Compare, *e.g.*, *N.S.B.*, 163–81, with the Introduction to *L.R.H.J.*

year 1844, during that memorable European sojourn when their father experienced conversion. William had reached the age of two years and five months, Henry the age of one year. It will be noted that William was already less "good" than Henry — and more voluble. The letter was addressed by the father to the grandmother, Mrs. William James of Albany.

Windsor, May 1, 1844

My dear Mother, —

Smith's letter by this packet will inform you sufficiently of our Parisian experience. We left that city on the 23d, slept at Rouen, and came over to England on the 24th. The passage across the channel was very pleasant, none of us being sick but Fanny.[20] When we were going to France the weather was rough, and we were all shockingly treated — from me down to poor little Harry. I never was so sea-sick before. Willy did n't know what to make of it at all, and screamed incessantly to have "the hair taken out of his mouth." We were delighted enough to get back again to tidy old England. The weather is perfectly delicious, foliage and flowers all out, the grass as green as summer, and the air equal to any barber's shop for fragrance. We went to Clifton after landing, but finding no precisely suitable lodgings there except in the town, we pushed on to Windsor, and here we have found a comfortable resting-place at last. It is a little cottage standing between the Great and Little Parks, next to the residence of the Duchess of Kent, and fronting the entrance to the Little Park. The Little Park is called little because it is only four miles around, whereas the Great Park is twenty-three. Either of these will be quite large enough for the children's amusement. Let the Capitol Park[21] represent to your imagination the Great Park, and the Academy ditto the little one, and you may form some idea of our surroundings. But there is nothing in the aspect of the City Hall to suggest an image of our beautiful cottage. A luxuriant hedge, six feet high and two broad, separates the court-yard from the road. An iron gate through the hedge gives admittance to the court which is

[20] It is possible, though improbable, that this is Fanny Macdaniel, whose family belonged to the Brook Farm group, and whose sister afterwards married Charles A. Dana. Fanny Macdaniel did go to Europe with the James family in 1855. It is more likely, however, that "Fanny" and "Smith" were members of the James household.

[21] Referring to Albany, N. Y.

filled with trees and flowers and shady walks, and a fine fruit garden running round the sides of the house to the rear gives further promise of a "glorious summer" to this son of New York. . . . On our first entrance we were a little startled by the apparition of a huge watchman's rattle lying in a little room off the hall, and on inquiring its significance were told that it was to be used in case of an alarm from thieves at night. I have taken it to my room, determined to give it a fair trial on the first symptom of foreign invasion. It will be sure to arouse the Duchess of Kent, whose bed-room is quite near, and who will no doubt gratefully "use her influence" in our behalf. . . .

Our windows command a superb look out into the Little Park in front, and the Great Park in rear. The latter comes "smack up," as Temple says,[22] to the cottage hedge behind, and Willy and Harry from the nursery windows may hold delightful converse with the sheep and cattle browsing beneath, the livelong day. I have never seen a more enchanting spot. The long broad meadows of the Park dotted with the noblest oaks in England, and pasturing herds of the most beautiful cattle, deer, and sheep, stretch away for miles on one side; on the other, the Duchess of Kent's gardens, presenting an exhaustless variety of cultivated beauty; and again on the front the beautiful avenues of the Little Park sweeping over hill and dale till they reach the Thames, the foresters' lodges, the Queen's private gardens, her aviary, and so forth — all these things combined with many others make Frogmore Cottage a desirable summer residence, even at £4.10 per week. . . .

I confess to some potent pullings now and then, dear Ma, in your direction — "nursery" remembrances and "little-back-room" remembrances come over me not infrequently which make Windsor Castle seem a great ghastly lie, and its parks an endless sickness not to be endured a moment longer. But these are only *feelings,* which do not commend themselves to my judgment in sober moments, and they therefore will not decide the question of our return. The children are well in the main. Harry's teeth are troublesome at times, but he is as good as the day is long, and the night on top of it. Willy is very good, too, when we are quietly settled. Our wretched Paris excursion broke him up a little, but he is now on the mend. He is full of fun — calls me "Henwy" (he can't pronounce

[22] Probably H.J.'s brother-in-law, Col. Robert Emmet Temple.

the *ry*) and his mother "Ma*wy*" — and talks frequently of his transatlantic experience and acquaintance. . . .

So, dear Ma, believe me at least affectionately mindful of you all, and especially most tenderly and truly yours,

H.

After returning from Europe in 1845 the James family spent a year and a half in Albany, and then moved again to New York City, where they resided first at 11 Fifth Avenue, and afterwards at 57 Fourteenth Street. This period, extending until the departure for Europe in 1855, is the period of *A Small Boy and Others* — especially of that other but less small boy who is the central subject of the present book. As shadowed forth in the distant retrospect of the younger, the instruction of these two small boys was up to 1851 entrusted to a series of "educative ladies." After 1851 came a series of educational agencies at once more masculine and more organized. There was the Institution Vergnès, on lower Broadway, with its shrill atmosphere of foreign language and temperament; there was the academy of Mr. Richard Pulling Jenks, with Mr. Coe, the drawing master, uncovering the talent of William; and finally there was the establishment of Forest and Quackenboss, where Henry encountered "the dreadful blight of arithmetic." The most evident characteristic of this educational period, as of that which follows, is change. "We could n't have changed oftener . . . if our presence had been inveterately objected to, and yet I enjoy an inward certainty that, my brother being vividly bright and I quite blankly innocuous, this reproach was never brought home to our house." It would appear, then, that the fault lay not in the small boys but in the schools — as judged by the small boys' father.

Of education out of school, the play of environment on these two unfolding individuals, I shall not speak. It would be an impertinence to offer a dull and secondhand description to those who can see for themselves a picture drawn by the skillful hand of one who was both a witness and a participant. The New York of this decade, its streets, its amusements, its historic incidents, its people of importance, derive from the very dimness of the author's memory a unified effect of perspective; details being condensed into pervasive qualities, as in direct perception or immediate feel-

ing. At the same time, family life and its immediate outlying circle of friends live again in that aspect which they presented to the small boy and his boyish mind.[28]

The elder James experienced a growing dissatisfaction with the New York schools. Furthermore, there was the question of languages. We may "go to foreign parts . . . and educate the babies in strange lingoes," he wrote to his friends Edmund and Mary Tweedy, who were already in Europe and helping to turn his thoughts in that direction. Finally, after much thought, the momentous decision was made and the whole family sailed for Liverpool, June 27, 1855, on the *S.S. Atlantic* of the ill-fated Collins Line. In London they paused long enough to see Wilkinson, and to nurse the young Henry through an attack of malarial chills and fever; then on to Paris, from Paris to Lyons by rail, and from Lyons, by "travelling carriage," to Geneva, where they were established early in August. The following letter is from the elder James to his mother: —

Geneva, Aug. 13 [1855]

My dear Mother, —

We have just got the boys all nicely established at school at Mr. Roediger's, and last evening (Sunday) we dined there and passed a very agreeable evening. . . . We liked Mr. Roediger and his family extremely. . . . The children have been there now a week, and are getting very fond of the place. . . . I have no doubt from the attainments they are already making (Willy and Wilky especially) in the German and French, that they will speak the latter with great fluency within a year, and the former nearly as well. . . . On Sunday, after going to church in the morning, they return to lunch at one o'clock, and have the rest of the afternoon to themselves. At five o'clock, every Sunday, they have a very handsome dinner — judging indeed from yesterday's specimen, one could desire nothing better — at which all the pupils and the brother-in-law and sister of Mr. Roediger, with such friends of the pupils as may be in town, meet and enjoy themselves in the merriest manner. After dinner, they have tea, after tea a concert of music, and after the concert the children dance. This is the Swiss and German method of passing the day, and though it strikes me as

[28] H.J.[1], *S.B.O.*, 16, 222 and *passim*.

somewhat odd, I do not see that any serious damage is going to be done by it either to soul or body. One thing is very clear, that if the little fellows feel homesick at all, they will feel less of it on Sunday than any other day. . . .

I send a letter to the *Tribune* [24] . . . by this steamer, which sheds some light on the schools. . . . I don't know how we shall feel about staying here all winter, but I think from present appearances we shall do so. . . . Ever faithfully yours,

H. JAMES

Roediger's "polyglot pensionnat" at Châtelaine failed, however, to fulfill its early promise. "We had fared across the sea," writes Henry, "under the glamour of the Swiss school in the abstract, but the Swiss school in the concrete soon turned stale on our hands." October found the family returning on their former route through Lyons and Paris to London, accompanied by the first of a long succession of French governesses. Here they established themselves first on Berkeley Square, and then, sometime before Christmas, at St. John's Wood, where they were neighbors of Wilkinson, and where they "enjoyed a considerable garden and wistful view." [25] Here a certain Robert Thompson, Scotchman and one-time teacher of R. L. Stevenson, became the latest instrument of formal education.

The two brothers put very different estimates on this period of their lives. "I remember," writes Henry, "how, looking back at it from after days, W. J. denounced it to me, and with it the following year and more spent in Paris, as a poor and arid and lamentable time, in which, missing such larger chances and connections as we might have reached out to, we had done nothing, he and I, but walk about together, in a state of the direst propriety, little 'high' black hats and inveterate gloves, the childish costume of the place and period, to stare at grey street-scenery . . . dawdle at shop-windows and buy water-colours and brushes with which to bedaub eternal drawing-blocks." He adds that while William felt "deeper stirrings and braver needs," he himself had only a "rueful sense" of the absence of such feelings.[26]

[24] Letter to the editor, headed "From New York to Geneva — the Schools There," *N. Y. Tribune*, Sept. 3, 1855.

[25] *S.B.O.*, 286 ff., 294, 303. There is a charming letter written by William James in 1880 in which he gratefully recalls this chapter of his boyhood; *cf. Alice James. Her Brothers. Her Journal*, 41–2.

[26] *Ibid.*, 301.

When, in June 1856, the scene of London was replaced by that of Paris, Robert Thompson was succeeded by M. Lerambert. "Spare and tightly black-coated, spectacled, pale and prominently intellectual," he administered instruction in a pavilion that hung over the Avenue des Champs-Elysées between the Rond-Point and the Rue du Colisée. At the end of the winter, following a "rupture" with M. Lerambert, the children were enrolled as *externes* in the Institution Fezandié, Rue Balzac. M. Fezandié was a follower of Fourier, and the Institution, embracing persons of diverse nations, ages, and sexes, was "all but phalansteric" — "if not absolutely phalansteric at least inspired, or at any rate enriched, by a bold idealism." [27]

This winter of 1856–1857 in Paris was a year of exposure on the part of sensitive and maturing minds not only to the Parisian scene itself, but to the treasures of the Louvre and Luxembourg. William's growing interest in painting, so soon to assert itself, was richly fed. "I remember," writes Henry, "his repeatedly laying his hand on Delacroix, whom he found always and everywhere interesting — to the point of trying effects, with charcoal and crayon, in his manner; and not less in the manner of Decamps, whom we regarded as more or less of a genius of the same rare family. They were touched with the ineffable, the inscrutable, and Delacroix in especial with the incalculable; categories these toward which we had even then, by a happy transition, begun to yearn and languish." [28]

In the case of Henry himself such experiences touched more than his artistic side — or perhaps it would be more true to say that whatever touched him on that side pervaded the whole of his being. To him they were "educative, formative, fertilising, in a degree which no other 'intellectual experience' our youth was to know could pretend, as a comprehensive, conducive thing, to rival." "Such were at any rate," he goes on to say, "some of the vague processes . . . of picking up an education; and I was, in spite of the vagueness, so far from agreeing with my brother afterwards that we did n't pick one up and that that never *is* done, in any sense not negligible. . . . I was so far dissentient, I say, that I think I quite came to glorify such passages and see them as part of an order really fortunate." [29]

In any case, the next venture was educational in William's rather

[27] *S.B.O.*, 326–7, 364.
[28] *Ibid.*, 345.
[29] *Ibid.*, 349, 352.

than in Henry's sense. In the summer of 1857, impelled by motives of economy arising out of the business depression in America, the family sublet their Paris residence on the Rue Montaigne and moved to Boulogne, where the boys attended the local *collège*. Here William, who had reached his sixteenth year, felt for the first time the benefits of good teaching and continual application. Henry, a year younger, found Boulogne a comparatively barren scene. The following passage from the elder James to his mother gives a report of his parental stock-taking: —

"Harry, I am thankful to say, is doing very well, having had but one serious pull-back. . . . Willy is very devoted to scientific pursuits, and I hope will turn out a most respectable scholar. He has been attending the Collège Impérial here all summer, and one of his professors told me the other day 'that he was an admirable student, and that all the advantages of a first-rate scientific education which Paris affords ought to be accorded him.' He is, however, much dearer to my heart for his moral worth than for his intellectual. I never knew a child of so much principle, and at the same time of a perfectly generous and conciliatory demeanour towards his younger brothers, always disposed to help them and never to oppress.

"Harry is not so fond of study, properly so-called, as of reading. He is a devourer of libraries, and an immense writer of novels and dramas. He has considerable talent as a writer, but I am at a loss to know whether he will ever accomplish much." [80]

This European sojourn is also preserved in the memory of another of its young adventurers, Robertson James, who was then in his tenth and eleventh years: "A riot in Regent's Park where the mounted men charge the populace in the Bread Riots. The night in London when it was aflame with fireworks over the Crimean peace. The Queen, who sits in the gilded coach on her way to Parliament. The Christmas pantomime — the 'Ratcatcher's Daughter' — Berkeley Square — Fanny Macdaniel — Dr. Wilkinson — the Horse Guards. Mr. Thackeray, who carried me on his shoulder, and then Boulogne-sur-Mer and the Collège Municipale and its stone vaulted ceiling where Wilkie and I went and failed to take prizes. . . . The only thing to say of it is that it was a beautiful and splendid childhood for any child to have had, and I remember

[80] Dated Boulogne, Oct. 15, 1857.

it all now as full of indulgence and light and color and hardly a craving unsatisfied." [31]

In the spring of 1858 the whole family was removed bag and baggage from Boulogne-sur-Mer to Newport, Rhode Island, where they were attracted, no doubt, by the proximity of Edmund and Mary Tweedy. The causes for this leap, and the educational events of the next fifteen months, are shrouded in obscurity. The older boys attended the William Leverett School, with Thomas Sergeant Perry and Steele MacKaye among their schoolmates. The former has described his impressions of his companions: their long walks together every afternoon; Henry, who "sat on the window-seat . . . with a certain air of remoteness" — "an uninterested scholar," but preoccupied with literature; and William, who was "full of merriment," though he discoursed on Schopenhauer and Renan.[32] But it seems to have been a more significant fact that the painter William Morris Hunt and his pupil John La Farge were there, strengthening in the breast of William that appeal of art which a year later proved too strong to be resisted.

The father's state of mind at this time, and the educational philosophy which underlay his somewhat wavering course, appear in the following letter to Mrs. Francis G. Shaw: —

Newport, July 22 [1859]

My dear Mrs. Shaw, —

Welcome and thanks for your kind inquiries, but I am getting better fast, I hope. I had a most remarkable tumour in the ball of my thumb (left hand) which came without any visible aid from injury or ill-health, and bloomed at last into a very ugly resemblance of baked apple. I was obliged finally to go to Boston for advice. I applied then to Henry I. Bigelow, who told me he would cut it out, but strictly without my knowing it, which he did, so saving me from some sharp suffering. That ether discovery, by the way, is the greatest event, so far as the comfort of the diseased is concerned, in history. I was perfectly unconscious of the surgery, and when I came to myself went on talking as if nothing had happened to interrupt the continuity of my discourse with Dr.

[31] R.J. to A.H.J., Feb. 24, 1898. Another extract from this letter appears above, 75.

[32] *The Letters of Henry James*, edited by Percy Lubbock, Charles Scribner's Sons, 1920, I, 6–8.

Bigelow, supposing him all the while intent upon preparing to operate. When he told me it was all over, I felt my dignity seriously wounded at being treated so much like a mere thing; but you may easily suppose this mood did not last long. Let your mother's heart unite with my paternal one, in blessing God for this beneficent gift of ether, to assuage the maladies of our children and snatch them from pain whenever pain becomes a terror.

My wife feels herself so well acquainted with you, through the frequent appreciation of mutual friends, that she has you at an advantage. But she will be very glad to know you more directly, in order to ascertain whether, after all, much that she has heard be not fabulous. Of course you and I can smile by anticipation over the verdict of that inquest — as if it could end in more than one way! — but the dear old coroner herself is worthy of your love and eulogy, as you shall find — when we return from Geneva.

For, you must know, we are anxiously thinking of embarking for that educational paradise. We can't get a house in Cambridge, and are disposed to think it would not be the place for us in all respects if we could. Besides, I am not looking forward to giving my boys a college course, our desire after Cambridge having been prompted by the wish to get my oldest boy in the Scientific School. But we *may* not go, as our minds are still undetermined. The truth is, my dear Mrs. Shaw, I have but one *fixed mind* about anything; which is, that whether we stay here or go abroad, and whatever befalls my dear boys in this world, they and you and I are all alike, and after all, absolute creatures of God, vivified every moment by Him, cared for every moment by Him, guided every moment by an infallible wisdom and an irreproachable tenderness, and that we have none of us therefore the slightest right to indulge any anxiety or listen in any conceivable circumstances to the lightest whisper of perturbation. . . . Believe me, my dear Mrs. Shaw, ever most affectionately, yours,

H. JAMES

P.S. Today's *Liberator* [88] has a letter of mine which may supplement our correspondence.

[88] Letter to the editor, headed "Physical and Moral Maladies," and dated "Newport, R. I., July 3rd."

They all sailed east again October 8, 1859, on the *S.S. Vanderbilt;* and, the pendulum being at the other end of its trajectory, they settled again in Geneva, at the Hôtel de l'Écu, with a very determined educational intent. William was sent to the academy (afterwards the university), and here Henry joined him after an abortive attempt had been made to teach him science and mathematics at the Institution Rochette. This treatment was designed to cure Henry of the habit of excessive novel-reading, and he meekly, although quite fruitlessly, submitted to it. The outcome — "an obscure, a deeply hushed failure" — was calculated to intensify his sense of the comparative greatness of his brother: "Whatever he [William] might happen to be doing made him so interesting about it, and indeed, with the quickest concomitance, about everything else, that what I probably most did, all the while, was but to pick up, and to the effect not a bit of starving but quite of filling myself, the crumbs of his feast and the echoes of his life."

William was, in fact, feeling his oats.[34] As usual he was equal to anything. He was taken into the important students' organization, the Société de Zoffingue, and carried it off (including the scarf and cap) with *élan.* He conducted himself in the family circle with his usual high spirits. The following letters were written by two of the younger children, Wilky and Alice, aged fourteen and twelve respectively, to their parents, who had departed for Paris and London.

Geneva [Dec. 1859]

My dear Father, —

We arrived a little while ago from school and have already read your welcome letters that have made one feel very sympathetic for you, but still I cannot help smiling at the easy, graceful and homesick style in which they flow. . . . How do you find Paris and London? I would give a great deal to be there with you, to be arm in arm with you in Regent's Street or St. John's Wood. But I suppose those sweet days have passed and that we are now not to depend so much upon the pleasures that unity or friendship can afford, because we are growing older and must prepare to harden ourselves to deny ourselves the mere affections, so that in the world

[34] *N.S.B.,* 4, 13. *Cf.* also William's letter to his father, *ibid.,* 18. The original letter contained "some very beautiful poetry" composed in honor of Alice, which, he said, "loses a great deal by not being sung." "Alice took it very coolly," he added.

to come we may have peace and as much of these pleasures as we like. Enough of this, however. . . . How are the Wilkinsons? Give them all my love, and tell Mrs. Wilkinson how glad I was to receive her letter, or something agreeable that would touch her sentimentality (you know what I mean).

Father, you cannot imagine how much we miss you, and what a blank space your absence makes in this house. Even away off at school I feel it. I have a sort of unprotected feeling (not physically so, but mentally) — I feel as if there was something missing — but I have no doubt it does an immense deal of good to both sides to have occasionally these little separations. We received five letters after you left, one of them from La Farge, who gives us four pages of nothing else but Newport gossip and Newport this and thats. . . .

Willie interrupts me here and wants me to go into the parlor with him to hear him deliver a little sonnate on Alice which he has just composed and which he means to perform with much gusto. I will tell you its success when it is finished. . . . Song went off very well, and excited a good deal of laughter among the audience assembled.

As I have exhausted all my news, and as bedtime is approaching and as my eyes are gradually closing, even so must this letter which is meant to tell you how much we love you, how much we miss you, and how much we would give for you to be back under the roof of this hotel. Good-bye, dear Papa. Ever your affectionate son,

G. W. James

March 11 [1860]

My dear Father, —

We have had two dear letters from you and find you are the same dear old good-for-nothing home-sick papa as ever.

Willie is in a very extraordinary state of mind, composing odes to all the family. A warlike one he addressed to Aunt Kate, in which the hero is her husband and dies for her; and he says: "The idea of any one dying for her!!" and he wants Mother to take them in to Mrs. Thomas and Mrs. Osbourn [35] to be read and admired by them. We have all come to the conclusion that he is fit to go to the

[35] For an account of the Thomas and Osborne families, *cf. N.S.B.*, 18–20.

lunatic asylum, so make haste home before such an unhappy event takes place. . . . Your affectionate daughter

ALICE JAMES

It is not surprising that Henry, who was cold, hungry, and uncomfortable, and found the Bernese and Bâlois "strange representations of the joy of life," abandoned the idea of rivalry, and lived, so far as he could, "by the imagination, in William's so adaptive skin." [86]

[86] *N.S.B.*, 14, 15.

X

SHALL HE BECOME A PAINTER?

In the summer of 1860 the scene again shifted, this time to Bonn, where the boys (with the exception of Bob, who remained behind in Geneva) were divided between two tutorial households, William with Herr Stromberg, Henry and Wilky with Herr Doctor Humpert. This was the first glimpse of Germany and the beginning of facility in the German language. With this addition the sum of William's learning now embraced a good knowledge of French, some German and Latin, mathematics through trigonometry, and scattered bits of science.[1]

But the brief residence at Bonn in the summer of 1860 was chiefly notable as the occasion of William's decision to study painting. It was not a surprising decision. Indeed, the last European trip had been taken largely in order to save William from that siren call, which was so clearly audible in Newport. Since seven of the descendants of William of Albany became painters, it is to be presumed that there was something in the blood. Robertson James was to try the experiment in 1885. Henry was moved by essentially the same impulse: "My face was turned from the first to the idea of representation — that of the gain of charm, interest, mystery, dignity, distinction, gain of importance in fine, on the part of the represented thing . . . but in the house of representation there were many chambers, each with its own lock, and long was to be the business of sorting and trying the keys. When I at last found deep in my pocket the one I could more or less work, it was to feel, with reassurance, that the picture was still after all in essence one's aim." [2]

William had sketched and painted from early boyhood. While in Paris in 1857 he had received lessons at the atelier of M. Léon Coigniet, whose "Marius among the Ruins of Carthage" was impressively exhibited at the Luxembourg. But though his interest

[1] *L.W.J.*, I, 20.
[2] *S.B.O.*, 263–4.

and aptitude had long since been proved, even now it was not an unqualified decision. It had been hoped that through travel he might forget art's fatal attractions — and thus avoid a *mésalliance.* He now found that he could not forget her, and that separation only induced restlessness and longing. If the separation were made permanent he might be haunted by regrets all his life. So he would go back to her: it might end in marriage, or it might cure him.

The following letters from the elder James to Edmund Tweedy reveal the former's parental doubts, and his habit of finding reasons to reconcile the interest of the family as a whole with whatever at the moment seemed best for William.

Bonn, July 18 [1860]

My dear old Tweedius, —

. . . Have you any commands for Newport? I ask because it is our intention to return in the *Adriatic* of September 11. We have come to this resolve rather hurriedly, but we do not feel unadvisedly. We came on here to put the boys in German families for the summer, and take them in winter to Frankfurt or some similar place. But we had hardly reached here before Willy took an opportunity to say to me — what it seems he had been long wanting to say, but found it difficult to come to the scratch — that he felt the vocation of a painter so strongly that he did not think it worth my while to expend any more time or money on his scientific education! I confess I was greatly startled by the annunciation, and not a little grieved, for I had always counted upon a scientific career for Willy, and I hope the day may even yet come when my calculations may be realized in this regard. But as it was I had nothing to do but to submit; and as our motive to stay in Europe was chiefly derived from the imagined needs of his education, so now we are glad enough to turn homewards, and let him begin at once with Mr. Hunt. The welfare of the other youngsters will, however, be as much consulted by this manœuvre, I am persuaded, as Willy's. They are none of them cut out for intellectual labours, and they are getting to an age, Harry and Wilky especially, when the heart craves a little wider expansion than is furnished it by the domestic affections. They want friends among their own sex, and sweethearts in the other; and my hope for their own salvation, temporal and spiritual, is that they may "go it strong" in both lines when they get home. Early mar-

riages are thought very bad as a prudential step here in Europe, but an immense deal of imprudence may yet be transacted in America with the happiest social and individual consequences. My sole hope for humanity is that men will go on more and more to such a complete obedience of their natural instincts, that all our futile old rulers, civil and religious, will grow so bewildered as to abandon their thrones and leave the coast clear to scientific men. Love to all and believe me, ever faithfully yours,

H. J.

Bonn, July 24 [1860]

My dear old Tweedius, —

I assure you that your solicitude lest we should be returning too soon, though grateful to our hearts, is quite superfluous to our heads. And if you could project yourself in any degree into my consciousness, you would read our title to go so clear, that you would yourself be the first "to bid adieu to every fear, and wipe your weeping eyes." We left "those mansions in the skies" the last time, experimentally. We were not sure where we had best settle ourselves down at home: we found difficulties of an apparently insuperable character in the way of getting furnished lodgings near Boston. Newport did not give the boys what they required exactly, and we did n't relish their separation from us. Willy especially felt, we thought, a little too much attraction to painting — as I suppose, from the contiguity to Mr. Hunt; let us break that up, we said, at all events. I hoped that his career would be a scientific one, as I thought and still think that the true bent of his genius was towards the acquisition of knowledge: and to give up this hope without a struggle, and allow him to tumble down into a mere painter, was impossible. Let us go abroad then, we said, and bring him into contact with books and teachers. It is indispensable for him, and it *may* be useful to the other boys. Well, we have tried the experiment. Willy refuses to give up his predilection for painting without a fuller trial: the other boys have been all along perfectly starved on their social side, and not the least bettered on their intellectual. . . . As our chief inducement to stay here was the idea of promoting Willy's scientific culture and aspiration; as in regard to the other children we saw no reason to prefer this side of the Atlantic to the other for a single day; so we look upon Willy's strong desire to return to Mr. Hunt

as a Providential indication to change our plans, and go where the spirit and the flesh alike draw us. I am very glad we came abroad this last time: we should otherwise always have had a misgiving that something was to be found here better for boys than at home. As it is we go home profoundly persuaded that no wilder hallucination exists, at least in reference to boys who are destined to grow up into American men. America is "the lost Paradise restored" to boys and girls both, and it is only our own paltry cowardice and absurd ducking to old world conventionalities that hinder their realising it as such at once. . . .

We had Ristori to play *Marie Stuart* for us last night. It was the vulture counterfeiting Jenny Wren. Every little while the hoarse exulting voice, the sanguinary beak, the lurid bloated eye of menace, and the relentless talons, looked forth from the feathery mass, and sickened you with disgust. She would do Elizabeth better.[3] Love me and mine as we love thee and thine. Ever dear old fellow-soldier, yours,

H. J.

The following letter is addressed by William to Charles Ritter, a schoolmate at the academy in Geneva, and afterwards known through his literary associations with Renan and Strauss. This letter is the beginning of a correspondence that extended over forty years.[4]

Bonn, July 31, 1860

Dear Friend, —

. . . We shall not be here long, for we leave Havre for New York the eleventh of September. It is quite unexpected. I have fully decided to try the career of a painter. In a year or two I shall knew definitely whether I am suited to it or not. If not, it will be easy to withdraw. There is nothing on earth more deplorable than a bad artist. We have there one of the best living painters, and I shall carry on my studies under him. Our sojourn in Germany will thus be greatly abridged, and you can imagine with what

[3] Adelaide Ristori, the famous Italian actress, began playing the title rôle of *Marie Stuart* when she was eighteen. She later did take the part of Elizabeth in Giacometti's play by the same name.

[4] Ritter's correspondence, including several letters from James, has been edited by his brother, Eugène Ritter, and published under the title of *Charles Ritter, ses amis et ses maîtres*, Lausanne, 1911. This letter was written in French and has been printed in part in *op. cit.*, 10–2.

ardor I ought to devote myself to acquiring the language during the few weeks that remain. But how hard it is! These particles are really ungraspable. No day passes without my cursing that idiotic tower of Babel where it all began. . . .

I have just read *The Sorrows of the Young Werther.* It is an extraordinary book, much more worthy of attention than I had supposed. The style is admirable. Read it, if you have n't already, and in German. . . .

I fear that I cannot pass by Geneva after leaving Bonn. I should indeed like to see that good city again and chat once more with you, dear friend. I find myself compelled to leave at the very moment when I have begun to make friends — to take root, in short. That 's the great inconvenience of being always *en passage.* . . . You will write me soon. Believe in the affection of your devoted friend

WILLIAM JAMES

The following letters from William James to his parents [5] throw light on the life of the divided family during the Bonn period, as well as on the crucial decision which was then their common problem. During August, when the die had already been cast, William wrote from Bonn to his parents in Paris and in London, where they were to be rejoined by their sons before sailing. The father's opposition to art in general, as well as his indulgence of its particular embodiments, was well known to William, and he felt a strong desire to meet that opposition by argument, at the same time that he intended to profit by the indulgence. Although the father's letters are unfortunately missing, his views can be supplied. Art was, he felt, frivolous, irresponsible, narrow, vain, and parasitic, as compared with either the glory of religion or the seriousness of science.

Bonn, Aug. 12 [1860]

My dearest Parents, —

I began to write to you the other day, but had not time to finish, and thought that I had better wait till Sunday when I would have plenty of time and more to tell you. The delay has not been caused by any lack of affection, I can assure you, for I have thought of you every hour since you have been gone. Wilky and Harry have both

[5] These letters have been published in an abbreviated form in *N.S.B.*, 43–7.

written, I suppose you have got their letters; and we have received Father's letter . . . and the *Once a Weeks*.[6] Your hearts, I know, would have been melted if you had had a view of us this morning. I went directly after breakfast for the boys, and though Harry had an "iron stomach ache," as he called it, we went together on that low wooded hill which Aunt Kate could see from her window, and walked until dinner time, Harry being part of the time in great pain. In one part we found a platform with a stone bench commanding a view of the whole valley. We were rather tired and so we sat down upon it, Harry and Wilky each with a *Once a Week,* while I tried to draw the valley in my pocket book. We wondered what our beloved parents were doing at that moment (half-past eleven), and thought that you must all have been in the parlor, Alice, the widow, with her eyes fixed on her novel, eating some rich fruit which Father has just brought in for her from the Palais Royal; and lovely Mother and Aunt Kate in arm-chairs with their hands crossed in front of them, listening to Father, who is walking up and down speaking of the superiority of America to these countries, and how much better that we should go home — and we wished, oh! how we wished! we could have been with you to partake of the fruit and join in the conversation. However, there are only three weeks more, and then we rush to your arms. With a heavy sigh we got up from the seat and went on, but in a way so fraternal, presenting such a sweet picture of brotherly unitedness and affection, that it would have done anyone good to have seen us. And so it is every day in our shorter walks and talks.

Nothing new has transpired since you left. Mrs. Stromberg has gone to Ems for a few weeks, so that there is more quiet at our house. The German gets on slowly, — a very marked improvement in talking, I have noticed. I have not studied so hard last week as before, and prevent Harry from working his eyes out, which he seems on the whole rather less inclined to do than when you left. I am going to read as much as I can the rest of the time. It seems to be a mere process of soaking, requiring no mental effort, but only time and steady patience. . . . Harry says he "wakes up every day from his lethargy to wish he was in Paris, instead of availing him-

[6] *Once a Week* was published in London from 1859 to 1880. It published the stories of such writers as George Meredith, Charles Reade, and George Du Maurier.

self of the little time he has here, — he ought to be ashamed!" (!) Harry has not touched the *Once a Weeks* until today!!! . . . My room is very comfortable now that I have got used to it, and got a pair of slippers of green plush, heavy and strong enough to last all my life and then be worn by my children. My bed is all right, and it will please Aunt Kate to hear that I have had two FLEAS (my first) which have bitten my skin off of me nearly. Now I can sympathize with her sufferings which I never rightly respected before. The Zoffingian photograph [7] has come. I had hard work to get it out of the post-office. It is perfectly laughable, though a better picture than I expected. They have given me a moustache big enough to furnish three horse-guards. . . . I suppose you are enjoying the fat of everything in Paris. What is this "Hôtel des Trois Empereurs"? Does it stand opposite the Hôtel du Louvre on the other side of the Place du Palais-Royal? We should all like to be there very much, although we ought to be thankful for our comforts here. Fine plums are now fifty for a groschen.

The sweet, lovely, delicious, little grey-eyed Alice must be locked up alone on the day after the receipt of this with paper and envelope to write a letter, unassisted, uncorrected and unpunctuated, to her loving brothers who would send her novels and plums if they could. Please all of you write every day, — you cannot do so too often. We will write as often as we can. Wilky sends oceans of love to all, and if Harry were here he would do the same. What a blessing it is to have such parents, such a lovely mother, and dear good Aunt Kate, and magnificent father, and delicious Alice! Ever your affectionate son, nephew, and brother

WILLIAM JAMES

Bonn [Aug. 19, 1860]

My dearest Father, —

I got your letter on Thursday. I wish you would, as you promise, set down as clearly as you can on paper what your idea of the nature of art is, because I do not probably understand it fully, and should like to have it presented in a form that I might think over at my leisure. I wanted very much to ask you to do so at Mrs. Livermore's, but feared you might not care to and refrained foolishly. Now I wish you would do it as fully as you conveniently can, so

[7] The students' "Société de Zoffingue" in Geneva.

that I may ruminate it. I will not say anything about it before I have got your next letter.

As for what your last letter did contain, what can I do but thank you for every word of it and assure you that every word went to the right spot! Having such a father with us, how can we be other than in some measure worthy of him, though not perhaps as eminently so as the distance leads his fond heart to imagine. In regard to our self-respect and purity, I hope and trust the day may never come when your wishes will be disappointed. I am sure that *I* should as deeply deplore any loss of them in myself as you possibly could for me, and I hope that with the other children the case is the same. I never value my parents (Father especially) so much as when I am away from them. At home I only see his faults and here he seems all perfection, and every night I wonder why I did not value them more when they were beside me. I beg darling old Mother's forgiveness for the cruel and dastardly way in which I snub her, and Aunt Kate's for the impatience and violence I have always shown towards her. If ever I get back I will be perfect sherry cobbler to both of them, and to the little Alice, too, for the harsh way in which I have treated her. . . .

I have just got home from dining at the boys' house. . . . They certainly live on the fat of the land, though they do not seem as sensible of their advantages as they should be. As I had been led to expect nothing of the kind, I was surprised at the sumptuousness of the dinner, rich beef, sausages, pigeons, capital vegetables and soup, all cooked just right, and a most delicious cherry pie, with two bottles of costly Rhine wine in honor of the day. The Doctor [Humpert] was as cordial as usual, and the two old ladies perfect characters for Dickens. They have been so shut out from the world and have been melting together so long by the kitchen fire that the minds of both have become confounded into one, and they seem to constitute a sort of two-bodied individual. I never saw anything more curious than the way in which they sit mumbling together at the end of the table, each using simultaneously the same exclamation if anything said at our end strikes their ear. The boys say they always speak together, using the same words or else one beginning a phrase, the other ending it. It is a singular life.

Harry studies pretty stoutly, but I do not think you need to be apprehensive about him. There has been no renewal of the stomach

aches that I am aware of, and he looks fatter and fresher than when you left. He and Wilky appear to get on very harmoniously together. They enliven themselves occasionally by very good-natured brotherly trials of strength in their bedroom, when study has made them dull and sleepy. In these sometimes one, sometimes the other is victor. We see each other every day. They often pay me a visit here in my room in the morning when I am dressing, which is very pleasant, and I have more than once been in their room early enough to be present at Wilky's tumble out of bed and consequent awaking, and call upon the already-at-work Harry: "Why did not you stop me?" . . . We are going to put Harry through a slashing big walk daily. His old white Lordet clothes began to look so shockingly grimy that we have at last induced him to take them to be cleaned. He clung to them with such affection that it was no easy matter. I have got on very well this last week in German, am beginning to understand and to make myself tolerably understood in straightforward matters. . . .

Thousand thanks to the cherry-lipped, apricot-nosed, double-chinned little Bal [8] for her strongly dashed-off letter, which inflamed the hearts of her lonely brothers with an intense longing to kiss and slap her celestial cheeks. . . . Mother, in her precious letter, speaks of having her photograph taken when we get there. I conjure her by all the affection she bears us and by the ties which bind her to the eldest son, not to have it done *before*. When we get there we will have a consultation about it. . . . Now bosom upon bosom full of love to all, from your affectionate

WILLY

Bonn, Aug. [24, 1860]

My dearest Father, —

Your letter came last evening too late for me to have answered it immediately. I hasten to take time to do so this morning in order to quiet your apprehensions about the time of our leaving Bonn. We have never for a moment forgotten that we were to do so on Friday, Aug. 31st. . . . With respect to the *Gazette des beaux arts,* I am sorry it should have caused you any uneasiness. The three numbers came punctually and in perfect condition, and I have by this time enjoyed all their contents (which are not as interesting as

[8] One of W.J.'s nicknames for his sister Alice.

those of many preceding numbers, however). . . . For the abundant *Once a Weeks* too, and for an *Illustrated* which we got yesterday morning, we are most grateful. . . .

I was very glad to get your preceding letter, although its contents were not exactly what I had expected. What I wanted to ask you for at Mrs. Livermore's were the reasons why I should not be an "artist." I could not *fully* make out from your talk there what were *exactly* the causes of your disappointment at my late resolve, what your view of the nature of art was, that the idea of my devoting myself to it should be so repugnant to you. Your present letter simply points out the spiritual danger in which a man is if he allows the bent of his æsthetic nature (supposed strong) to direct his activity. It does not, therefore, cover just the ground which I had expected, unless your repugnance was in great measure merely a repugnance to my exposure to such spiritual danger, which can hardly be the case. — But now I perceive that what I was just going to say is not true, and we had better leave the matter till I get to Paris and we can talk it over.

It of course gives me a sort of gratification to see that in your letter you seem to accept the *fact* of my being an "artist," and limit yourself to showing me what you think an artist is and how he may deceive himself. In as far as you have done so I think I understand you perfectly. I had already gathered the idea from your conversation and have often thought over it and felt all its truth. I think there is small danger of my ever forgetting it. The influence which my dealings with art and works of art hitherto have had upon me is such as would by no means tempt me to forget it. I do not see why a man's spiritual culture should not go on independently of his æsthetic activity, why the power which an artist feels in himself should tempt him to forget what he is, any more than the power felt by a Cuvier or Fourier would tempt them to do the same. Why should not a given susceptibility of religious development be found bound up in a mind whose predominant tendencies are artistic, as well as in one largely intellectual, granting, even, that the former be much the most elementary, the least dignified and useful? My experience amounts to very little, but it is all I have to go upon; and I am sure that far from feeling myself degraded by my intercourse with art, I continually receive from it spiritual impressions the intensest and purest I know. So it seems to me is my mind formed,

and *I can see* no reason for avoiding the giving myself up to art *on this score.* Of course if you even agree to let this pass, there remain other considerations which might induce me to hesitate, — those of utility, of duty to society, etc. All these, however, I think ought to be weighed down by strong *inclination* towards art, and by the fact that my life would be embittered if I were kept from it. That is the way I feel *at present.* Of course I may change. I may have misapprehended your position, too, and talked quite uselessly. We will see in a week. I have no more time. Great love to all. Good-bye.

W. J.

The parents were rejoined by their children on September 1, and ten days later the James family sailed for America on the *Adriatic.* As the younger Henry expressed it, "we went home to learn to paint." Not only were his problems subordinated to those of William, but he followed in his brother's wake. For when they all settled again in Newport in order that William might study painting with Hunt, the latter exercised a "fertilising action on our common life"; and "since W. J. for the first six months or so after our return, daily and devotedly haunted his studio, I myself did no less, for a shorter stretch, under the irresistible contagion." [9] In short, while William (together with John La Farge) drew and painted in the foreground, the younger Henry drew and painted in the background.

The vocational experiment was a complete success in the sense that it was altogether decisive. William learned by living with art that he could live without it. He had written to his friend Ritter that nothing was more to be deplored than a bad painter. It is safe to assume that the negative outcome of the experiment was the result of a growing conviction that he could not excel in a field in which mediocrity would be intolerable. That he had talent and interest is unquestionable; but he found the interest to be less compelling than he had thought, and he judged the talent to be less distinguished than his standards required. Having once rejected painting, he rarely looked back, and never with profound regrets.[10]

Though James definitely abandoned painting as a vocation, he did

[9] *N.S.B.*, 62, 79.

[10] His most serious doubt as to the wisdom of this decision was felt in 1872; *cf.* below, 327. The reader who wishes to form his own judgment of James's skill as a draughtsman and painter will find reproductions in *L.W.J.* and *N.S.B.*

not for that reason lose those qualities, nor even those interests, which had led him to make the experiment. He had acquired and retained something of the painter's professional prejudices, leading him, for example, to suspect the connoisseurship of the layman, and to feel the hopeless inadequacy, if not irrelevance, of æsthetics. He retained the painter's sensibility, and something of the artist's detachment. He cultivated style in his scientific and philosophical writing, and was offended by its absence in others. He allowed himself the artist's license. I mean that when a theme took him, it possessed him. His descriptions of people were, like his father's, *portraits,* in which he expressed some tonality of life which the subject conveyed to him. Hence when he was most personal he was often most impersonal. He indulged his moods because they were intuitive, and his playfulness because it was creative.

In analyzing the genius of William James, all this may properly be emphasized, provided in the end it is subordinated. For just as at this critical moment of his life he preferred science to painting, so does his life as a whole signify a preference of explanation and achievement to contemplation and imagination. He saw the landscape with a painter's eye and the artist's senses of plastic form, as in his descriptions of the "full-bodied air" of Edinburgh, its "plane rising behind plane of flat dark relieved against flat light in ever-receding gradation." [11] He had the artist's imagination and acute perception of sensory qualities, as when he paused in his writing to remark that "the light is shrieking away, outside." [12] But the gifts which qualified him to be an artist were from this crucial period of his life unreservedly dedicated to ulterior moral and speculative ends.

[11] *L.W.J.*, II, 146.
[12] A. J., *Journal,* Oct. 12, 1890.

XI

SCIENTIFIC STUDIES IN HARVARD

FROM 1861 William James's range of vocational alternatives was narrowed to science. He was, in short, to pursue knowledge. Whether it should be science in the stricter sense of natural science, or in the broader sense of philosophy; whether, if natural science, it should be science of experiment or of observation; and whether his intellectual vocation should assume the form of research, or of teaching, or of the practice of medicine — all of these questions lay ahead, to be answered only after twelve years of trial and doubt, during which the state of his health played as decisive a rôle as the self-revelation of interest and aptitude.

The autumn of 1861 found him a student of chemistry in the Lawrence Scientific School at Harvard, where Henry joined him the following year as a "singularly alien member" of the Law School. When he entered upon his academic career, William was nineteen years of age. To us who revive this autumn of 1861 in historical retrospect it was preëminently a time of civil war. The firing on Fort Sumter on the twelfth of the previous April had provoked an extraordinary outburst of patriotic fervor, and this had been succeeded in July by the depression following the battle of Bull Run. North and South were settling down to the grim business of protracted warfare. In November the Mason and Slidell affair inflamed popular feeling against England. Nationalism, the defense of the Union, the abolition of slavery, were the ideas that possessed the public mind. The elder James had been most passionately aroused, and had brought his dearest convictions to the support of these ideas in his July oration at Newport. The enlistment of the two younger boys, as well as of countless cousins and friends, afterwards brought the war directly home to the James family.[1]

[1] Wilkinson James enlisted in 1862 at the age of seventeen. "To me in my boyish fancy," he afterwards wrote, "to go to war seemed glorious indeed; to my parents it seemed a stern duty, a sacrifice worth any cost." ("The Assault on

There is no evidence, however, that William was in the autumn of 1861 preoccupied by the public questions of the day, as he was in later life — for example, at the time of the Spanish War. He expressed himself eloquently on the issues of the Civil War in his oration of 1897 at the dedication of the monument to Colonel Robert Gould Shaw, but this was retrospective and detached rather than contemporary. In 1861 physical frailty precluded the possibility of enlistment. That he did not utter himself more intensely on the subject is due in part, perhaps, to the fact that his social and political interests were not yet ripe; in part also, I suspect, to a feeling that if he could not act he preferred not to talk.

The year 1861 belongs not only to the age of the Civil War, but also to the age of Barnum. Advertising and Babbittry were not yet refined, but manifested themselves with forceful crudity. There is a certain strident note, an artfulness of first intent, which later sophistication finds naïve; a charlatanry so blatant, a quackery so transparent, as to seem honest; and which somehow enters, whether in visible bulk or as a mere aroma, into all the life of the times. It can be detected not only in Barnum and his "Great American Museum," or in Hermann, "The Great Prestidigitateur," or in patent-medicine advertising; but in commerce generally, in the oratory of the pulpit or platform, in the acting of Booth and Forrest, and in the quality of moral or patriotic demonstrations. It was the age of the exclamation point, when it was necessary to astonish in order to command attention; when shrillness of accent, the use of superlatives, and simple-minded boasting were still the principal instruments of publicity and propaganda. This was the vulgarism of the age, which James seems wholly to have escaped, whether by his aloofness from the life of the market place and forum, or by an instinctive repugnance.

In short, so far as wider national characteristics are concerned, I can see in William James no evidence whatever of his having entered on manhood in the decade of the 1860's. What shall be said of the local influences of New England? The transcendental movement was manifesting itself vigorously and had assumed institutional form in the Sanborn school, attended by the younger James

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Fort Wagner," in *War Papers*, Commandery of Wisconsin, Loyal Legion, Milwaukee, 1891.) Robertson James enlisted May 21, 1863.

boys. But to this whole wide current of influences, as well as to its Hegelian aftermath in the "Concord School of Philosophy," William seems to have been insusceptible — except for the case of Emerson, and it was what *divided* Emerson from these influences that commended him to James. The futility of transcendentalism, to Henry as well as to William, lay in its unself-critical solemnity. It was a series of "experiments in the void," unaware of the actual complications of life.[2] William James's mind seems always to have been disillusioned. It seems always to have been the kind of mind which requires an anvil to its hammer, a resistance to overcome — whether unmitigated evil for which to devise a remedy, or stubborn facts on which to think.

Turning, in search of influences, from New England generally to Harvard in particular, we find two groups of remarkable personages, which we may term the humanistic and the scientific groups. Harvard, under President Felton, was an undistinguished institution embracing distinguished men. That which a student remembered in after life was not that he took this or that course, or mastered this or that subject, but that he knew this or that man. The humanistic group intersected that of the literary celebrities of Boston and Cambridge. The *Atlantic Monthly,* edited by James T. Fields, was at this time publishing contributions by Hawthorne, Longfellow, Lowell, Holmes, Emerson, Whittier, Bayard Taylor, Norton, Mrs. Stowe, Harriet Martineau, and others of only slightly less repute. The *North American Review* was edited by A. P. Peabody, and later by Lowell, Norton, Gurney, and Henry Adams. In 1865, E. L. Godkin, who was intermittently a resident of Cambridge, began his famous editorship of the *Nation,* aided and abetted by Norton. Longfellow, Lowell, Holmes, Emerson, and Norton were all at one time or another officially connected with Harvard. This group belonged to the European as well as to the American world of letters. They frequently visited Europe themselves, and were in turn visited by distinguished travelers from abroad. The European contacts of the New England historians and diplomats were even more notable. Prescott, who had been a member of the Saturday Club, had just passed from the scene, but Motley was Minister to Austria and at home in all parts of Europe; while George Bancroft had been Minister in London and was shortly (in 1867) to be ap-

[2] *N.S.B.,* 217.

pointed to Berlin. Europe was nearer than were the Ohio and Mississippi valleys.[3]

This literary cosmopolitanism of Boston and Cambridge was congenial to James, and no doubt helped to confirm the influence already exerted by his own travel and European contacts. When he began to experiment with his pen, he wrote reviews and short articles for the *Atlantic,* the *North American Review,* and the *Nation;* and his career as a writer, like that of his brother, was greatly facilitated by the fact that he lived among the editors, and numbered such men as Lowell, Fields, Norton, Godkin, and Howells among his friends. But here the parallel ends. To Henry the New England men of letters were masters and colleagues, to William they were friends and sources of entertainment to whom he turned in his hours of relaxation.

There remains the scientific group, including Asa Gray, Benjamin Peirce, Louis Agassiz, Jeffries Wyman, and (after 1863) Wolcott Gibbs — also men of fame and greatness, through whom Boston and Cambridge participated in the thought if not in the life of the world, and were stirred from provincial sluggishness by winds from abroad. Agassiz, in particular, with his irresistible personal force, his disarming enthusiasm, and his unashamed Europeanism, wrought mightily to loosen the grip of local tradition. It was in science, and especially in the field of biological science, that Harvard was most contemporary and prophetic; and it was this emancipating influence, among all the forces of his time and place, that most deeply affected William James during the years of his university studies.[4]

James's interest in the natural sciences, like his interest in painting, dated from boyhood, when he showed an aptitude both for observation and for the use of instruments. He had shown curiosity enough to supplement his meagre scientific studies in Geneva by reading and visits to the museum. His brother testifies to this early bent: —

"As certain as that he had been all the while 'artistic' did it thus appear that he had been at the same time quite otherwise inquiring

[3] Edward Everett Hale writes that when Robert Todd Lincoln, bringing a letter of introduction from Stephen A. Douglas, entered Harvard in 1860, Lowell was apparently the only member of the faculty who had heard of his father. (E. E. Hale, *J. R. Lowell and His Friends,* 1899, 200–1.)

[4] Similarly, Henry Adams, who graduated from Harvard in 1858, reports that only Agassiz really stirred him. (*Education of Henry Adams,* 1918, 60.)

too — addicted to 'experiments' and the consumption of chemicals, the transfusion of mysterious liquids from glass to glass under exposure to lambent flame, the cultivation of stained fingers, the establishment and the transport, in our wanderings, of galvanic batteries, the administration to all he could persuade of electric shocks, the maintenance of marine animals in splashy aquaria, the practice of photography in the room I for a while shared with him at Boulogne, with every stern reality of big cumbrous camera, prolonged exposure, exposure mostly of myself, darkened development, also interminable, and ubiquitous brown blot. Then there had been also the constant, as I fearfully felt it, the finely speculative and boldly disinterested absorption of curious drugs. No livelier remembrance have I of our early years together than this inveteracy, often appalling to a nature so incurious as mine in *that* direction, of his interest in the 'queer' or the incalculable effects of things. There was apparently for him no possible effect whatever that might n't be more or less rejoiced in as such — all exclusive of its relation to other things than merely knowing." [5]

James's early scientific studies brought to light a fundamental quality of his mind. He was eagerly but *impatiently* interested. There was that in him which made prolonged application to the same task extremely repugnant. This quality was, as we have seen, temperamental. Its effect was enhanced by his periodic ill-health, which often made sustained effort impossible; but fundamentally it was a trait and not a symptom. He himself was disposed to regard it as a weakness, and whenever, as in the case of the writing of the *Principles of Psychology,* he committed himself to a task of large proportions, he fought and overcame it. But if it was a weakness it was the price he had to pay for his peculiar kind of strength. The power of his mind lay largely in its extreme mobility, its darting, exploratory impulsiveness. It was not a mind which remained stationary, drawing all things to itself as a centre; but a mind which traveled widely, — now here and now there, — seeing all things for itself, and making up in the variety of its adventures for what it lacked in poise.

James's teacher of chemistry in the Lawrence Scientific School was Charles William Eliot, who was an acute observer of men and

[5] *N.S.B.*, 122–3.

one who weighed his words. This is what he afterwards said of his famous pupil: —

"James was a very interesting and agreeable pupil, but was not wholly devoted to the study of chemistry. . . . His excursions into other sciences and realms of thought were not infrequent; his mind was excursive, and he liked experimenting, particularly novel experimenting. . . . In 1863–4 [he] changed from the Department of Chemistry to that of Comparative Anatomy and Physiology in the Lawrence Scientific School, and became for one year a pupil of Professor Jeffries Wyman. His tendency to the subject of physiology had appeared clearly during his two years in the Department of Chemistry; so that I enlisted him, in the second year of his study of chemistry, in an inquiry into the effects on the kidneys of eating bread made with the Liebig-Horsford baking powder, whose chief constituent was an acid phosphate. But James did not like the bread, and found accurate determination of its effects three times a day tiresome and unpromising; so that after three weeks he requested me to transfer that inquiry to some other person. . . . The two interesting points about his education are: first, its irregularity — it did not conform to the Boston and Cambridge traditional method; and secondly, it was in large proportion observational, and particularly in the biological sciences. The systematic part of his education did not foretell his subsequent devotion to philosophical studies; but his unsystematic excursions did." [6]

The central point here is James's tendency to "unsystematic excursions," the movement of his mind curiously duplicating the movements of his body, and giving him a cosmopolitanism of thought and experience — in a genuinely cosmic, and not merely in the usual and more limited sense. In this tendency Eliot was shrewd enough to recognize a hopeful promise of philosophy and not a mere negation of science.

But Wyman and Agassiz, not Eliot, were the teachers who counted during these years. Jeffries Wyman was Hersey Professor of Anatomy in the Harvard Medical School. As a scientist he represented extreme scrupulousness without narrowness or pedantry. His range of interests was wide. He was a field naturalist as well

[6] These statements are quoted from a memorandum which President Eliot prepared for Mr. Henry James, and from which the latter quotes in *L.W.J.*, I, 31–2.

as an experimentalist, and he addressed himself eagerly to the great controversial topics of his day — evolution and "spontaneous generation." But he was distinguished from his colleague Agassiz by his greater openness of mind and patient suspension of judgment until such time as the evidence should prove decisive. When Dr. Holmes said of him that "his word would be accepted on a miracle," he testified to his reputation for extreme caution as well as for character.[7] To William James, who was instantly attracted to him and came directly and almost continuously under his influence for five years, he was a scientific paragon. His "unmagisterial manner," his "complete and simple devotion to objective truth," his "disinterestedness," his "accuracy and thoroughness," not only embodied what the scientist ought to be, but contributed greatly to the forming of that scientific conscience which exercised a constant censorship upon James's speculative profligacy.[8]

Louis Agassiz was so conspicuous a figure in the Boston and Cambridge of the '60s that James inevitably felt his power, though it does not appear that until he joined him on his Brazilian expedition in 1865 he had any closer association than that of auditor and casual acquaintance. Agassiz, at this time fifty-three years of age, and professor of geology in the Lawrence Scientific School, was at the height of his power and fame. Comparing Wyman with Agassiz, James wrote that the latter was more "widely effective"; and when he suggested that Wyman's fame would have been greater if he had had a little more egotism and ambition, it was Agassiz, no doubt, that was in his mind. Wyman was a saint, Agassiz was a hero, a titan — enthusiastic, powerful, irresistibly magnetic. Being masterful, he exercised a natural ascendancy over others. "From his boyhood," wrote William James, "he looked on the world as if it and he were made for each other, and on the vast diversity of living things as if he were there with authority to take mental possession of them all." He had, like Wyman, an interest as broad as all biology; and made, besides, an impression of personal greatness which distinguished him in any company of men, and made it natural that even the Saturday Club, composed almost solidly of celebrities, should be known to some as "Agassiz's Club." He was "recognized by all," continues William James, "as one of

[7] *Early Years of the Saturday Club*, 427.

[8] "Professor Jeffries Wyman," *Harvard Advocate*, XVIII (Oct. 1, 1874), 8–9; *L.W.J.*, I, 50.

those folio copies of mankind . . . who aim at nothing less than an acquaintance with the whole of animated Nature." [9] His genius lay not in abstract reasoning, which he despised, but in a comprehensive massing and organization of facts.

When James began to teach, he drew most heavily upon what he had learned from Wyman. The first philosophical problem to which he devoted himself systematically was the problem of evolution, and here also it was the same teacher who had first shown him the way. This, together with the ideal of scientific purity, was his debt to Wyman. To Agassiz he owed the strong stimulation of his scientific interest. He felt, as did all who came under Agassiz's hypnotic spell, that "natural history must indeed be a godlike pursuit, if such a man as this can so adore it." Above all he learned from Agassiz to believe that abstract knowledge is a second best, transcended in immediate acquaintance. Thus he testified in 1896: "We cannot all escape from being abstractionists. I myself, for instance, have never been able to escape; but the hours I spent with Agassiz so taught me the difference between all possible abstractionists and all livers in the light of the world's concrete fulness, that I have never been able to forget it." [10]

Others mentioned in the letters of this first academic year played an important part in James's later life: Francis J. Child, his senior but beloved friend; Thomas W. Ward, the intimate companion of his youth; Charles S. Peirce, philosophical colleague of his maturity; Charles W. Eliot, president of Harvard during his entire teaching career. The letters were written from Cambridge to his family, all now living in Newport except Wilky and Bob, who had been surrendered to "the famous Mr. Sanborn" at Concord and from there made occasional visits to Cambridge. William had taken rooms first with Mr. John Pasco, at the corner of Linden and Harvard Streets; later, in midwinter, he moved to Trowbridge Street, near Main Street, the present Massachusetts Avenue, where he lived in the Samuel Sweester household (a "Mr. and Miss S., Mr. S.'s three gushing girls, a parrot, and a maniac"). [11] He boarded with Miss Upham at the junction of Oxford and Kirkland, in what was later known as Foxcroft House, on the site of the present New Lecture Hall. The term had opened on August 29.

[9] *M.S.*, 4, 6.
[10] *Ibid.*, 10, 14.
[11] *N.S.B.*, 221, 140.

[Sept. 7–8, 1861]

Professor Eliot is a fine fellow, I suspect, a man who, if he resolves to do a thing, will do it. I find analysis very interesting *so far.*

Sept. 10 [1861]

Your letter this morning was such a godsend that I hasten to respond a line or two, although I have no business to for I have a fearful lesson tomorrow and am going to Boston tonight to hear Professor Agassiz lecture (twelve lectures on "Methods in Natural History"). . . . Miss Upham's table is much pleasanter than the other. Professor Child is a great joker (he is a little flaxen-headed boy of about forty), there is a nice old lady boarder, another man of about fifty of aristocratic bearing who interests me much, and three intelligent students. At the other table there was no conversation at all. The fellows had that American solemnity, called each other Sir, etc. You cannot tell, dearest Mother, how your account of the Sunday dinner and of your feelings thereat brought tears to my eyes. I shall enjoy home as I never did before when I get back. . . . I am very glad Father got through so well. I hope his head is all right now. Give him my ardent love, and to Harry, and . . . cover with kisses the round fair face of the most kissworthy Alice, and kiss Aunt Kate until you get tired, and get all the rest of your family to kiss you until you cry, "Hold! Enough!" and so oblige, dearest Mother, your devoted son,

WILLY

Sept. 16 [1861]

This chemical analysis is so bewildering at first that I am entirely "muddled and beat" [12] and have to employ most all my time reading up. Agassiz gives now a course of lectures in Boston, to which I have been. He is evidently a great favorite with his audience and feels so himself. But he is an admirable, earnest lecturer, clear as day, and his accent is most fascinating. I should like to study under him. Prof. Wyman's lectures on the comparative anatomy of

[12] From Sir James Stephen's account of the Lincolnshire boor whose dying words were: "What with faith, and what with the earth a-turning round the sun, and what with the railroads a-fuzzing and a-whuzzing, I 'm clean stonied, muddled, and beat." *Essays, by a Barrister,* 1862, 233. Stephen was a favorite author, frequently quoted by W.J.

vertebrates promise to be very good; prosy perhaps a little and monotonous, but plain and packed full and well arranged (*nourris*). Eliot I have not seen much of; I don't believe he is a *very* accomplished chemist, but can't tell yet. Young [Charles] Atkinson . . . is a very nice boy. . . . The rest of this year's class is nothing wonderful. In last year's there is a son of Prof. Peirce, whom I suspect to be a very "smart" fellow with a great deal of character, pretty independent and violent though. . . . We are only about twelve in the laboratory, so that we have a very cosy time. I expect to have a winter of "crowded" life.[13]

[Nov. 1861]

As Wilky has submitted to you a résumé of his future history for the next few years, so will I, hoping it will meet your approval. Thus: one year study chemistry, then spend one term at home, then one year with Wyman, then a medical education, then five or six years with Agassiz, then probably death, death, death with inflation and plethora of knowledge.[14]

Dec. 25 [1861]

The *place,* to me, improves as I go on living here, and if I study with Agassiz four or five years I should like to have you all here, with me, comfortable. I had a long talk with one of his students the other night and saw for the first time how a naturalist could feel about his trade in the same way that an artist does about his. For instance, Agassiz would rather take wholly uninstructed people, "for he has to unteach them all that they have learnt." He does not let them *look* into a book for a long while, what they learn they must learn for themselves, and be *masters* of it all. The consequence is he makes *naturalists* of them, he does not merely cram them, and this student (he had been there two years) said he felt ready to go anywhere in the world now with nothing but his notebook and study out anything quite alone. He must be a great teacher. Chemistry comes on tolerably, but not as fast as I expected. I am pretty slow with my substances, having done but twelve since Thanksgiving and having thirty-eight more to do before the end of the term.[15]

[13] Reprinted from *L.W.J.*, I, 34–5.
[14] Reprinted from *L.W.J.*, I, 42.
[15] Selections from this letter appear also in *N.S.B.*, 131–4.

[March 1, 1862]

President Felton's death [16] has been the great event of the week, two funerals and I do not know how many prayers and sermons. Today I thought I would go to chapel for the sake of variety, and hear Dr. Peabody's final word on him — and a very long and lugubrious one it was. The prayer was a prolonged moan in which the death (not in its consequences but in itself) was treated of as a great calamity, and the eulogy of the sermon was almost ridiculously overcharged. What was most disagreeable throughout the whole was the wailing tone, — not a bit that of simple pagan grief at the *loss* (which would have been honest), but a whine consciously *put on* as if from a sense of duty, and a whine at *nothing* definite either, but a purposeless clothing of all his words in tears. The whole style of the performance was so false and unpleasant that I have concluded to have nothing more to do with funerals till they improve. . . . I am now studying organic chemistry. It will probably shock Mother to hear that I yesterday destroyed a handkerchief — but it was an old one, and I converted it into some sugar which, though rather brown, is very good. I believe I forgot to tell you that I am shorn of my brightest ornament. That solitary hirsute jewel which lent such a manly and martial aspect to my visage is gone, and the place thereof is naked. Please don't let Father get excited. I don't think anyone will know the difference, and moreover it is not dead, it only sleeps and some day will rise phœnix like from its ashes with tenfold its former beauty. When Father comes let him bring *Ganot,*[17] *if Harry does not want it.*

June 20, 1862

This is "Class Day," *the* day of the year at Cambridge, when the senior class receive their friends, have an oration and poem by men chosen by themselves, etc. It is about three o'clock. I have just returned from the college yard which looks like a vast conservatory of gay flowers. . . . The oration was very well delivered, and I thought its humor better than its ethics. The poem was very good indeed though recited like a see-saw. . . . This evening there is more dancing etc. Aunt Mary Temple and I have had several

[16] President C. C. Felton died Feb. 25, 1862. He had been President of Harvard College only two years.

[17] The reference is to Adolphe Ganot's *Traité de physique expérimentale et appliquée,* 1853.

disputes about the beauty of the male full dress of modern times. The experience of today puts to flight forever all my misgivings (not that I ever had any) as to the correctness of my former judgment. Mind, I am only denying to it the quality of *grace;* and am perfectly willing to allow that its other advantages are many. For instance the most poverty-stricken and ill-favored "scrub" . . . is most glad to feel that the most accomplished man in his class has no chance of appearing more gentlemanly than he. All the *character* of the divine human form vanishes at its touch, and the seniors going about today have a seedy, sneaking, undertaker look which makes you feel like despising them. Amid the crowd in the yard they look like servants or sycophants. There is, I am sure, in the garb something unmanly and undignified — and beside these poor fellows, the juniors and other swells with their easy sacks or ample skirts and gay cravats and colored legs and hats look doubly noble. At any rate they don't insult nature, and if she has made them "gentlemen" let it be seen.

The second year at Harvard saw William settled in new rooms at Mrs. H. L. Stewart's, on Mt. Auburn Street, near Hilliard. He continued his studies in chemistry with Eliot, but did not finish the year. The following is to his sister Alice. His father had come on to arrange for the publication of his *Substance and Shadow,* which appeared in 1863.

Cambridge, Oct. 19, 1862

Dearest Child, —

Although unwell, such is the love I cherish for you and for all the dear folks at home that I cannot resist writing a few words this evening, in order to keep up our affectionate relations and to thank you for your nice letters, which, though rudely and coarsely executed, are rather *more* than *less* delightful for it. Father has been making such a long stay here that you at home must be beginning to think of coming on after him. I think now he will stay till Wilky leaves, *si toujours* he *does* leave, on Tuesday. I think the knocking about and excitement here is doing him good. I have been with him to the printer's, and think that between us three one of the prettiest books of modern times will be produced — plain, unadorned, but severely handsome. . . .

I have had since last Sunday a boil in my elbow. Eliot with voice of absolute certainty told me to keep painting it with iodine, and as he rarely proffers a remark, those which he does let fall have double weight. So how could I help hopefully painting away. The result has been to keep the boil about *in statu quo* until about three days ago, when my arm began to swell voluminously. The iodine seems to prevent the formation of a crater, but what else it does, heaven and Eliot alone know. It is very painful to apply, and seems only to prolong the boil, and having dropped its use I now curse it aloud. I am quite sick and feverish tonight, and sit under my lamp wrapped in my overcoat writing *à la seule que j'aime* and wishing for nothing so much as an hour or two of her voluble and senseless, though soothing and pleasing, talk. Her transparent eyes, soft step, and gentle hands, her genial voice and mood, never seemed to me more desirable or more lovable than now. And what a hallowed warmth and light environs our too fond mother's form, too, as my mind's eye now sees us; she who is always as ready to soothe us in sickness as to guide us in health, and who is as unassuming and gentle in the one function as in the other. Dear old Aunt Kate too, whose self-sacrificing zeal and devotion never seemed so angelic, and whose cool and comfortable fussing around your sickly frame never so exquisitely grateful — and the sprightly, genial Bob, with the healthy breeze of active, moving life he always bears in with him — all — all — rush over me like an aged and mellow sea at the bottom of which my soul lies faintly floating. One sofa is vacant in the parlor of my home, one place unfilled, — 't is mine. Harry just comes in, sweet child, and sends his love to each and all. You shall have Bourdon's arithmetic and anything else you please. Good night — a thousand kisses to all — *le seul qui t'aime,*

WM. JAMES

To conceive James during these years as engaged in the study of chemistry, comparative anatomy, or medicine, is to form a very inadequate idea of his intellectual development. He was perpetually grazing and ruminating, wandering wherever the pasturage was good. Fortunately two notebooks of the year 1862–1863 have been preserved, in which appear — along with items extracted from the lectures of Agassiz on "Geology and the Structure and Classification of the Animal Kingdom," and Joseph Lovering on "Electrostatics, Electrodynamics and Acoustics" — pencil drawings, his-

torical and literary chronologies, sayings of Charles Peirce, an outline of the French Revolution, and abstracts of Büchner's *Kraft und Stoff,* Max Müller's *History of Ancient Sanskrit Literature,* Farrar's *Origins of Language,* and Jonathan Edwards's *Original Sin.* The entries in these books, and in an Index Rerum begun in 1864, range over the whole field of literature, history, science, and philosophy. They indicate a mind as energetic and acquisitive as it was voracious and incorrigibly vagrant. The following entry is characteristic: "Feb'y 12. Read Buckle's essay on Mill. Buckle's noble enthusiasm for truth is inspiring. Read also, or rather skipped through, Balzac's 'Lys dans la vallée.' Wonderful! There never was such devotion of author to subject before. I will read all Balzac."

The autumn of 1863 finds James rooming at the house of Sophia H. Appleton, 616 Main Street, whence he moved later in the year to Divinity Hall. Although in September he again registered in the Lawrence Scientific School, the focus of his interest had shifted from chemistry to biology, and in the same month he began his studies in the Medical School. He immediately began to have "a filial feeling" towards Wyman,[18] and to set his heart on a scientific career, with "natural history" as his subject. Business (perhaps printing) and medicine (perhaps psychiatry) were the more lucrative alternatives.[19] The following paragraph from a letter to his mother best summarizes the state of his mind on the ever-present question of a profession: —

Monday night [Nov. 2, 1863]

I feel very much the importance of making soon a final choice of my business in life. I stand now at the place where the road forks. One branch leads to material comfort, the flesh-pots, but it seems a kind of selling of one's soul. The other to mental dignity and independence; combined, however, with physical penury. If I myself were the only one concerned I should not hesitate an instant in my choice. But it seems hard on Mrs. W. J., "that not impossible she," to ask her to share an empty purse and a cold hearth. On one side is *science;* upon the other *business* (the honorable, honored and productive business of printing seems most attractive), with *medi-*

[18] *L.W.J.,* I, 50.

[19] James's cousin, Katharine Barber James, had married Dr. William Henry Prince, first superintendent of the Northampton State Hospital, and this circumstance no doubt contributed to his interest (both psychological and medical) in the insane. *Cf. L.W.J.,* I, 43–5.

cine, which partakes of the advantages of both, between them, but which has drawbacks of its own. I confess I hesitate. I fancy there is a fond maternal cowardice which would make you and every other mother contemplate with complacency the worldly fatness of a son, even if obtained by some sacrifice of his "higher nature." But I fear there might be some anguish in looking back from the pinnacle of prosperity (*necessarily* reached, if not by eating dirt, at least by renouncing some divine ambrosia) over the life you might have led in the pure pursuit of truth. It seems as if one *could* not afford to give that up for any bribe, however great. Still, I am undecided. The medical term opens tomorrow and between this and the end of the term here, I shall have an opportunity of seeing a little into medical business. I shall confer with Wyman about the prospects of a naturalist and finally decide. I want you to become familiar with the notion that I *may* stick to science, however, and drain away at your property for a few years more. If I can get into Agassiz's museum I think it not improbable I may receive a salary of $400 or $500 in a couple of years. I know some stupider than I who have done so. You see in that case how desirable it would be to have a home in Cambridge. Anyhow, I am convinced that *somewhere* in this neighborhood is the place for us to rest. These matters have been a good deal on my mind lately, and I am very glad to get this chance of pouring them into yours.[20]

Although James had now entered the Medical School, his studies were chiefly under the direction of Jeffries Wyman. It is clear that the *practice* of medicine did not attract him. "I embraced the medical profession a couple of months ago," he wrote on February 21, 1864. "My first impressions are that there is much humbug therein, and that, with the exception of surgery, in which something positive is sometimes accomplished, a doctor does more by the moral effect of his presence on the patient and family, than by anything else. He also extracts money from them."

In the spring of 1864, after many doubts and difficulties had been overcome, the James family at last settled upon a house in Boston and moved to 13 Ashburton Place. Although this step happily united James to his family, it put an end for nearly a year to his correspondence.

[20] Reprinted from *L.W.J.*, I, 45–6. It is now possible to fix the date of the letter.

XII

THE BRAZILIAN EXPEDITION

JAMES continued his medical studies until the end of March, 1865, when he joined the Thayer Expedition to Brazil. This promised a period of close association with Agassiz, and a trial of the career of biology, which was still a live alternative. The interruption of his studies induced a general examination of prospects and possibilities. The long voyage and the ensuing period of illness gave him leisure to reflect, while absence from his family provided an occasion for putting his reflections on record. Behind his more or less playful manner there is unmistakable evidence of a brooding preoccupation with philosophy.

Alonzo Potter, Bishop of the Episcopal Church in Pennsylvania, and one of James's traveling companions on the outward voyage, was a graduate of Union College and former Lowell Lecturer in Boston. He was on his way around Cape Horn in search of health, but died in this same year soon after reaching San Francisco. The expedition had sailed from New York on April 1: —

At Sea, April 21–25, 1865

My dearest Parents, —

Everyone is writing home to catch the steamer which leaves Rio on Monday. I do likewise, although, so far, I have very little to say to you. You cannot conceive how pleasant it is to feel that tomorrow we shall lie in smooth water at Rio and the horrors of this voyage will be over. O the vile Sea! the damned Deep! No one has a right to write about the "nature of evil" or to have any opinion about evil, who has not been at sea. The awful slough of despond into which you are there plunged furnishes too profound an experience not to be a fruitful one. I cannot yet say what the fruit is in my case but I am sure some day of an accession of wisdom from it. . . .

The main incidents on board have been Agassiz's daily lectures. Bishop Alonzo Potter, with his third wife, is with us. He and

Prof. Agassiz furnish as good an illustration of the saying: "You caw me and I 'll caw you," as I ever saw — though I think Agassiz will be left a little in the debt of the worthy Bish. unless he makes it up tomorrow. The Bish. tells me he knows Father and Father spent some days in his house when he came to Boston years ago. He has read "Substance and Shadder," and though disagreeing with the doctrine, admires the ability displayed and the very fine style. Last Sunday he preached a sermon particularly to us "savans," as the outsiders call us, and told us we must try to imitate the simple child-like devotion to truth of our great leader. We must give up our pet theories of transmutation, spontaneous generation, etc., and seek in nature what God has put there rather than try to put there some system which our imagination has devised, etc., etc. (*Vide* Agassiz *passim.*) The good old Prof. was melted to tears, and wepped profusely. He has profoundly impressed both the Captain, Mr. Billings[1] . . . who is the grand panjandrum of the California University, and the Bish.; and I am sure the words of the latter were as heartfelt as anything in such a wooden man can be. . . .

I fancy the work *here* will roll up continually before the Prof. If he finds glacier marks on the mountains behind Rio, he will not need to go to the Andes, and maybe not then to the Amazon. Still, *omnia exeunt in mysterium.* He tells me he wants me to work upon the polyps and jelly fish here at Rio. I have been much exercised on the voyage about how to return home. . . . In an excellent bookstore filled with French scientific and philosophical works this morning, and stimulated by the European atmosphere of things, I had such a yearning towards the sinful but human old continent as made me almost burst my skin.[2] . . . Your loving

W. J.

Rio, May 3–10, 1865

Although we have been here so long, we have only just begun to get systematically at work. I confess that the unchartered freedom did me tire. . . . We have a laboratory established over Mr. Davis's store, and we have three bedrooms just off it, in which six

[1] Frederick Billings was at this time a trustee of the College of California. It was he who suggested that the town in which the college was located be called Berkeley.

[2] Other portions of this letter will be found in *L.W.J.*, I, 57–60.



William James, 1865



Henry James, His Brother, about 1865

of us sleep. . . . Prof. has given me the marine critters of the bay (except fishes) while I am here, which is delightful, but it will cut me off of most of the excursions which the other men will make while we are here. You can imagine nothing which will equal the profusion of the lower forms of life here at low water. I shall keep on now working as steadily as I can in every way, and trying to be of as much use as I can to the Professor. Although several bushels of different things have already been collected, *nothing* has been done which could not have been done just as well by writing from Boston. Tomorrow, however, three excursions are going off. Professor is a very interesting man. I don't yet understand him very well. His *charlatanerie* is almost as great as his solid worth; and it seems of an unconscious childish kind that you can't condemn him for, as you would most people. He wishes to be too omniscient. But his personal fascination is very remarkable. I don't know whether, after all, our expedition will accomplish as much as it promised to. Prof. himself is a first rate captain, to be sure, and can organize splendidly. But of his eleven assistants, three are absolute idiots; Tom Ward, Dexter[8] and myself know nothing; of the five who know something, one is superannuated and one in such a feeble condition that the least exertion renders him unwell. Remain three whole men. I don't want to find fault with anyone, but merely to show that the real strength of the party is by no means proportioned to its size. . . .

Prof. told me yesterday he was going to send four of us overland to Pará, one, a geologist; the others must settle among themselves who shall go. I think it probable now that Tom Ward and I will make two. . . .

You 've no idea how I pine for war news. When I get home I 'm going to study philosophy all my days. I hope this letter has not a sombre tone. If it has it is owing to my digestive derangement. I have only written today from sheer necessity. I never looked forward to anything with more pleasure than to the making of this overland journey. Good-bye! beloved family. . . . Your loving

W. J.

He did not go on the overland journey, but had smallpox (or varioloid) instead, being stricken a few days after the last letter

[8] Simon Newton Dexter, of Utica, N. Y., Harvard '70.

was written. As soon as he recovered he wrote at length to his family, saying that his "coming was a mistake," and that he was evidently "cut out for a speculative rather than an active life": "Agassiz has treated me very well, and agrees cordially to my going home, though of course I am a pair of hands lost to him. He is an extraordinary being, having with all his foibles, a greater personal fascination than anyone I know. . . . I have seen . . . a most extraordinary and lovely country, and it has been worth a long journey."[4] The same letter contained an ominous allusion to the "sensitiveness" of his eyes. Although he was promptly reassured as to any permanent impairment of his vision, he suffered for many years, and intermittently throughout the remainder of his life, from an inability to use his eyes without excessive fatigue. His health and spirits improved rapidly, however, and his stay in Brazil was prolonged until March 1866. The next letter is to his brother: —

Original Seat of Garden of Eden
July 15 [1865]

Darling Harry, —

This place is not twenty miles from Rio, which damnable spot I left this morning at six, and now (two P.M.), am sitting on a stone resting from my walk and thinking of thee and the beloved ones in Bosting. No words, but only savage inarticulate cries, can express the gorgeous loveliness of the walk I have been taking. Houp lala! The bewildering profusion and confusion of the vegetation, the inexhaustible variety of its forms and tints (and yet they tell us we are in the winter when much of its brilliancy is lost) are *literally* such as you have never dreamt of. The brilliancy of the sky and the clouds, the effect of the atmosphere, which gives their proportional distance to the diverse planes of the landscape, make you admire the old gal Nature. I almost thought my enjoyment of nature had entirely departed, but here she strikes such massive and stunning blows as to overwhelm the coarsest apprehension. I am sitting on a rock by the side of a winding mule-path. The mule-path is made over an "erratic drift" which much delighteth Agassiz, but makes it truly erratic to the traveler. On my left, up the hill, there rises the wonderful, inextricable, impenetrable forest; on my right the hill plunges down into a carpet of vegetation which reaches

[4] The remainder of this letter is published in *L.W.J.*, I, 60–4.

to the hills beyond, which rise further back into mountains. Down in the valley I see three or four of the thatched, mud hovels of Negroes, embosomed in their vivid patches of banana trees. The hills on both sides and the path descend rapidly to the shores of a large lagoon separated by a forest-clad strip of land from the azure sea, whose surf I can hear continuously roaring at this distance. Would I could get so far, but the road is too long. A part of the path hither lay through an orange thicket where the great, hard, sweet, juicy fruit strewed the ground more than ever did apples the good old Concord turnpike. Out in the sea are a few rocky islands on which a few palm trees cut against the sky and give the whole a tropical look. How often, my dear old Harry, would I have given everything to have you by my side to enjoy the magnificent landscape of this region! As for the rest I don't enjoy it so much.

But I will write more before the next steamer. *Au revoir* at present.

This letter of July 15 partook of the nature of a literary exercise, communicated to a brother with an eye to landscape and style. It was enclosed in a letter dated July 23, 1865, from which the following extracts are taken: "At last the various postponements are over and we start for Pará day after tomorrow without fail, which will bring us 1500 miles or more nearer home. . . . I enclose a slip I wrote to you the other day. Since then I have seen some more scenery and been on two large plantations in the interior. Very interesting. I pine for some conversation of an intellectual character, and I can't read. Would I might hear your articles on Goethe and Arnold. Would I might hear Father's on 'Faith and Science' or his letter [5] to the *Evening Post* on Johnson's drunken-

[5] The "letter" here referred to, and which appeared in the *New York Evening Post* on May 18, 1865, is not the least remarkable of James's polemical utterances. Replying to the charge that President Johnson was intoxicated at the time of the delivery of his Inaugural Address, he pays his respects to the pharisaism and snobbism of the London *Times* and *Saturday Review*, and then contends that Johnson's momentary use of stimulants was not only excusable because of his illness, but justified by the candor and humanity (as referring to his humble origin) of the utterance which resulted. "It is very doubtful to me," he said, "whether President Johnson would have given the frank utterance he did to the divine emotion which glowed in his soul, if he had been left to his ordinary carnal prudence."

"Faith and Science" appeared in the *North Amer. Rev.* for Oct. 1865. The same number contained critical notices of Arnold's *Essays in Criticism* and Carlyle's translation of Goethe's *Wilhelm Meister*, by H.J., Jr.

ness! Would I might hear Chauncey Wright philosophize for one evening, or see La Farge, or Perry, or Holmes." [6]

In the Xingú River, Aug. 23–25 [1865]

My dear Mother, —

I wrote the day we arrived at Pará a note to Aunt Kate in which I reiterated what I had written before, *viz.*, that I should be home in October. That was merely the date to which I had postponed the early departure I had resolved upon in Rio. I am very sorry if I have disappointed you by making you hope to see me too soon — but now that the real enjoyment of the expedition is beginning and I am tasting the sweets of these lovely forests here, I find it impossible to tear myself away, and this morning I told the Professor that I would see this Amazon trip through at any rate. My eyes are getting better, and as I begin to be able to look at objects without dreading a jumping toothache in one of them for half the night, I arouse myself from the dismal potato existence I have been leading for the last three months, and begin to feel as if there were a little of the human being left in me. Still in these ashes glow their wonted fires. I see, moreover, a chance of learning a good deal of zoölogy and botany now, as we shall have a good deal of spare time; and I am getting a pretty valuable training from the Professor, who pitches into me right and left and wakes me up to a great many of my imperfections. This morning he said I was "totally uneducated." He has done me much good already, and will evidently do me more before I have got through with him.

Mrs. Agassiz is one of the best women I have ever met. Her good temper never changes and she is so curious and wide awake and interested in all that we see, and so ever busy and spotless, that she is like an angel in the boat. . . . Agassiz is too happy for anything, — I fear the gods are bent upon his ruin. Since we arrived at Pará fourteen days ago, he has found forty-six *new species* of fish, and a total number of fishes greater than the collection which Spix and Martius [7] made in the whole four years of their sojourn! The reason is that he gets everyone to help him. . . . If Harry would keep his promise and send Father's letter to the *Evening Post*

[6] *Cf.* below, 230, 243.

[7] The reference is to *Reise in Brasilien, 1817–1820,* by J. B. Spix and K. F. Martius, 1823.

about Johnson's ebriety, I would take it very kindly. I wish you could send the *North American* too. . . . Adieu! Adieu! Adieu! Yours,

W. JAMES

Teffé (Amazon), Oct. 21–22, 1865

My dearest Parents, —

I arrived here three days ago from my canoe voyage and found letters from Father, Mother and Wilky who had just heard through T. Ward of my sickness at Rio. It almost broke my heart to see how troubled you had been about it and what unnecessary anxiety it had given you. I almost wish I had concealed the whole affair from your knowledge till it was well past. Actually it was nothing. I now look back upon it as one of the pleasantest and quaintest experiences of my life. It has left my face absolutely unmarked, so that Agassiz declares it could have been no smallpox, but only a mild case of varioloid. My health at present is probably better than it ever was in my life. . . . I never felt in better spirits, nor more satisfied than I do now with the way in which I am spending my time. I feel that I am gaining a great deal in every way. I wish I could send this letter home by telegraph so as to neutralize instantaneously the effect of some of my past letters, which I recollect for some time after my sickness were calculated to make you think I was discontented. The fact was that my blindness made me feel very blue and desponding for some time. I only rejoice that I was saved from acting on my feeling; for every day for the last two months I have thanked heaven that I kept on here, and put the thing through instead of going prematurely home. . . .

We shall be at Pará by the middle of December, certainly. I am very anxious to learn whether the New York and Brazilian steamers are to run. We may learn at Manaos, where there is also a chance for letters for us, and American papers. Why can't you send the *North American* with Father's and Harry's articles? It would be worth any price to me. . . .

I wrote in my last letter something about the possibility of my wishing to go down south again with the Professor. I don't think there is any more probability of it than of my wishing to explore Central Africa. If there is anything I hate it is collecting. I don't think it suited to my genius at all, but for that very reason this little

exercise in it I am having here is the better for me. I am getting to be very practical, orderly, and business-like. That fine disorder which used to prevail in my precincts and which used to make Mother heave a beautiful sigh when she entered my room, is treated by the people with whom I am here as a heinous crime, and I feel very sensitive and ashamed about it. . . .

I pine for Harry's literary *efforts* and to see a number or so of the *Nation*. You can't send too many magazines or papers.[8] . . .

W. J.

It will be noted that William was interested in his brother's literary career, and that that career might be said to have begun with a contribution to the *North American Review* in 1864. To law Henry had proved impervious, though the so-called study of it had been made to yield something for his secret but growing treasure of experience. "The forenoon lectures at Dane Hall I never in all my time missed, that I can recollect, and I look back on it now as quite prodigious that I should have been so systematically faithful to them without my understanding the first word of what they were about. They contrived — or at least my attendance at them did, inimitably — to be 'life.'" In Cambridge he had already enrolled himself in "the bright band of the fondly hoping and fearfully doubting who count the days after the despatch of manuscripts."[9] His first story had appeared in 1865, and his second, "A Landscape-Painter," was to appear in the *Atlantic Monthly* for February 1866.

The next letter, written after another two months, is full of the eager anticipation of home: —

Obidos, Dec. 9, 1865

My darling old Mama, —

I seize a moment before the steamer arrives to write you just one line which may possibly reach you a fortnight before I do myself. I am just returned from a short canoe trip for the everlasting old story, *fish*, having had small luck owing to the premature rise in the river. I have now but two weeks more work before me, and then the Sabbath. I am expecting Hunnewell[10] down in this steamer

[8] For other parts of this letter, *cf. L.W.J.*, I, 67–70.
[9] *N.S.B.*, 344–5, 358.
[10] Walter Hunnewell (1844–1921) was a senior in Harvard College.

to be my companion. I have with infinite trouble succeeded in getting three men, and a good canoe, and tomorrow we shall start up the River Trombetas together. I have spent the last fortnight . . . very pleasantly, in this paradisaic spot in the house of a very nice, easy-going, old-womanish kind of man, the postmaster; and am writing this in the mellow evening light in his parlor, post-office, spare-room, whichever you please to call it, for it serves as all three. I speak Portuguese like a book now, and am ready to converse for hours on any subject. To be sure the natives seem to have a slight difficulty in understanding me, but that is their lookout, not mine, — *my* business is to *speak,* and understand *them.*

I am on the whole very glad this thing is winding up — not that I have not enjoyed parts of it intensely and regard it as one of the best spent portions of my life, but enough is as good as a feast. I thoroughly *hate* collecting, and long to be back to books, studies, etc., after this elementary existence. You have no idea, my dearest Mother, how strange that home life seems to me from the depths of this world, buried as it is in mere vegetation and physical needs and enjoyments. I hardly think you will be able to understand me, but the idea of the people swarming about as they do at home, killing themselves with thinking about things that have no connection with their merely external circumstances, studying themselves into fevers, going mad about religion, philosophy, love and sich, breathing perpetual heated gas and excitement, turning night into day, seems almost incredible and imaginary — and yet I only left it eight months ago. Still more remarkable seems the extraordinary variety of character that results from it all — here all is so monotonous, in life and in nature, that you are rocked into a kind of sleep, — but, strange to say, it is the old existence that has already begun to seem to me like a dream. I dare say when I get home I shall have for a time many a pang of nostalgia for this placid Arcadia; even now it often suffices for me to see an orange-tree or one of these mellow sunsets, to make me shrink from the thought of giving them up altogether. At one time this was so strong that I could hardly bear to think of not going back to superb old Rio with the Professor, and revisiting all those places on the coast which I could enjoy so little when we passed them, owing to my eye.

But it's all over — and I thrill with joy when I think that one short month and we are homeward bound. Welcome ye dark blue waves!

Welcome my native slosh and ice and cast-iron stoves, magazines, theatre, friends and everything! even churches! Tell Harry that I long to see him and hear him, and read him, as one seasick longs for land; and Father, I never knew what he was to me before, and feel as if I could talk to him night and day for a week running; and the idea of the soft charms of Alice, Aunt Kate and yourself seems almost too good for this world. I hope very much old Wilk and Bob will both be at home, for I love them as never before. Give my love to all my friends male and female, in the house and out . . . and believe me, my darling Mother, ever yours,

W. J.

P.S. It is now night — not a mosquito, but a perfumed air, filled with the music of insects, frogs and whippoorwills. The stars are beating time together, I am writing by a yellow wax candle, in shirt-sleeves, and linen trousers, on a tiled floor, with every door and window open. How different from your circumstances at this moment! what they *may* be, I frequently amuse myself by imagining, but never can know what they are. Good-bye! . . .

XIII

MEDICAL STUDIES AND PHILOSOPHICAL BEGINNINGS

AFTER a year's absence James returned to Boston, in March 1866, resuming his studies at the Harvard Medical School and at the Massachusetts General Hospital, where he held a brief internship during the summer. The family, after much hesitation and debate, finally chose the Quincy Street house in Cambridge, and there they were reunited, excepting the two younger sons, Wilkinson and Robertson, who had recently been discharged from military service with records of bravery. Wilkinson had been wounded at Fort Wagner and both suffered from the aftereffects of physical and nervous strain. Having been officers of Negro regiments, they felt a strong interest in the future of that race, and together acquired a plantation in Florida on which they employed Negro labor. In 1870 they were forced by the industrial depression and by local prejudice to abandon this idealistic enterprise. William and Henry felt towards their younger brothers an interest which was both solicitous and admiring. Of "Bob," William once remarked that he had "more genius than Henry and me put together." The "affectionate," the "rosy-gilled" Wilky was generally beloved.[1] The following letter to him also introduces Oliver Wendell Holmes, Jr., and the future Mrs. Holmes.

Boston, March 21 [1866]

My dear Wilky, —

Your letter to me and one to Father written before it, both arrived on the same day two or three days ago. I got the gun ready to pack off today, and Father the watch, so you shall have them before long. . . . I wish some of us might get down there to visit you sometime. I dreamt the other night that I did so and that the scenery was the most gorgeous I ever witnessed, beating all Gustave Doré

[1] For a fuller account of Wilkinson and Robertson James, *cf. Alice James. Her Brothers. Her Journal.* 1–82.

and South America combined. It was the finest landscape dream I ever had, so I fear the reality would be rather pale beside it.

We have been living years in the last few days, having been on the point of buying and renting several houses. Father went yesterday to an auction of a house on Shawmut Avenue, corner of Union Square, and almost bought it, although ten minutes before he had never seen it. But Mother frowned at him and it was knocked down to someone else. . . . Everything is wild and whirling, however, and on all sides a gulf into which your money pours. . . .

I have been at work for a week now and take to it quite naturally. The school is very full, over fifty students, which is rather inconvenient. . . . I have made the acquaintance of . . . Miss [Fanny] Dixwell of Cambridge lately. She is about as fine as they make 'em. That villain Wendell Holmes has been keeping her all to himself out at Cambridge for the last eight years; but I hope I may enjoy her acquaintance now. She is A 1, if anyone ever was. . . .

If you can get a young alligator's head and boil it so as to clean the skull and send it to me by any convenient opportunity, I should be very much obliged. Agassiz confiscated all we got on the Amazon. I hope you 'll have some good shooting with my old gun. All the game in the world would not compensate me for the trouble of cleaning a gun. Ever yours,

W. J.

Speaking in later years of this period of his life, James said: "I originally studied medicine in order to be a physiologist, but I drifted into psychology and philosophy from a sort of fatality. I never had any philosophic instruction, the first lecture on psychology I ever heard being the first I ever gave." [2]

The flame of James's philosophical interest burned brightly and continuously, but the fuel was supplied irregularly. His studies, in the sense of systematic application under expert direction, were in the biological sciences. The philosophical content was supplied by the theoretical part of his scientific studies; by the sporadic reading of philosophers, beginning with those standing closest to science, such as Mill and Spencer; and by contact with his friends and contemporaries. These last supplied a counter-influence, in the field of

[2] Letter of Aug. 16, 1902, published by A. Ménard, *Analyse et critique des principes de la psychologie*, 1911, 5, note.

philosophy, to the religious emphasis of his father. Four of them stand out from the rest: Charles S. Peirce, Chauncey Wright, Wendell Holmes, and Thomas W. Ward. The first two were philosophers by vocation, the last two friends who were passing through a philosophical phase of adolescence. Charles Peirce, who was three years older than James, was a son of the famous mathematician, Benjamin Peirce, under whom he was at this time employed on the United States Geodetic Survey. We have already met him as a marked man among James's fellow students in the Lawrence Scientific School. During the winter of 1866–1867 he gave a course of lectures at the Lowell Institute on "The Logic of Science and Induction," and in 1868 he published a series of highly original articles on logic and theory of knowledge in the *Journal of Speculative Philosophy.* Chauncey Wright was twelve years James's senior. He had graduated at Harvard in 1852 and was thereafter only intermittently connected with the college. But he resided for the most part in Cambridge, where he worked on the *Nautical Almanac,* wrote occasional papers, collected posthumously under the title of *Philosophical Discussions,* and was renowned for his talk. James knew him, not as a teacher, but as a companion and frequent visitor at the Quincy Street house, where he had his "customary corner of the deep library sofa"; and where his untimely death in 1875 was most deeply felt.[8] Both of these men represented not only the scientific *approach* to philosophy, but the carrying over of the scientific method *into* philosophy. They were both, in fact, interested in method for its own sake, and therefore notably rigorous in their thinking.

Wendell Holmes, the future Justice of the Supreme Court, had graduated from Harvard College in 1861 and, after serving three years in the Northern army, completed a course in the Harvard Law School in 1866. He sowed his metaphysical wild oats before turning his mind to the more serious business of law. But quite apart from the toughening of his mental fibre by grapplings with jurisprudence, he seems to have been a born positivist — with no indulgence towards speculation that he thought to be either loose or emotionally biased. Ward was for several years the recipient of James's philosophical confidences. His turn of mind was skeptical and pessimistic — owing in part, no doubt, to temperamental rea-

[8] *Cf. N.S.B.,* 282–3.

sons, but more specifically to dislike of the business career which he had adopted, and to his religious doubts. He read philosophy, especially the empiricists and positivists, and was much influenced by Charles Peirce's conversations and lectures. So it happened that James found himself, in his relations with his more intimate companions, the fighting champion of metaphysical liberalism. Peirce, Holmes, Ward, and Chauncey Wright were rough philosophical playmates — sparring partners, who helped him to strengthen his speculative sinews. They provided the resistance by which he proved his mettle — the whetstone on which to sharpen his logical wits; but they did not in the least swerve him from his predestined mission to find a philosophical truth that should justify religion without alienating science.

The first two selections [4] are from letters to Ward: —

Boston, March 27, 1866

I have been studying now for about two weeks, and think I shall be much more interested in it than before. It was some time before I could get settled down to reading. But now I do it quite naturally, and even *thinking* is beginning not to feel like a wholly abnormal process. . . . I am conscious of a desire I never had before so strongly or so permanently, of narrowing and deepening the channel of my intellectual activity, of economizing my feeble energies and consequently treating with more *respect* the few things I shall devote them to. . . . I feel somehow . . . as if I had no right to an opinion on any subject, no right to open my mouth before others until I know some *one* thing as thoroughly as it can be known, no matter how insignificant it may be. After that I shall perhaps be able to think on general subjects.

Boston, June 8, 1866

I cannot exactly say I *hasten* to reply to your letter. I have thought of you about every day since I received it, and given you a Brazilian hug therewith, and wanted to write to you; but having been in a pretty unsettled theoretical condition myself, from which I hoped some positive conclusions might emerge worthy to be presented to you as the last word on the Kosmos and the human soul, I

[4] Reprinted from *L.W.J.*, I, 74–9.

deferred writing from day to day, thinking that better than to offer you the crude and premature spawning of my intelligence. In vain! the conclusions never have emerged. . . . I began the other day to read the thoughts of Marcus Aurelius . . . and it seems to me that any man who can, like him, grasp the love of a "life according to nature," *i.e.*, a life in which your individual will becomes so harmonized to nature's will as cheerfully to acquiesce in whatever she assigns to you, knowing that you serve *some* purpose in her vast machinery which will never be revealed to you — any man who can do this will, I say, be a pleasing spectacle, no matter what his lot in life. . . . I am anxiously awaiting your arrival on Class Day. I expect you to spend all your time with me either here or in Swampscott, when we shall, I trust, patch up the Kosmos satisfactorily and rescue it from its present fragmentary condition.

The next two citations are from letters written to his sister during the first half of the next academic year.

Cambridge, Nov. 14, 1866

Your first question is, "where have I been?" "To C. S. Peirce's lecture, which I could not understand a word of, but rather enjoyed the sensation of listening to for an hour." I then turned to O. W. Holmes's and wrangled with him for another hour.[5]

Cambridge, Dec. 12 [1866]

The present time is a very exciting one for ambitious young men at the Medical School who are anxious to get into the hospital. Their toadying the physicians, asking them intelligent questions after lectures, offering to run errands for them, etc., this week reaches its climax; they call at their residences and humbly solicit them to favor their appointment, and do the same at the residences of the ten trustees. So I have sixteen visits to make. I have little fears, with my talent for flattery and fawning, of a failure. The appointments are published in January.

A few months later James wrote further of his medical adventures to his brothers, Wilky and Bob, who were at this time together in Florida: —

[5] Reprinted from *L.W.J.*, I, 80.

Cambridge, March 13, 1867

My dearest boys, —

. . . We got a letter from Wilky on Sunday . . . announcing the latest developments of the Negro question. . . . The Medical School held its commencement today and graduated eighty-two students. It seems a very large number. Agassiz was there and "made a few neat and appropriate remarks," as usual, about the transmutation question. Six of the theses of the graduaters were read publicly, — on what principle they had been selected from the whole lot by the faculty I cannot tell — but the look of mingled wonder, pain and disgust at their flimsy badness on Agassiz's face was very amusing to observe.

There are some Japanese jugglers here whom I went to see the other night. A truly "refined" exhibition. They are a very gentlemanly set of men, small and shaven, with little black eyes like huckleberries, and clean yellow faces polished like billiard balls. They wear the greatest mass of silk woman's toggery which impedes all their movements, and by its very superfluity imparts to them a something aristocratic. It is curious to see in this costume of theirs how the more obvious considerations of utility may be overborne by other more far-fetched ones, of fashion, caste, religion, or whatever the ideas are which attach to this dress. Even the athletes of the party have this dress and have their sleeves tied up and their petticoats looped back with great ado before beginning to perform. There is always one who keeps up a squeaking and gibbering explanation to the audience of what is being done, — and the audience is much pleased and tickled thereat. I also went last night to the Museum, being in a debauched state of mind, and heard a magnificent "sensational" drama, in which villains and "demi-mondes," pistol shots, drownings, miraculous interruptions to assassinations just trembling on the verge of execution, rocks rolling on people and assassinating them, with all the people you supposed killed appearing again before the end of the play, formed a whole impossible to describe or even to understand. Suffice it to say that the whole was strikingly moral and the curtain fell on the head villain, nervously biting his nether lip and twitchingly feeling his handcuffs, while the bloody corpse of the second villain, who was less intellectual than the first, lay prostrate on the ground, his last words being, "Mother! Mother!" On the other side the young artist-hero, who is at last

discovered to be the rightful duke and heir to five millions, stands clasping his young bride, while the presiding genius, the beautiful young demi-monde — who is, of course, at heart by far the most virtuous person that ever lived, both in speech and act — announces her intention of ending her days in a convent. Harry has just returned tonight therefrom, his back having gi'n out after three acts.

Tomorrow Harry is going to a tea squall at Sedgwick's given in honor of the Beckwiths that used to live in the Quai du Mont Blanc while we were at Roediger's,[6] do you remember? I am going at the same time to Mrs. Lowell's, next door, who gives a party to her niece, Miss Mabull Lowell. Thus you may see how our life glides away in levity and mirth while you are mingling the sweat of your brow and your tears with the cotton-yielding mother-earth. But it will not always be so. Your day will come and then where shall *we* be? Good night, my dear boys. Ever yours,

W. J.

Whether James secured his hospital appointment or not, it was impossible that he should avail himself of it. The following spring brought a new interruption of his medical studies and another period devoted to searching life and considering the alternatives it offered. He sailed for Europe in April 1867, not to return until November 1868.

Several causes combined to bring him to this decision. The first was a condition of ill-health from which he had been suffering since the previous autumn.[7] He was now entering upon a period of partial incapacity, physical suffering, and depression, which lasted for nearly five years. It is impossible in the case of James to regard the state of his health as an incident. Since he could not endure standing for hours in a laboratory, it provided a decisive reason against experimental research. It limited the amount of his reading, and no doubt was partially responsible for his extraordinary capacity to seize quickly the nourishment which his mind required. In any case it turned him from passive and cumulative erudition toward active rumination. He became essentially a thinking and observing, rather than a learning, man. Recurrent ill-health, while it produced pe-

[6] *Cf.* above, 359–60.

[7] "Insomnia, digestive disorders, eye-troubles, weakness of the back, and sometimes deep depression of spirits followed each other or afflicted him simultaneously." *L.W.J.*, I, 84.

riods of depression, did not touch his essential sanity — his nature was too elastic. It did, however, give him a peculiar sympathy for abnormal people, and inclined him to believe that they were the chosen vehicles of the spirit. Finally, his ill-health blended in a peculiar way with that fundamental trait to which attention has already been called. James was, as we have seen, almost always restless and discontented. His discontent acted as an irritant and prevented his mind from becoming stagnant. He tasted the good things of life through yearning for them in their absence as well as through enjoying their presence. He was soon sated with what he had, but this condition was always associated with an eager longing for something else; so that on the whole he was insatiable rather than replete. Now the condition of his health undoubtedly contributed to this instability. Some other activity, some other scene, always furnished a relief from his present discomforts. He found work a cure for too much play, and play a cure for work; nature a cure for social fatigue, and civilization a cure for the emptiness of primitive nature; philosophy a cure for science and science for philosophy; he went to Europe when he suffered from America, and sought in America a cure for Europe.

So ill-health, combined with his ardent and mobile temperament, gave to his life that nostalgic, that darting and oscillating rhythm, which is its most unmistakable characteristic. There was a perpetual uprooting and replanting, and he reaped accordingly. Drill, professional expertness, comprehensive erudition, the systematic and thorough mastery of a branch of knowledge — these were denied him; and he bitterly deplored the fact. But the very conditions which prevented these results enabled him to achieve that other result which he himself expressed when he said: "It is the amount of life which a man feels that makes you value his mind." [8]

James had a more specific reason for going to Europe. At the Medical School he had acquired an interest in experimental physiology, and he believed that by going to Germany at this time he could both satisfy his scientific needs and perfect his knowledge of the language. In directing his steps to Germany he was following a well-worn pilgrimage route, leading not only from America but from western Europe as well. Germany glowed distantly and enticingly as the home of the great and good things of the spirit, and of the

[8] *L.W.J.*, I, 119, 185.

new and interesting things in literature, science, and philosophy. Germans were admired for the lack of precisely those qualities for the possession of which they were later disliked. The Germany that men loved was the Germany reminiscent of the past rather than the Germany prophetic of the future. Thus Henry Adams, who went to Germany in 1860, said that "what he liked was the simple character; the good-natured sentiment; the musical and metaphysical abstraction; the blundering incapacity of the German for practical affairs." [9] To an American in the 1860's political influences could not fail to confirm this cultural predisposition. Germany benefited by the unpopularity of her nearest rivals, and was loved in proportion as they were hated: England for her sympathy with the South; France for the same reason, as well as for the pretensions of the Second Empire and the supposed shallowness and frivolity of the Parisians. It will appear in the sequel that though James was influenced by this Germanophile tendency he was never dominated by it. It is characteristic of him to have loved Germany, France, England, and Italy each in turn, without definitely adopting any of them.

On his way to Germany he stopped in Paris and from there sent the following letter to his brother Henry.[10]

Paris, May 3, 1867

Dear Brother, —

I wrote to Sister three days ago, but missed the mail, so that there is still time to write a few words to you too. I had expected to start from Paris today, but now I believe that I shall not leave before day after tomorrow. I feel so tired today from all my expeditions that I shall give myself tomorrow for rest. I have n't done much, it is true, but the distances are so enormous that the morning vanishes one knows not how, and then one must rest and in the evening go to the theatre. I have been to the Palais Royal and to the Gymnase (dramatique). At the Palais Royal five "low comedians," all of the calibre of Warren [11] at least — one choked with laughter. At the Gymnase I saw *Les Idées de Mme. Aubray,* by Dumas *fils. Never,* never in all my life, have I had so rich an intellectual treat! I thrilled,

[9] *Education of Henry Adams,* Riverside Press, 1918, 83.

[10] Written in French and here translated.

[11] William Warren (1812–88) played for thirty-seven years at the Boston Museum, and was not only a Boston institution, but one of the best actors of broad comedy in his time.

I burned, I overflowed with joy from beginning to end. Every detail, every syllable, every glance in the play of actors and actresses was *finished,* perfected, — and what grace! what beauty! I did not believe that men could be so natural, so well-bred as these comedians were. The comedy itself is very strong, done with a master's hand. I wish that you had read it so that you could be *en rapport* with me, but it really is scarcely worth while to buy it, and the *livingness* of its charm for me was all in the play of the actors. It is a moral comedy — Madame Aubray wants to *"reconstituer l'amour en France"* — but they have so much *esprit,* these Parisians, that they end by having none at all. A young man living as we live in Boston feels the corruption, or rather the inanity, the essential ineptitude in the most hyper-virtuous phrases of this play; and nevertheless Dumas & Co. would regard such a young man as excessively coarse-grained and stupid. Dear Brother, how much I would have given to have you by my side so that we might rejoice together. . . .

W. J.

XIV

DRESDEN AND BERLIN

FROM Paris James went to Dresden, where he spent the spring and early summer of 1867. This period was marked by a great efflorescence of his æsthetic interests, stimulated both by galleries and by his general reading. His intellectual and emotional adventures — with art and literature, with the language and people, and with fellow travelers — are described with fullness of detail and characteristic self-revelation in the letters which he wrote at this time to his family.[1] And all the time he was thinking of those left behind in America, and wanting them, and in particular his brother Harry, to share his new-found treasures. The first letter, from his sister Alice, gives a picture of life in Cambridge. "Mr. Paige," the artist, was probably William Page, the portrait painter and friend of Lowell. The Thies family, who are so vividly described in the second letter, were old Cambridge friends, having preceded the Jameses as occupants of the Quincy Street house. "Old Mr. [Louis] Thies" [2] was curator of the Gray Collection of Engravings at Harvard.

Cambridge, June 8, 1867

My dearest Willy, —

. . . Mother and I went yesterday to town to buy a sewing-machine. We got a "Florence," which is considered the best, and seems to be very simple and easy to learn to use. By the time you get back you will probably find Harry and Father dressed in suits made by Mother and me. Apropos of making clothes, Father came in the other day with some story from the Lowells about the goodness of Mr. Paige, the artist, who allowed his wife to make his clothes. We disputed for some time who was the most virtuous, Mrs. Paige for making them or Mr. Paige for wearing them, when

[1] *Cf. L.W.J.*, I, 86 ff.
[2] *Cf.* below, 256, 261.

Harry came in and settled the matter in his cool way, by saying that they were all very good but the clothes. . . . Your loving sister

ALICE JAMES

Dresden, July 10, 1867

Chérie de Jeune Bal, —

Another fortnight over and I ant dead yet. I received some ten days ago your letter and Mother's dated June 10. The richest intellectual treat I have experienced since I have been in Europe! and brought tears to my eyes by the unexpected mentioning of trivial details of my former home life which I had well nigh forgot. . . . Harry's *bon mot* about Mr. Paige's clothes was inimitable, in his best vein, and I seemed for a moment actually to *see* the dear boy with his "high calm" and alabaster brow. Those, those are the incidents with which letters should be filled! Treasure up carefully every witticism of Harry's and send it to me. . . .

I went to the theatre to see Schiller's *Robbers* about a week ago. Behind me sat an American who could hardly understand a word of German, and who, after the manner of his race, got exceedingly fidgety and riled at not being able to *make* something or other of the performance. He finally leaned forward and in a hoarse whisper said to me: "After all, I guess we can swear as loud and pray as hard as any of 'em." It struck me as a most characteristic speech, and considering the particular play we were witnessing, rather ridiculous. The impatient nature of the Americans has struck me very much in the individuals I have seen here. Speaking of Americans, I met the other day at the Terrace Mr. Miller, the father of G. Miller who is engaged to Miss [Susan] Dixwell. He indulged me with reminiscences of Albany in the olden time, and seemed to have a very tender recollection of Father, whose independence in leaving the church seemed to him very remarkable. He said he rode with him (in a horse-car, I think) a few years ago, and from what Father then said to him, "he felt as tho' he should like to talk with him two or three days, by spells."

I meet the Thieses quite often, and had quite a long visit from old Mr. Thies yesterday morning. He is an extremely nice old fellow, and treats me like a second father, so to speak. Mrs. T. has an air of reserve and severity which does not ill beseem her. Miss T. seems to enjoy herself and the world, and wears a perpetual open-

mouthed smile even at the most serious moments, which has the advantage of showing her teeth, of which she has a complete set, very white and well-shaped. Whenever the band plays a galop she beats time in the most intense manner with her hands, feet, head, shoulders, and so forth, in a way too common with her sex, and especially exasperating to non-dancers, like myself. Alice, if I ever see you do the like, I will slay you where you stand.

I went to the theatre again two nights ago to see Goethe's *Faust! ! !* which was acted with hardly anything omitted, and was, naturally, a great failure, though the audience, who knew the poem by heart, seemed greatly delighted. They play *Othello* tonight, but I don't think I shall go. *Tannhäuser* last night and *Don Juan* Saturday! — you see they have rich bills. Opera and drama every alternate night throughout the year. *Adieu, chérie de sœur.* . . . Your affectionate

W. J.

Dresden, July 24, 1867

My dearest Family, —

. . . My uneventful life rolls quietly on, I have plenty of leisure for reading, and see very few people, so that at times, in fact, I rather pine after a heart to beat in unison with; but on the whole I am very contented, and preserve that golden mean between an inane optimism and a stupid pessimism which has always distinguished me. I would not share your fate at home for anything. I spent the other evening at the Thieses. . . . Young Thies is a great wit, to judge by a saying of his the other night that "the Americans were almost as *gemüthlich* as the Germans, at a fire." Which is first class, though it can't be appreciated without an intimate knowledge of the German use of the word *gemüthlich.*

For the rest, I have a kind of airy friendship for the people I see in the street, and the study of their physical type is very interesting, although perplexing. The sight of the women here has strengthened me more than ever in my belief that they ought to be made to do the hard labor of the community — they are far happier and better for it. I only wish I had that pampered Alice here to see these little runts of peasant women stumping about with their immense burdens on their backs. They all have flat, tanned faces, seldom with any color in their cheeks, very small back heads with their scanty and

well-greased brown hair in a braid rolled circularly round and clapped like a muffin just above the nape of their very short necks, broad shoulders and short solid sides that remind you of nothing but chops and the possibility of cannibalism, massive hips, feet and ankles, and of a more saturated dirtiness than any race of people I ever remember to have seen. But they are as active and strong as little lionesses, and work from morning till night. Seriously there is a great deal of good in it — and the ideal German woman of poetry (see Goethe, for instance) is a working woman. . . . The Jews (with all that may be urged against them) are the best looking people here on the whole. There is a decisive character about their face that makes a picture of them immediately, and is extremely refreshing after the somewhat vulgar platitude of the Christian-Germanic type. . . .

Since my last, I have discovered another lovely *vis-à-vis* (whose existence I was not aware of at the time I sent you the portrait of the old lady opposite)[3] in a house a little way down the street, fifth story. Black hair, ruddy complexion, large gold earrings and stout figure — the very picture of robust beauty, and forms now (together with my letter of credit, of course) the consolation of my life. Every evening she sits in her window looking down upon me while I sit looking up at her, and from the modest blush that mantles on her cheek and the ill-repressed smile that gladdens her countenance, it is evident to me that she views me not with perfect indifference. I went down into the market this morning to purchase a bouquet to send to her, but the commissionaires, or *Dienstleute* as they call them here, were all such dirty ragamuffins to serve as Cupid's messengers, and I felt so bashful about buying the bouquet and asking one of them to take it to her, and moreover it was so doubtful whether, in the present state of our acquaintance, she would receive it, that I beat a humiliating retreat back to my room — where I now am. So you see, with all my solitude and reading, Aunt Kate could hardly say I dwell more in the Intellect than in the Affections.

The country about here in every direction is beautiful, so peaceful and cultivated — and there are spots and nooks close to the city of ravishing charms — I have wished so often, and would oftener "if wishing were not vain," that Harry might be here for an hour

[3] This seems to be the third of these fenestral apparitions. *Cf. L.W.J.*, I, 93 ff., where the "portrait of the old lady" will be found opposite p. 96.

at a time just to refresh himself with a sight of something new, though not so very *different* from home. . . .

The greatest delight I have had since I 've been here was the loan of five *Weekly Transcripts*. . . . I never should have believed that in three months the tone of a Boston paper would seem so outlandish to me. As it was, I was in one squeal of amusement, surprise, and satisfaction until deep in the night when I went to bed tired out with patriotism. The boisterous animal good-humor, familiarity, reckless energy and self-confidence, unprincipled optimism, æsthetic saplessness and intellectual imbecility, made a mixture hard to characterize, but totally different from the tone of things here and, as the Germans would say, whose *"Existenz so völlig dasteht"* that there was nothing to do but to let yourself feel it. It amuses me very much to see Americans here too. They have such a hungry, restless look, and seem so unhooked somehow from the general framework. The other afternoon as I was sitting on the Terrace, a gentleman and two young ladies came in and sat down beside me. I knew them to be Americans at a glance and the man amused me very much by his exceedingly American expression: a red moustache, and tuft on chin, powerful nose, small, light eye, half whimsical, half insolent, and *all* sagacious looking, and a sort of rowdy air of superiority that made me quite proud to claim him as a brother. In a few minutes I recognized him to be Gen. M'Clellan, looking rather different from his photographs, but still no possibility of mistaking him; and I learned afterwards he was here. Whatever his faults may be, that of not being a Yankee is not among them. . . .

Tell Harry to keep up his spirits. If I were he I would not put off all my German reading till I come here — you can do it just exactly as easily at home. Read Goethe's *Faust* — it is a good piece and not without a vein of poetry running through it, and *lässt sich lesen* with enjoyment provided one does not insist on getting a *consistent* "philosophy" out of it. Such at least is my experience so far. I have read nothing since my last, but medicine, Lewes's *Aristotle* (in German translation) and some essays, full of talent, by Herman Grimm; and have no "ideas." Let Harry read (if he wants to) an essay by Grimm on the Venus of Milo, republished by de Vries, and compare it with the St. Victor one.[4] Both are imaginative rhap-

[4] Paul de Saint-Victor's "La Venus de Mile" formed the first chapter of his *Hommes et Dieux*, 1868.

sodies, but how much solider the German! (if I remember right). It is worth reading, Harry. . . . Adieu! Your affectionate

W. J.

Early in August James decided, on the advice of a Dresden physician, to try the baths at Teplitz in the hope of curing his ailing back. The following letter to his sister affords a picture of his life during the next month.

Teplitz, Bohemia, Aug. 6–14, 1867

Chérie de Sœur, —

. . . Do you wish to know how I pass my days here? — one day is just like another. I wake up in the morning in a room with a bright green wall paper, a smooth yellow waxed floor and some very nice furniture, of a handsome yellow wood. . . . My bed is provided with three large and very soft, fluffy pillows which meet over my eyes when I lean my head on them. That is what the Germans like. . . . Many people get up to be at the Kurgarten at half-past six where they walk up and down under a long horse-shoe colonnade . . . and drink to the accompaniment of a band of music. As for me, I am not such a fool, but gulp the water leisurely down in bed, and at nine o'clock, the bottle finished, I get up, dress myself and go out to get my breakfast. This is in general the most delightful incident of the day — for listen! I cut through a little narrow street between some whitewashed houses, enter a big stone doorway, and am in the park of Prince Clary . . . [the park] whose particular freshness and fragrance at that morning hour have been the chief enjoyment of my life since I have been here. . . . A walk . . . brings me to the "Princely" Dairy, surrounded by an old wall of masonry, also embosomed in trees, under which you find a collection of little wooden tables and chairs, as you do everywhere in Germany. A little maiden like Henrietta Temple brings me my breakfast, *viz.*, a big bowl of curds and whey, a roll and a glass of yellow frothing milk. . . . I sit under the trees, and absorb the milk, and the air, and music, and let my eyes feed on all the wonderful details of green light which the woods yield; and then I "dash away a tear" as I think how impossible it is to enjoy it in company with my little sister, and how happy would she be to be transported here for one brief hour. Or Harry! he would just sit with his mouth and nostrils

open, speechless for hours, drinking it in. I see now that an instantaneous transportation of the physical man to any distance and for any time, is one of the desiderata which science is *bound* some day to satisfy. It is necessary — human life permanently without it is an absurdity. At that happy distant day shall we be able for a small fee and the wishing, to visit (with all our senses) and be visited by those we love, even as the eagles stoop unto their nests. Whereas now we can do nothing but sigh, and wish, and grow old and mouldy in the uniform monotony of our isolation.

But enough! I return to my abode which is in the Fürstenbad on the Badeplatz, a square through which the whole town passes once a day, and sit down on one of the wooden benches by the door. . . . This style of descriptive writing, which is foreign to my nature, is a burden too heavy to be borne — and I dare say *you,* if you have got so far, are praying that this chalice may be soon removed from your lips. I will accordingly spare you the rest of the description. . . .

I got a letter from Father . . . ten days ago, and three days ago came trailing along his article, and a *Nation,* for all of which much obliged. I have read the article with much interest and will probably write to him next week when I return to Dresden. I have been greatly reinvigorated by my stay here, and consider myself a well man. . . . I congratulate Harry, from whom the weight of responsibility he felt is now removed. . . . Ever your loving brother

WM. JAMES

P.S. Pray engineer a *Nation* to me frequently. You can't imagine what a treat they are.

In September James was in Berlin. During this and the following month he wrote a series of letters to his father dealing with the philosophical articles which the latter had recently published in the *North American Review.* These letters, together with those addressed to O. W. Holmes, Jr.,[5] furnish abundant evidence of James's serious attention to philosophical matters. His other letters reveal ill-health, brooding melancholy, vocational doubts, and dispersion of interests. Thomas Sergeant Perry, with whom an intimacy had developed in the Newport days, and who was also a student in Berlin,

[5] They have been reproduced and discussed elsewhere; *cf.* above, 155; below, Ch. XXX; and Appendix I.

was his companion. As his father and Holmes were his philosophical correspondents, so he wrote about the incidents of travel to his sister, about science to Bowditch, about literature to his brother Henry, and about personal and moral problems to Tom Ward: —

Berlin, Sept. [12], 1867

My beloved old Tom, —

. . . I have now been in Berlin six days. It likes me much, so far — but perhaps on the whole I had better begin at the beginning and lay bare to you my history from the first beginning of its present phase. I don't know whether you have heard or not that I found myself in last November, almost without perceptible exciting cause, in possession of that delightful disease in my back, which has so long made Harry so interesting. It is evidently a family peculiarity. . . . I came to Dresden, where I lived a good deal the life of a hermit, getting worse rather than better, till six weeks ago, when I was sent by a doctor to a bath place, Teplitz; and in the last two weeks, since my return thence, have felt a great deal better. I have no idea how far the improvement will go, but I hope still further than now. Of course, medicine is busted — much to my sorrow, for I was beginning to get much attached to it. The future is very uncertain. I shall try to stick out the winter here and follow a few of the courses in the University. I am at all events picking up a knowledge of the German language, the possession of which gives one a sort of pleasure, even if he does not hope to make much use of it. . . . I should like to display to you the list of the discoveries I have made, since I left home, but I have been in a deplorably inert state of mind. Sickness and solitude make a man into a mere lump of egotism without eyes or ears for anything external, and I think, notwithstanding the stimulus of the new language, etc., that I have rarely passed such an empty four months as the last. For the past six weeks, in accordance with the doctor's advice (which I myself thought very sensible), I have taken a vacation and abstained from all intellectual labor except reading fiction in the French language; and returning yesterday to a German work on electricity, was very much disheartened at finding how unfitted I had become to deal either with the language or the subject. . . . I am going to try this winter to stick to the study of the nervous system and psychology. Unfortunately I shall not be well enough to study the nervous system

practically. There is an enormous psychological literature (from a physical and inductive point of view) in German. . . . Your friend,

WM. JAMES

The following paragraphs from letters to his brother Henry reveal James's literary occupations and the circumstances of his first literary venture, the review of Grimm's *Unüberwindliche Mächte.*[6]

Berlin, Sept. 26, 1867[7]

The other day, as I was sitting alone with my deeply breached letter of credit, beweeping my outcast state, and wondering what I could possibly do for a living, it flashed across me that I might write a "notice" of H. Grimm's novel which I had just been reading. To conceive with me is to execute, as you well know. And after sweating fearfully for three days, erasing, tearing my hair, copying, recopying, etc., etc., I have just succeeded in finishing the enclosed. I want you to read it, and if, after correcting the style and thoughts, with the aid of Mother, Alice and Father, and rewriting it if possible, you judge it to be capable of interesting in any degree anyone in the world but H. Grimm, himself, to send it to the *Nation* or the *Round Table.* I feel that a living is hardly worth being gained at this price. Style is not my forte, and to strike the mean between pomposity and vulgar familiarity is indeed difficult. Still, an the rich guerdon accrue, an but ten beauteous dollars lie down on their green and glossy backs within the family treasury in consequence of my exertions, I shall feel glad that I have made them. . . .

I wish you would articulately display to me in your future letters the names of all the books you have been reading. "A great many books, none but good ones," is provokingly vague. On looking back at what *I* have read since I left home, it shows exceeding small, owing in great part, I suppose, to its being in German. I have just got settled down again — after a nearly-two-months' debauch on French fiction, during which time Mrs. Sand, the fresh, the bright, the free, the somewhat shrill but doughty Balzac, who has risen considerably in my esteem or rather in my affection; Théophile Gautier, the good, the golden-mouthed, in turn captivated my attention; not to speak

[6] Published in the *Nation,* V (1867).
[7] *L.W.J.,* I, 103–4, 106.

of the peerless Erckmann-Chatrian, who renew one's belief in the succulent harmonies of creation — and a host of others. I lately read Diderot, *Œuvres choisies,* 2 vol., which are entertaining to the utmost from their animal spirits and the comic modes of thinking, speaking and behaving of the time.

[Berlin, Oct. 1867]

I have just been much refreshed by reading Swinburne's article on Arnold in the *Fortnightly* for October [8] [1867] which T. S. Perry sent for. He seems much more real and innocent than I had supposed. Of course, the article is without judgment or any constructive power, and is intemperate like a boy's. But what freshness of perception and richness and ease of expression — such happy expressions as "compromise with the nature of things," "air" in Arnold's descriptions and not in those of the Tennysonian school, are worth pages of painful discrimination. Poets can write good prose. Stirling's article is also big. I presume you have read both. I read *M. de Camors* the other day, which you speak in a letter to T. S. Perry of having read. I must say that with every acknowledgment of its excellence in secondary qualities, good taste, concision, wit, and limpid style, it was exceedingly repulsive to me, both from the repulsiveness of the story, in which after all the hero's character is left a mere blank, and from the perfect heartlessness of the author. Personally he gives me an impression of cold and fashionable corruption greater than anyone I know. I should not have felt this perhaps so much in *M. de Camors* if I had not read the idiotic *Jeune homme pauvre* this summer. I find as I grow older that I need something of beauty and refreshment in novels more and more, and this, of course, is the general taste of those who read them for relaxation and not for study. Though of course the *"étude"* style of novel cannot be judged from that point of view and condemned, yet I think that the highest style of novel is the one that satisfies that craving for refreshment.

James's review of Grimm's novel had grown, no doubt, out of his personal interest in the author. He had carried with him to Ger-

[8] This number of the *Fortnightly Review* contains an article by Swinburne on "Mr. Arnold's New Poems," and one by James Hutchison Stirling entitled "De Quincey and Coleridge upon Kant." The reference below is to Octave Feuillet's plays, *Monsieur de Camors* and *Le Roman d'un jeune homme pauvre.* The former of these was reviewed by H.J.[3] in the *Nation,* July 30, 1868.

many a letter of introduction from Emerson. Herman Grimm, son of Wilhelm Grimm, the younger of the famous brothers of the fairy tales, was an essayist and historian of art and literature, who became professor of the history of art in Berlin in 1872. He had discovered Emerson through his writings in 1855, and introduced him to the German world of letters with an essay in 1861. Grimm's wife was Gisela von Arnim, daughter of Goethe's Bettina, and author of *Goethe's Briefwechsel mit einem Kinde.* James's impressions of this interesting household are described in his published correspondence.[9] Grimm's impressions are briefly recorded in his reply to Emerson.

Concord, April 14, 1867[10]

My dear Mr. Grimm, —

Will you allow me the pleasure of introducing to you a young friend of mine, Mr. William James, a student of medicine at Cambridge. He has lately returned from South America, whither he accompanied Professor Agassiz in his scientific tour in Brazil. He goes now to Berlin, with a view to the further prosecution of his studies. His father, Henry James, Esq., an old friend of mine, is a man of rare insight and of brilliant conversation, and I doubt not you will find the son the valued companion that we hold him. He asks me rather suddenly for this letter, or I should make it the companion of one or two more that have long been due to yourself, and to my friend Gisela Arnim, to whom I pray you to present my affectionate salutations, with the promise to make her soon a special acknowledgment of her letter, which, though addressed to my daughter, directly concerned me, and of her book, on which I have much to say. I remain your affectionate debtor,

R. Waldo Emerson

Berlin, Oct. 19, 1867[11]

Honored Sir and Friend, —

. . . Mr. James has arrived here, and we are greatly pleased with him. To-morrow evening he will become acquainted at our house with Joachim, the celebrated violinist, — at the same time my best

[9] *Cf.* the remarkable letter to his sister Alice, Oct. 17, 1867, *L.W.J.*, I, 108–15. For the repercussions in Cambridge and Concord, *cf.* above, 96.

[10] *Correspondence between Ralph Waldo Emerson and Herman Grimm,* edited by Frederick William Holls, published by Houghton Mifflin Co., 1903, 67–8.

[11] *Ibid.*, 75, 77. The "romance" is the *Unüberwindliche Mächte,* mentioned above.

friend, and also the man who was among the first in Germany to become acquainted with your thoughts in the fullness of their importance. Joachim and I read your works at the time in Germany when besides us perhaps no one knew them. Now indeed many know them, and more and more are becoming acquainted with you.

A few months ago I sent you the three volumes of a romance in which America is mentioned. What will you have said about it? I think of it occasionally, for the effect of such a work must always remain very problematical. . . . With most cordial regards, yours,

HERMAN GRIMM

[Berlin], Oct. 31 [1867]

My dearest Alice, —

I said in Father's letter I would gossip as usual to you by this mail, but I don't find much to say . . . and life is too serious for much letter writing to one's childlike sisters. I am in great heart and back; took my first lecture at the University today and missed never a word of what the cuss said, at which I was much pleased. I am beginning to force myself into the hard resisting *society* of Berlin, and through Grimm have come to be on speaking terms with several *countesses!* After the custom of their infatuated nation they prefer speaking to me in English. When they address me in German they call me "Herr Mister" — and I in English say to them, "May it please your goodness gracious," etc. A real event, and one of the two or three strong sensations I have had in the way of music in my life has been the hearing of Joachim (the famous violinist) play at Grimm's. I have heard him twice, and the way in which he makes that darned fiddle speak is something not dreamed of in the philosophy of people who have never heard him. Personally he is a heavy, bilious man, a little like Parke Godwin, with an extraordinary simplicity and goodness, apparently.

I have been for some time past thinking with longing of home and looking forward to the day when I may at last return. I regard this as a good sign and connected with returning health. All Europe is in an uproar about the Roman difficulty [12] — it is as good as a play almost to outsiders like ourselves. . . . Your loving

WM. JAMES

[12] Garibaldi, leading his insurrectionary forces, was encamped about sixteen miles from Rome.

November, December, and half of January James spent in Berlin, where he attended lectures on physiology by Emil Du Bois-Reymond, and began to entertain the project of approaching psychology from that angle.[13] This new enthusiasm reminded him sharply of his limitations: "Too late! Too late! If I had been *drilled* further in mathematics, physics, chemistry, logic, and the history of metaphysics, and had established, even if only in my memory, a firm and thoroughly familiar *basis* of knowledge in all these sciences (like the basis of human anatomy one gets in studying medicine), to which I should involuntarily refer all subsequently acquired facts and thoughts . . . I might be steadily advancing." [14]

Among James's contemporaries at the Lawrence Scientific School and at the Medical School, it was Henry P. Bowditch who influenced him most in the direction of physiology. Bowditch received his M.D. degree in 1868, a year before James, and then went abroad for three years' study in France and Germany, where he was able to *do* what James had eagerly hoped to do in the previous year. In 1871 Bowditch became a professor of physiology at Harvard and instituted in Boston his own physiological laboratory, to which James made frequent visits.[15] Though Bowditch soon outstripped James in physiology, the latter, owing to the accident of ill-health, was the first to explore the European field. The numerous letters in which he described his studies were designed to help Bowditch to form plans of his own. At the same time he summarized and criticized the many books which, in spite of every handicap, he was able to read, though he felt books to be a poor substitute for the laboratory. It was to Bowditch, then, that James poured out his heart when it was filled with baffled yearnings after experimental research.

Berlin, Dec. 12, 1867

I live near the University, and attend all the lectures on physiology that are given there, but am unable to do anything in the laboratory, or to attend the cliniques or Virchow's lectures and demonstrations, etc. Du Bois-Reymond, an irascible man of about forty-five, gives a very good and clear, yea, brilliant, series of five lectures a week, and two ambitious young Jews give six more between them which are

[13] *Cf.* below, II, 3.
[14] *L.W.J.*, I, 119–20.
[15] *Cf.* below, 325, 332.

almost as instructive. . . . The physiological laboratory, with its endless array of machinery, frogs, dogs, etc., etc., almost "bursts my gizzard," when I go by it, with vexation. . . . It is very discouraging to get over so little ground. But a steady boring away is bound to fetch it, I suppose; and it seems to me it is worth the trouble. . . .

I suppose you have been rolling on like a great growing snowball through the vast fields of medical knowledge and are fairly out of the long tunnel of low spirits that leads there by this time. . . . Of course I can never hope to practise. . . . But I don't want to break off connection with biological science. I can't be a teacher of physiology, pathology, or anatomy; for I can't do laboratory work, much less microscopical or anatomical.[16]

But if James was penetrating less rapidly and deeply than Bowditch, he was advancing on a broader front. He was not only reading *belles-lettres,* but was studying philosophy. He sent home for "Cousin's lectures on Kant and that other French translation of a German introduction to Kant." "It behooves me," he said, "to learn something of the 'Philosopher of Königsberg,' and I want these to ease the way." [17]

Meanwhile Henry was repining in Cambridge. He was, like his brother, in poor health, and he thought wistfully of a more abundant life abroad. In May he had written to his brother, "I envy you chiefly the Dresden pictures — if you are able to look at any. I have been reading Taine's *Italy* — which makes me hungry for works of art." He had become his brother's editor and literary agent. The following is his reply to William's letter of September 26, in which the latter had forwarded the review of Grimm's *Unüberwindliche Mächte*: —

Cambridge, Nov. 22 [1867]

Dear Willy, —

. . . I received about a fortnight ago your letter with the review of Grimm's novel — after a delay of nearly a month on the road, occasioned by I know not what. . . . I liked your article very much and was delighted to find you attempting something of the kind.

[16] *L.W.J.*, I, 120, 123.

[17] *L.W.J.*, I, 117. The two books are: Victor Cousin, *Leçons sur la philosophie de Kant,* 1844; and, presumably, Johann Schultz, *Erläuterungen über des Hrn. Prof. Kant's "Kritik der reinen Vernunft,"* of which a French translation by Tissot appeared in 1865.

It struck me as neither dull nor flat, but very readable. I copied it forthwith and sent it to the *Nation*. I received no answer — which I take to be an affirmation. . . . I confess to a dismal apprehension that something *may* have happened to it on the road to New York, and have just written to Godkin to tell me whether he actually received it. . . . I hope you will try your hand again. I assure you it is quite worth your while. I see you scoffing from the top of your arid philosophical dust-heap, and commission T. S. P.[18] to tell you (in his own inimitable way) that you are a d——d fool.

I very much enjoy your Berlin letters. Don't try to make out that America and Germany are identical, and that it is as good to be here as there. It can't be done. Only let me go to Berlin and I will say as much. Life here in Cambridge — or in this house, at least — is about as lively as the inner sepulchre. . . . It is plain that I shall have a very long row to hoe before I am fit for anything, for either work or play. I mention this not to discourage you — for you have no right to be discouraged, when I am not myself — but because it occurs to me that I may have given you an exaggerated notion of the extent of my improvement during the past six months. An important element in my recovery, I believe, is to strike a happy medium between reading, etc., and social relaxation. The latter is not to be obtained in Cambridge — or only a ghastly simulacrum of it. There are no "distractions" here. How in Boston, when the evening arrives, and I am tired of reading, and know it would be better to do something else, can I go to the theatre? I have tried it *ad nauseam*. Likewise "calling." Upon whom? . . . Going into town on the winter nights puts a chill on larger enterprises. I say this not in a querulous spirit — for in spite of these things I would n't for the present leave Cambridge, — but in order that you may not at distance falsify your reminiscences of this excellent place. Tonight, *par exemple,* I am going into town to see the French actors, who are there for a week, give *Mme. Aubray.* Dickens has arrived for his readings. It is impossible to get tickets. At seven o'clock, A.M., on the first day of the sale there were two or three hundred people at the office, and at nine when *I* strolled up, nearly a thousand. So I don't expect to hear him. . . . I wanted to say more about yourself, personally, but I can't. I will write next week. *Je t'embrasse.*

H. J. JR.

[18] Thomas Sergeant Perry.

[Berlin, Dec. 1867]

Dear Harry,—

. . . I got a letter from you and one from Wilky last week, with the *Nation* and the contemptible contexts. I perceived the tracks of your repairing hand, and thank you for them. I sent you another notice last week of Quatrefages's "Anthropology";[19] but feel so ashamed of merely writing against space without having anything to say, that I think you had better either not give it, or cut it down to a mere page or two. I really have no respect for this unprincipled literary wash that floods the world and don't see why I should be guilty of augmenting it. No news. I am sound of wind and limb; but what would n't I give to have a good long talk with you all at home, especially Father and you. I can hardly believe I ever shall. Yours,

W. J.

When James was in Europe he was always keenly interested in the broader aspect of politics, and above all in national traits. His letters abound in comparisons of Germany, France, England, and Italy with one another and with America. The very difficulty of judging the genius of a people seems to have fascinated him, and tempted him to return to the task again and again. The following impression of Germany was written to Edmund Tweedy.

Berlin, Dec. 18, 1867

I should like to give you in a few compact sentences a general formula of Germany, and the German character; but must confess myself wholly unable to. Almost any opinion I now have is liable to be changed or even reversed by the experience of tomorrow. In fact, my experience has, considering how long I 've been here, been remarkably limited. . . . I have *now* a great respect for the Germans, in most ways, and if I had to be born a "foreign" child at all, I don't know that I could do a more comfortable thing than have it done in Germany. The ways of living are (as a whole) so sensible and easy, there seems to be such a good, fat, homely atmosphere about the inner family life of the people, as well as about much of their

[19] This is apparently the review of A. de Quatrefages, *Rapport sur les progrès de l'anthropologie en France*, which appeared in the *Nation* for Feb. 6, 1868, under the title of "The Progress of Anthropology."

public life, that a German child's early associations must have an uncommon richness and stoutness, so to speak, even if they have not much artistic elevation. Then as a boy and youth you can certainly get the best education in the world. Perhaps, after all, it is a better place to grow up in than to live in after you have grown up. The people are a swarming set, and without ever seeming to be in a hurry, get through a great deal of work. Their dull physiognomy, which tells upon one fearfully after a while, and makes one long for *any* face to come along which shall have some fire and expression no matter how ugly it may be, is often deceptive enough; for I have found it covers a great internal vivacity and charmingness. The best friends I have here are a Mr. and Mrs. Grimm, who are really trumps. Grimm, a son of one of the great Germanists ("the brothers G."), is himself a man of fine imagination, and with a sort of enthusiastic uprightness and truthfulness that would make you love him even if you did not want to. They have been very kind to me because I brought them a letter from Emerson, whose works have gone right to Grimm's heart.

In politics, as far as my limited lights go, I feel strongly Prussian; and it seems to me that true liberals of whatever German state ought to help in the present work of unification through Prussia. The "rights" violated vanish in comparison with the mass of old lumber swept away in the change, and which it would apparently have been almost impossible to sweep away in any other manner. And now the liberal party has a stage broad enough to increase greatly its satisfaction after success. Its *chances* of success in a vast number of practical matters are now much greater too; for many local impediments and obstacles have been upheld through the *local* conservative party; whereas the conservative party of the whole country will willingly let them drop. Add to this the sentimental desire of the people for a united country, and the moral effect on the majority of its being actually accomplished, no matter by what means, and I think no liberal ought to be so stiff-necked as not to accept the situation and make the best use of it he can. European politics are more interesting than ours at home inasmuch as they are not so infernally legal. Witness the Roman question. I hope the French will get a thrashing from somebody soon; they really need it, — their absurd pretension to dispose of everything in Europe is getting too insufferable.

In the next letter the subject of psychology, approached from the side of physiology, comes very clearly into view. As he says in another letter of the period, he is "wading" his way towards the psychological field.[20] The following was written to his father, —

Berlin, Dec. 26, 1867

I don't think I 've told you as yet anything about my future plans. Lectures end here near the end of March. I propose then to go to Teplitz again. If it does me then as much good as before, I think I shall probably be about whole. . . . Then, I think now of going to Heidelberg. There are two professors there, Helmholtz and Wundt, who are strong on the physiology of the senses, and I hope I shall be well enough to do some work in their laboratory. I shall hate myself till I get doing some special work; this reading leads to nothing at all. At present I feel as if, being started by them, I might most likely go home in the fall. So many new things may turn up between now and then, however, — I may get into such a good line of work or into such company as to feel like trying another winter. My great lack now is companionship. T. S. P. is too young and Grimm is too old, and I often long with a perfect vengeance for an evening at Cambridge. My ultimate prospects are pretty hazy. If I only had been well and could have got out here a year or two earlier to one of these physiological laboratories, the way of life would have been singularly simplified for me. At present my health is so uncertain that I cannot look forward to teaching physiology. As a central point of study I imagine that the border ground of physiology and psychology, overlapping both, would be as fruitful as any, and I am now working on to it. But a cultivator thereof can make no money. Occasional review articles, etc., perhaps giving "quizzes" in anatomy and physiology, and getting work to do for medical periodicals, may help along. If I wrote with more facility I fancy the latter might be productive. My ambition is modest, as you see, but my wants will not be numerous.

The *Nation* for January 23, 1868, contains an unsigned article entitled "The Manners of the Day," which consists of a temperately hostile commentary on Parisian life as reflected in *La Comtesse de Châlis; ou les mœurs du jour,* by Ernest Feydeau. This article had

[20] *L.W.J.*, I, 126–7.

passed through a brother's expert hands, whose editorial "smoothing" of the style involved a liberal use of scissors as well as of the pen. The following is from William's covering letter, written from Berlin, on December 26, 1867: —

"Another fat pseudo-letter. T. S. P. bought the book of Feydeau the other night and, after sitting up to read it, it occurred to me that my irrepressible and venal pen might *compliquer* an article out of it which should be more readable than the other two. So with a mighty sweat and labor I forged the accompanying, which I beg you will take care of and smooth, if possible, the style. I strove to imitate the *Saturday Review,* I fear unsuccessfully, but the writing is good practice. I am now more than ever convinced that I was not born for it. Don't read the book, it is as vile and weak as they make 'em. For the last year, I know not why, I have found myself growing to despise the French in many ways. Paris seems now to be in a state of moral and intellectual debasement, of which it really seems hard to imagine any peaceful issue. Every cord is tightly screwed up, to a hair of the snapping point; everything *screams* falsetto, the point seems coming when pleasure must be bloody to be felt at all. T. S. P. takes the *Figaro* daily. It is the most hideous little sheet I ever saw. One part *bons-mots,* personal *cancans,* and bawdy anecdotes, spun out with that infernal, grinning flippancy and galvanized gaiety ye wot of; the rest devoted to executions, murders and crimes generally in different countries, and theatrical gossip. I seriously think our *Police Gazette* is a higher paper. It is the organ of naturally coarse and low minds, but the *Figaro* is that of minds lost and putrefying. Bah!"

The balance of this letter is devoted to minute descriptions for blistering the back. In fact the unpublished parts of the correspondence between William and Henry James are very largely composed of hygienic, symptomatic, and therapeutic details. Their interest in one another's condition of health was equaled only by their faith in their own remedies. The enclosure which made the letter "fat" was the fuller manuscript of the article on Feydeau. In the excised portion James points out that while the Englishman, in the presence of virtue and vice, thinks it sufficient to act, or exhort, or reprove, the Frenchman feels compelled to deliver a panegyric: —

"And so when French novelists turn to virtue they behave like men about to go up in a balloon; they are unwilling to think of it at

all unless romantically. To keep one's practical self-possession in presence of the *True,* to look with analytic eye upon the *Pure,* is to them impossible. While the unwholesome parts of their narrative are often got up with a thoroughness, an ingenuity of detail, a faithfulness to nature, a sharpness and an accent, which are beyond praise, the good episodes are apt to have such a deficiency of outline, to swim forever in such mists of silvery generalization!"

To his sister James wrote this vivid account of his social experiences: —

Berlin, Jan. 9, 1868

Sweetlington!

. . . The last fortnight has been distinguished by a greater social activity than ever on my part. The last of it was on the night of the 6th when H. Grimm was forty years old, and in the manner of his nation had a fandango, at which an allegorical little drama in verse with prologue was performed by some of the friends of the family. The Thieses, or rather Mrs. Thies on a visit to Mrs. Bancroft a few days before, had suggested to Mrs. Bancroft that she should "surprise" Mrs. Grimm by coming in upon them that night. . . . To make the surprise more sudden and unexpected, Mrs. Thies told Mrs. Grimm all about it beforehand, and extra cray-fish were ordered and a few extra people invited. I sat behind Bancroft at the allegorical drama and he looked more like a *villain* than ever. There is no other word for his expression, especially that of the back of his neck and ears. His eyes look like those of a lobster, as if they were on stalks, and T. S. P. says you feel as if he ought to have a pin run through him to be stuck up on the wall like an insect. He speaks German fluently (and audibly) and the Germans speak with ever new admiration of his being minister here, as if they were not yet quite able to realize the idea. Mrs. Bancroft is doubtless an excellent lady in private, but the impression of an old limp party kid glove which her appearance suggests is but too well corroborated by the want of body to fill out the form of her conversation. Miss Thies played the part in the drama of a sort of nondescript being answering, as well as I could make out, to the "Genius of Hospitality." She wore a cloud of white muslin and a tin crown on her disheveled hair, and recited very prettily her German verses, with red cheeks, and sparkling eyes. . . .

Miss Bornemann sends you her loving thanks for the leaves.[21] The night of the party in question I came mighty near falling in love with her, she was so prettily dressed in a Swiss costume, and so electric and fluttering with the excitement. . . . Oh! that this heart were not so dried up! Mrs. Grimm is a woman of genius, really. Mrs. Tappan would grow ten years younger could she be in their house. There is a freedom and breadth about her ways, combined with a feminine grace that must bring everyone down. Combine the bold candor and distinct movement of Mrs. Tweedy with the timid mistrust and delicate vagueness of Mrs. Child, if you can, and you have something like her. Grimm himself is a noble fellow, and you can't think how friendly they have both been to me. At that last party, for the first time since I have been away, I felt for a time at home and really fused with my surroundings, talked away my idiotisms and despoiled phrases to nearly everyone in the room and giggled with Fräulein Bornemann as if she had been Mary Tappan. You 've no idea what an intense pleasure it was. If I wanted, I could see all the best society in Berlin with the openings I now have, but with my University work, my back is unequal to the task of a larger visiting circle than I have. T. S. Perry went to the party and naturally found it gloomier than a funeral. One has got here by sheer force of self-sustenance to live down this foreignness. The stranger himself has much more than at home or in France or England to do his own work — and when by chance you meet a Berliner whose manners go out to meet you, as it were, it strikes you so strangely that your impulse is to beg him not to take that extra trouble on your account. When you 've crossed the sill, I daresay you 're as well off as anywhere else. I made, or rather had made, a "Moore's" Patent Blotter for a birthday present for Grimm which seemed to tickle him.

O my beloved child, how much I would like to be with you and have you "sass" me as of yore. Frequently in the night watches does my spirit fly and bump like a moth against the window panes of Quincy Street, and I think on the whole what a good crowd dwells there, especially in the midst of the ignoble mush of which the majority of the male sex is composed, how refreshing it is to have two persons of moral cleanness and freshness like H. James, Sr., and

[21] Ivy leaves from the Quincy Street house, a souvenir for Miss Thies. Fraülein Bornemann was an intimate of the Grimm and Thies households.

H. James, Jr., in the family. I would not have you read them this as directly coming from me, but you can somehow leave the letter trailing around where they may be likely to see it, and inadvertently peruse it. . . . 1000 kisses to all, from your loving

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The consoling and hortatory letters which James wrote at this time to Tom Ward were designed as much for his own cure as for Ward's, since, as he said, "We resemble each other in being both persons of rather wide sympathies, not particularly logical in the processes of our minds, and of mobile temperament." There was a dawning realization that since education is a cumulative effect, even a series of abortive undertakings like his own might bear fruit in the end: "Results should not be too voluntarily aimed at or too busily thought of. They are *sure* to float up of their own accord, from a long enough daily work at a given matter; and I think the work as a mere occupation ought to be the primary interest with us. At least, I am sure this is so in the intellectual realm, and I strongly suspect it is the secret of German prowess therein. Have confidence, even when you seem to yourself to be making no progress, that, if you but go on in your uninteresting way, they must bloom out in their good time." [22]

On January 18, 1868, soon after writing these words of counsel and consolation to Ward, James was again in Teplitz, where he was obliged to remain until March 1868. A letter to his youngest brother expounds the same practical philosophy: —

Teplitz, Jan. 27, 1868

My dear old Bob, —

. . . This accursed thing in my back has now lasted for thirteen months. It scatters all my plans for the practice of medicine to the winds, which has been a great disappointment to me, inasmuch as I was getting very much interested therein. I still hope however that I may with the aid of the Teplitz treatment . . . recover a sufficiently strong back to be able to do laboratory work, in which case I think I shall devote myself to the study of physiology, and perhaps be able to get a professorship somewhere.

I feel rather ashamed at my age to stand in the presence of you and Wilky without having earned a cent. But I have not been quite idle

[22] Written in Jan. 1868. *L.W.J.*, I, 129, 133.

notwithstanding, and will, if health only returns, make my living yet. I am very glad I came to Germany on many accounts, in the first place, because I have got command of the literature in a way I hardly think I should have had patience to do at home, so difficult is the language; and in the second place (though I don't know whether this is due so much to the example of German ways of living, as to my sickness and the inevitable change produced by growing older) my way of looking on the practical problem of life is a much steadier and simpler one. I feel as if I should be contented to settle down to some one occupation for the rest of my days, and atone for the narrowness of my scope by the thoroughness of my treatment of it — trusting to have life rounded off in the next world if necessary, like the man in Browning's "Grammarian's Funeral." The patience of these Germans in their calling is something that is hardly known at all with us, and might be introduced with considerable augmentation of our aggregate yearly happiness, though I presume it has its disadvantages too. We Americans are too greedy for *results* . . . and we think only of means of cutting short the work to reach them sooner. I suppose it grows mostly out of the facility with which *material* results of all sorts have been obtainable with us — I am sure it is a destructive temper of mind in purely intellectual pursuits. I think the business of life appears to the vision of an ordinary German about to embark on it rather as a succession of days of a given *occupation,* than as a mere road to some more or less considerable achievement. He lets the results take care of themselves more, feeling convinced that they will be a necessary outgrowth of so many hours of labor. Or perhaps in many cases he does n't think of them at all, so small either in the way of money or authority are they apt to be here, and just lives on without fretting. Most Americans I have seen here have had a peculiar haggard, hungry expression about the eye quite different from anything German. . . .

I confess sometimes the prospect of our scattered and in various ways dilapidated family of old is a little disheartening, but hang it! the world is as young now as it was when the gospel was first preached. And our lives, if we will make them so, are as real as the lives of anyone who ever lived. . . . Pray write me soon . . . again, and tell me of your prospects, and your views of life, and believe me my dearest Bob, ever your loving brother,

WM. JAMES

XV

READING AND CRITICISM

DURING all of this period, but especially during his retreat at Teplitz, James enlarged his acquaintance with literature and exercised himself in the art of literary criticism. It is evident that he looked for values beyond those of the literary art itself. Browning, like Emerson and Goethe, he read largely for edification. Recommending "A Grammarian's Funeral" to Ward, he said: "It always strengthens my backbone to read it, and I think the feeling it expresses of throwing upon eternity the responsibility of making good your one-sidedness somehow or other . . . is a gallant one, and fit to be trusted if one-sided activity is in itself at all respectable." He was looking, in other words, for some philosophy which might support him if he should decide "not to Live but Know." His love of Erckmann-Chatrian's *L'Ami Fritz* and similar "books of gold," a love which remained undiminished to the year of his death, was founded on their wholesomeness and reassuring humanity. The later passion for Tolstoi's *War and Peace* was based on different grounds — its veracity and mystical profundity.[1] There was a third reason for reading — namely, relaxation and entertainment suitable to his warm-blooded temperament. There were, in short, moral, metaphysical, and recreative motives which limited James's taste, and predisposed him against anything which stressed technique at the expense of subject matter, surface at the expense of depth, or evil at the expense of good. Literature must be true, important, and pleasing. At the same time that James was coming to a clearer consciousness of his literary bias he had a sudden access of fluency, and poured himself out in letters of incredible length. This was not merely the effect of isolation — it is evident that he enjoyed the excitement of having ideas and expressing them. His brother was their favorite recipient and often their object: —

[1] *L.W.J.*, I, 101, 129–30; II, 40, 48, 51–2.

Teplitz, Feb. 12, 1868

My dear Harry, —

I enclose with this another article for Charles Norton.[2] I received while writing it Dr. Holmes's lecture from H. P. Bowditch, and appended a few remarks suggested thereby, which are "gassy" enough as far as they go. The lecture tickled me to death by the perfection of its style. Have you read it? If not, borrow it from Wendell. I don't know whether the Teplitz medium prevents me from appreciating rightly the relative value of things, but it seems to me one of the best things I know of Dr. Holmes's. The "strange intensity of my feeling" on the subject of article writing, of which you speak, is to be explained by the novelty of the exercise, and by the enormous difficulty I experience in turning out my clotted thought in a logical and grammatical procession. I find more freedom, however, in each successive attempt, and hope before long to write straight ahead as you do. What an activity, by the bye, you are displaying in the *Nation!*[3] I like your last articles very much indeed. There is a vein of freedom about them, greater than that which used to obtain in connection with your earlier ones. I don't think ephemeral newspaper articles ought to appear too nice. I was much pleased the other day by receiving from Fräulein Bornemann some old *Atlantic Monthlies*, in which I found parts II and III of your "Poor Richard." I found it good much beyond my expectations — story, characters and way of telling excellent, in fact. And hardly a trace of that too diffuse explanation of the successive psychological steps which I remember attacking you for when you read it to me.

The *Atlantics* came in a box which was sent me apparently from a party at the Grimms' house, for it contained three sheets of allegorical contributions in German manuscript signed by seven or eight of the Grimm crowd. The head-senders, however, were Mrs. Grimm, Miss Thies, and Fräulein Bornemann. The contents varied from a big and bully liver sausage to a bottle of champagne — passing through some pots of the most india-rubber-like calves-foot jelly, chocolate, meringues, cologne water, pin cushion, oranges, plaster statuary, etc., forming, with the allegory of the manuscript, a most

[2] This was the review of Claude Bernard's *Rapport; cf.* above, 97.

[3] Henry James contributed seven reviews to the *Nation* in 1867, and thirteen in 1868. "Poor Richard" appeared in the *Atlantic* for June, July, and August, 1867.

German mixture. Luckily the allegory was in prose, or it would have been even more insipid. The sapidity of the sausage made amends — and there is in every phenomenon that takes place in the German female nature the most curious coexistence of sausage and what seems to us cold and moonshiny sentimentality. It must be felt, for it cannot be analytically exhibited to a foreigner. . . .

I am just beginning to reap the harvest of my months of probation, just beginning to feel at home with the language and the people, and to lose the sense of effort and strangeness with which the common processes of living have hitherto been conducted. It would, accordingly, as a mere matter of self-indulgence be foolish to go home at this moment. But in addition to that, if I get enough improvement from this cure this time to get into a laboratory, it will be a matter to affect the prosperity of my whole future life, and turn me from a nondescript loafer, into a respectable working man, with an honorable task before him. . . .

I have not read anything lately worth recording. The bathing weakens one's brain so as to almost prevent all study. I took up Balzac's *Modeste Mignon* the other day. I don't know whether you know it. It must be one of the very early ones, for the extraordinary research and effort in the style is perfectly *cocasse*. It is consoling to see a man overcome such difficulties. But the story was so monstrously diseased morally that I could not finish it, reading novels as I do for the sake of refreshment. Ever your

WMS.

Teplitz, March 4, 1868[4]

My dear Harry, —

. . . Teplitz is as *safe* a place as there is on the globe. Nothing moves at this season save the heavenly bodies, and as one hardly feels tempted to arise and pursue them around their orbits, one can keep very still. In other respects, it is a singularly blameless place, too. This house is excellently kept and I feel exactly like one of the family, and am on the most affectionate terms with the domestics, male and female, who, in sooth, are an excellent crowd. The male, *der alte* Franz, resembles General Washington, both in form and feature and in moral character. He walks at the rate of about half a mile an hour, but never sits down and so in the course of the day gets through

[4] A fragment of this letter is printed in *L.W.J.*, I, 136–7.

a fabulous amount of the most heterogeneous work. When spoken to, he always seems to count twenty-five before answering, and when angry (if that ever occurs) I have no doubt he counts a full hundred. . . .

I wrote you three weeks ago enclosing an article on Claude Bernard for Charles Norton. I was "struck all of a heap" by Charles's offering you the *North American Review,* and though my idea of the duties are rather cloudy, I should think you did wisely in declining. I get the *Nations* reglar, including my two last articles.[5] Keep a-sending of them! I regard the *Nation* as the sole bulwark of our country's honor. If I were a rich man I would have 10,000 distributed *gratis* every week through the land, but I would keep *Godkin* poor and hungry, so that his "vein" might not be clogged and dulled by the vapors of prosperity. My *schriftstellerisches Selbstgefühl* was naturally rather mangled by the mutilations you had inflicted on my keen article about Feydeau, for I had rather regarded those racy remarks on the French character which you left out as the brightest jewels in my literary coronet, and the rest merely as an illustration of them. However, if you do not claim any of the money for your improvements, I shall not complain. Darwin's book has just come to me. As it is of course too late for the next *North American Review,* I will send a review of it at my leisure.

I have received the second *Galaxy* and *Atlantic* for February, with your story of old clothes.[6] Both stories show a certain neatness and airy grace of touch which is characteristic of your productions (I suppose you want to hear in an unvarnished manner what is exactly the impression they make on me). And both show a greater suppleness and freedom of movement in the composition; although the first was unsympathetic to me from being one of those male *vs.* female subjects you have so often treated, and besides there was something cold about it, a want of heartiness or unction. It seems to me that a story must have rare picturesque elements of some sort, or much action, to compensate for the absence of heartiness, and the elements of yours were those of everyday life. It can also escape by the exceeding "keen"ness of its analysis and thoroughness of its treatment, as in some of Balzac's (but even there the result is disagree-

[5] The "two last articles" were presumably "The Manners of the Day" and "The Progress of Anthropology."

[6] "The Story of a Masterpiece," and "The Romance of Certain Old Clothes."

able, if valuable); but in yours the moral action was very lightly touched, and rather indicated than exhibited. I fancy this rather dainty and disdainful treatment of yours comes from a wholesome dread of being sloppy and gushing and over-abounding in power of expression, like the most of your rivals in the *Atlantic* . . . and that is excellent, in fact it is the instinct of truth against humbug and twaddle, and when it governs the treatment of a rich material it produces first class works. But the material in your stories (except "Poor Richard") has been *thin* (and even in P. R., relatively to its length), so that they give a certain impression of the author clinging to his gentlemanliness though all else be lost, and dying happy provided it be *sans déroger*. That, to be sure, is expressed rather violently, but you may understand what I mean if I point to an article named "Mrs. Johnson" (I suppose by Howells) which was sent me in the February *Atlantic*.[1] . . . The quality of its humor is perfectly exquisite, and as far as I noticed never *déroger*-s, but the article left on me (and I suspect on you) a certain feeling of dissatisfaction, as if the author were fit for better things, as if this material were short measure and he had to coax and cook it to make it fill even that sober form — as if it were at bottom a trifling, for him. Well, I feel something of a similar want of blood in your stories, as if you did not fully fit them, and I tell you so because I think the same thing would strike you if you read them as the work of another. (For instance Charles Lamb's essays are perfect because they are so short, and when De Quincey blames him for his want of continuity and his "refusing openings" continually, he seems quite wrong. Probably if Lamb had expanded his articles into the size of "Mrs. Johnson" a similar effect of inward disharmony would have arisen which would have been painful.) If you see what I mean perhaps it may put you on the track of some useful discovery about yourself, which is my excuse for talking to you thus unreservedly. So far I think "Poor Richard" the best of your stories because there is warmth in the material, and I should have read it and enjoyed it very much indeed had I met it anywhere. The story of "Old Clothes" is in a different tone from any of yours, seems to have been written with the mind more unbent and careless, is very pleasantly done, but is, as the *Nation* said, "trifling" for you. . . .

I have uttered this long rigmarole in a dogmatical manner, as one

[1] This story by W. D. Howells appeared in the *Atlantic* for Jan. 1868.

speaks to himself, but of course you will use it merely as a mass to react against in your own way, so that it may serve you some good purpose. It must be almost impossible to get anyone's real, whole feeling about what one has written. I wish I could say it *viva voce*. If I were you I 'd select some particular problem, literary or historical, to study on. There 's no comfort to the mind like having some special task, and then you could write stories by the way for pleasure and profit. I don't suppose *your literarisches Selbstgefühl* suffers from what I have said; for I really think my taste is rather incompetent in these matters, and as beforesaid, only offer these remarks as the impressions of an individual for you to philosophize upon yourself. . . . I have no time for more — my veal-time is long foreby. Ever yours affectionately,

WM. JAMES

In March James returned to Dresden, where he took up his abode under the motherly care of Frau Spangenberg, and remained until the end of June, except for occasional visits to Teplitz, forty miles away. During these months of comparative rest, in which he hoped for beneficial effects from the Teplitz baths, he experienced a great awakening of interest in art, this time from the point of view of the critic and historian.

[Dresden], March 9 [1868]

Dear Harry, —

Here is the "Darwin" for Charles Norton, which I spoke of in my letter of three days ago. I slung it yesterday and breathe at last free. Nothing new to tell you save that I have finished the *Odyssey*, and been once to see the collection of casts in the Museum here. It is useless to deny that the Greeks had a certain cleverness. Houp la la! — I have gone and bought Renan's *Questions contemporaines*. . . . Renan is — Renan, but abounds in felicitous sayings and suggestive *aperçus*. *E.g.*, "Le barbare représentant quelque chose d'inassouvi, est l'éternel trouble fête des sociétés trop satisfaites d'elles mêmes," [8] etc., strikes me as a good definition. The more I think of Darwin's ideas the more weighty do they appear to me, though of course my opinion is worth very little — still, I *believe*

[8] The original passage is as follows: "Le barbare, en effet, représentant quelque chose d'inassouvi, est l'éternel trouble-fête des siècles satisfaits."

that that scoundrel Agassiz is unworthy either intellectually or morally for him to wipe his shoes on, and I find a certain pleasure in yielding to the feeling. I wish when you write you would say more about what you have been reading. . . . Adieu! Adieu! Yours,

WM. JAMES

The following paragraphs from a letter written March 16 to his sister Alice reveal the intimate connection between James's intellectual life and his human relations: —

"If I find my third *mild* experiment with Teplitz successful, I shall think it my duty to stick in the neighborhood all summer so as to have two more courses still. If not, I will fly home; for all I am gaining here is a knowledge of my own disposition in dreary circumstances, which is no doubt useful to attain, but enough is as good as a feast, and I think I very nearly touched bottom a great while ago. And the absence of friends where one can't lead an active life is a great privation. *I,* at any rate, need the stimulus of conversation, example, etc., to study — and in my crippled condition I can get none of it here. Looking back on what I have done in the way of study this winter it seems one of the emptiest years of my life, and all, I think, on *that* account. . . .

It may be we are cold-hearted — we are certainly dry, and our feelings of kindliness do not froth up into expression like the Germans', and must be called less lively; and we certainly have a mean, false shame about expressing the movements of our affections. But I think that our reserve in so far forth as it is reserve and not barrenness, is in some degree pleasanter to see than the too easy and *sloppy* outpourings of German feeling, which gives you a sense of surfeit immediately. One can't appreciate it without being here. *Per contra,* one does meet here in the most unpromising people at first sight, a sort of *good manners* which is very rare at home. I mean a positive manner, giving a sort of *color* to its bearer. Of course there are lots of Germans who are totally destitute of it — but at home one hardly meets it *at all.* Yesterday in the second class car compartment, which was full, I noticed it in five people. . . . After the Esquimaux visages of the past year, creation widened again to my view, and I began to feel that human society on a different basis than that of mutual disgust and mere toleration

might after all be a reality — a point of view to which I confess I have been long a stranger. Don't think me soured in temper — it evidently is something constitutional in me. I get really angry with these German women for looking so and for being contented with it."

Writing again to his brother, James continues to exercise his critical faculties and powers of generalization: —

Dresden, April 5, 1868

My dear Harry, —

. . . You see I am still in Dresden. I have picked up a good deal in a dorsal point of view since leaving Teplitz, and am rather better than I was at Berlin. I know I should be more so still if the uneasiness of my blood did not drive me to do so much running about — I have been more restless this time at Dresden than at all yet. I have been a number of times in the gallery, you may imagine with what pleasure — like a bath from Heaven; for last summer when I was here I was only able to thrust my nose into it twice, and look for a few minutes at some half dozen pictures. I 'd give a good deal to import you and hear how some of the things strike you. . . .

One thing is certain, that the German blood is almost without a sense or a want of the beautiful. . . . The old Germans seem nevertheless to have caught the beautiful very often, but I fancy it has been mostly incidentally. They seem to have striven mainly after mere fact, truth of detail without choice in genre subjects, which are consequently generally really vulgar and hideous; and in religious subjects, truth of *ideal* detail, that is dresses ideally handsome, cheeks ideally smooth, light ideally pure, etc.; which of course makes the ensemble pleasing, and accidentally carries many parts over into the territory of what other races call beautiful. I think the real charm in nature which they *sought* to render will be found to be the *agreeable, i.e.,* that by which each separate sense is affected pleasantly, such as brightness, velvetiness; and not at all that higher and more intellectual harmony (consistent with far duller and inferior separate sensations) which leaps at once to one's eyes out of the beginnings of the Italian Schools. . . . With all this there is yet in the old Germans a repose which is analogous in some measure to that of the Greeks . . . inasmuch as both seem to have conceived their subjects as simply *being,* and degenerate schools need to have

the being determined in some picturesque and expressive manner. But the general mode of looking at the universe was as wide as East from West between the Greeks and Germans; and I fancy their agreeing in this point may possibly arise from the fact that German *art* (and the repose I speak of is strongest in ideal subjects) may have expressed only a small holy corner of what the Germans call their *Weltanschauung*, while to the Greek it expressed everything.

The real brothers of the Greeks are the glorious Venetians: in both does the means of expression the artist is able to dispose of seem to cover all he wants to say, — the artist is adequate to his universe. Finiteness and serenity and perfection — though out of the finiteness in both cases there steals a grace, which pierces the moral hide of the observer, and lays hold of the "infinite" in some mysterious way. It is a touching thing in Titian and Paul Veronese, who paint scenes which are a perfect *charivari* of splendor and luxury, and manifold sensations as far removed from what we call simplicity as anything well can be, that they preserve a tone of sober innocence, of instinctive single-heartedness, as natural as the breathing of a child. . . .

Besides the gallery, I have been enjoying that imperturbable old heathen Homer, lately, and have read twenty books of the *Odyssey*. There are half a dozen German translations, all of which are esteemed to be far ahead of Voss, and in verity the thing reads just like a German poem, — no trace of an inversion or an awkward forced sentence such as abound in translations generally, but a divine old narrowly, homely, concrete, unconscious-seeming language and narrative. For my part, I 've no doubt it 's just as good as reading the original! The *Odyssey* strikes me as very different in spirit from the *Iliad*, though whether such difference necessarily implies a difference of time and production I am too ignorant to have any idea. My South American Indians keep rising before me now as I read the *Odyssey*. . . . But the health! the brightness and the freshness! — and yet "combined with a total absence" of almost all that we consider peculiarly valuable in ourselves.

The very persons who would most writhe and wail at their surroundings if transported back into early Greece, would, I think, be the neo-pagans and Hellas worshipers of today. The cool acceptance by the bloody old heathens of everything that happened around them, their indifference to evil in the abstract, their want

of what we call sympathy, the essentially definite character of their joys, or at any rate of their sorrows (for their joy was perhaps coextensive with life itself), would all make their society perfectly hateful to these over-cultivated and vaguely sick complainers. But I don't blame them for being dazzled by the luminous harmony of the Greek productions. The Homeric Greeks "accepted the universe," their only notion of evil was its perishability. . . . To them existence was its own justification, and the imperturbable tone of delight and admiration with which Homer speaks of every fact, is not in the least abated when the fact becomes to *our* eyes perfectly atrocious in character. As long as Ulysses is in the hands of the Cyclop, he abhors him, but when he is once out of danger, the chronic feeling of admiration, or at least indifferent tolerance, gains the upper hand. To the Greeks a thing was evil only transiently and accidentally, and with respect to those particular unfortunates whose bad luck happened to bring them under it. Bystanders could remain careless and untouched — no after-brooding, no disinterested hatred of it *in se,* and questioning of its right to darken the world, such as now prevail. . . .

This sad heroic acceptance (*sans arrière pensée*) of death seems to me the great tragic wind that blows through the *Iliad,* and comes out especially strong in Achilles. . . . It strikes us with a terrible impression of unapproachable greatness of character; but I can't help thinking that its *peculiarity* in our sight lies rather in an intellectual limitation, than in any extraordinary moral tremendousness on the part of the hero. Take a modern man of vigorous will and great pride, and *give him the same conception of the world as Achilles had* — a warm earth where everything is good, a brazen Fate which is really inscrutable, and which is ever striking her big licks into the pleasant earth, and finally cutting us off from it — and I have no doubt he would live like Achilles (firmly enjoying his earth and as firmly looking at the face of Fate), without needing the introduction of any new and peculiar moral element of strength in his character. . . .

9.30 P.M. At this "pint" I was interrupted by the thick-set but beaming-with-moral-excellence wench who said, *"Bitte kommen Sie zu Tische!"* So I went and devoured my portion of *Kalbsbraten* with the greater zest for having done you so much writing. I hope it boreth you not to read it. I write off my reflections to you as

they arise because it is the nearest intercourse of that pensive nature that I can have with my kind, and it is a satisfaction to make some definitions, however provisional, when you are reading. . . . I wrote you from Teplitz a long letter relative to your writings. Exactly what escaped me in the ardor of composition I cannot now remember, but I have the impression I assumed a rather law-giving tone. I hope it did not hurt you in any way, or mislead you as to the opinion I may have of you as a whole, for I feel as if you were one of the two or three sole intellectual and moral companions I have. If you could have known how I have ached at times to have you by and hear your opinion on different matters, or see how things would strike you, you would not think I thought lightly of the evolutions of your mind. . . . One of the most fearful features of my being abroad is this terrible fluency which is growing on me of writing letters. Last week I wrote *five sheets* to Arthur Sedgwick, *de populo americano*, which I would like you to read, so ask him for it. My organ of perception-of-national-differences happened to be in a super-excited state that week, and that letter was the consequence. I don't know whether the "pints" raised will seem to you just. I was very much amused by Father's account of Emerson,[9] but I think Emerson probably has other "intellectual offspring" than those wretched imitators, and has truly stirred up honest men who are far from advertising it by their mode of talking. . . . Yours,

W. J.

Dresden, April 13, 1868

My dear Harry, —

I am just in from the theatre and feel like dropping you a line to tell you I have got your last *Atlantic* story ("Extraordinary Case"), and read it with much satisfaction. It makes me think I may have partly misunderstood your aim heretofore, and that one of the objects you have had in view has been to give an impression like that we often get of people in life: Their orbits come out of space and lay themselves for a short time along of ours, and then off they whirl again into the unknown, leaving us with little more than an impression of their reality and a feeling of baffled curiosity as to the mystery of the beginning and end of their being, and of the intimate character

[9] The reference is to his father's letter of March 18, 1868, printed above, 96.

of that segment of it which we have seen. Am I right in guessing that you had a conscious intention of this sort here? . . . You seem to acknowledge that you can't exhaust any character's feelings or thoughts by an articulate displaying of them. You shrink from the attempt to drag them all reeking and dripping and raw upon the stage, which most writers make and fail in. You expressly restrict yourself, accordingly, to showing a few external acts and speeches, and by the magic of your art making the reader *feel* back of these the existence of a body of being of which these are casual features. You wish to suggest a mysterious fulness which you do not lead the reader through. It seems to me this is a very legitimate method, and has a great effect when it succeeds. . . . Only it must succeed. The gushing system is better to fail in, since that admits of a warmth of feeling and generosity of intention that may reconcile the reader. . . . Your style grows easier, firmer and more concise as you go on writing. The tendency to return on an idea and over-refine it, becomes obsolete, — you hit it the first lick now. The face of the whole story is bright and sparkling, no dead places, and on the whole the scepticism and, as some people would say, impudence implied in your giving a story which is no story at all, is not only a rather *gentlemanly* thing, but has a deep justification in nature, for we know the beginning and end of nothing. Still, while granting your success here, I must say that I think the thorough and passionate conception of a story is the highest, as of course you think yourself.

I have been hearing Devrient play in *Hamlet*. He was the first German actor, I believe (Dawison is considered to have got ahead of him now) — is an old man, but no one would believe it of him on the stage.[10] His Hamlet is of the same class as Booth's, and interesting in the same way, though by my recollection Booth goes ahead of him greatly in variety and subtlety. What a thing the human voice is, though! The endless fulness of the play never struck me so before, — it bursts and cracks at every seam. I may feel it the more for having been thinking of classical things lately, — I was in the cast collection again yesterday.

The question what is the difference between the classical conception of life and art, and that of which *Hamlet* is an example, besets

[10] Karl August Devrient (1797–1872) and Bogumil Dawison (1818–72), both famous German Shakespearian actors of their time.

me more and more, and I think by a long enough soaking in presence of examples of each, some light might dawn. And then the still bigger question is: What is the warrant for each? Is our present only a half-way stage to another classical era with a more complete conception of the universe than the Greek, or is the difference between classic and romantic not one of intellect but of race and *temperament?* I was only thinking yesterday of the difference between the modern flower-in-a-dunghill (*e.g.,* Victor Hugo *passim*) poetry, where often the dirtier the dung the more touching the poetry of the flower, and the Greek idea, which could not possibly have conceived such a thing, but would have either made the flower leaven the heap, or turned back on it altogether, harmony being the *sine qua non;* and here comes to add to my "realizing sense" of the chasm between them, this awful *Hamlet,* which groans and aches so with the mystery of things, with the ineffable, that the *attempt* to express it is abandoned, one form of words seeming as irrelevant as another; and crazy conceits and countersenses slip and "whirl" around the vastness of the subject, as if the tongue were mocking itself. So too, action seems idle and to have nothing to do with the point, just as in a moral point of view it must have seemed vain to the authors of the Fantine-poetry [11] and to so many Christian sects. While the Greeks were far greater "positivists" than any now.

But I fear you begin ere now to be in the same doubt about *my* sanity as most people are about Hamlet's. Excuse the bosh which my pen has lately got into the habit of writing. In this matter I am prevented from expressing myself clearly by reason of the fogginess of my ideas. I think I could reach some analysis by keeping works of both sorts long enough before my eyes, but opportunity and skill are both lacking. And perhaps, after all, such analyses are made by everyone more or less for himself, and understood by no one else — witness all the German treatises on *Aesthetik:* everyone has written one here, just as everyone has kept school once, in Massachusetts. I saw, by the bye, t'other day a German theory: Shakespeare a homeopath! It waxes very late. Good night! . . . Yours,

W. J.

[11] The expression "Fantine-poetry" evidently refers to the character in *Les Misérables.*

On April 1, 1868, James began at Dresden a diary in which for two months he recorded his reading and reflections, and in which for several years he formulated his crucial decisions and resolves. In the spring of 1868, he was, as is also revealed in his letters, reading widely and voluminously — Homer, Renan, Shakespeare, Darwin, Taine, Kant, Agassiz, Janet, Lessing, "sensible as the northwest wind," and "the beloved" Schiller, whose "magnificent essay," "Über Anmut und Würde," interested him greatly as presenting that antithesis of the moral and the æsthetic which he had inherited from his father.

He visited the collection of ancient sculpture repeatedly, and felt himself forced to ask "what the *x* is that makes the difference between them and all modern things," clutching at "straws of suggestions that the next day destroys." Thus, in works of Greek sculpture the artist's idea "lies all through them and can bear any amount of loss of small details and continue to smile as freely as ever." Or, while the modern thing requires the spectator to put himself in a particular and sympathetic mood, "the Greek things never have any point — the eye and the mind slip over and over them, and they only smile within the boundary of their form." But James's æsthetic experience was fused with the problem of his health, and this in turn with the remorseful state of his conscience, which charged him with purposelessness and futility. At moments he found "a sort of inward serenity and joy in living, derived from reading Goethe and Schiller"; and in beauty the suggestion of a standard, as well as a refuge from too much thinking.

XVI

TOWARDS PSYCHOLOGY AND PHILOSOPHY

JAMES'S thoughts now turned towards Heidelberg, where he hoped to resume his scientific studies. The correspondent to whom he most fully confided his scientific yearnings was, as ever, Henry Bowditch: —

Teplitz, May 5, 1868

My dear Henry, —

I was very much pleased to get your letter of January 12th some time ago. I had despatched a letter to you not many days previously which I hope you have also received. I got Dr. Holmes's pamphlet with the letter, and was much obliged to you for it — it was a real treat to me. Our excellent Professor may be lacking in practical sense, and his style of writing may be heavy and dull, but for the genuine scientific *furor* he can't be beat (subtle joke). . . .

In ten days I start for Dresden, where I shall stay at least one month, and perhaps longer, trying to husband the good effects of this bathing by rest and not work them right off as I have hitherto done. Then it is most probable that I shall go to Heidelberg. I have by this time dropped all hope of doing anything at physiology, for I 'm not fit for laboratory work, and even if that were not the only reputable way of cultivating the science at all (which it is), it would be for *me* with my bad memory and slack interest in the details, the only practicable way of getting any honest knowledge of the subject. I go to Heidelberg because Helmholtz is there and a man named Wundt, from whom I think I may learn something of the physiology of the senses without too great bodily exertion, and may perhaps apply the knowledge to some use afterwards. The immortal Helmholtz is such an ingrained mathematician that I suppose I shall not profit much by him. How long I stay in Heidelberg will depend on what I find I can gain there, and on the state of my back. It 's a delicious place to live in, people say, although the Swabian German

is laughed at by those of the North. So if you are intending to come to Germany this summer and to devote yourself first to the language, which is the common plan, you would hardly choose it for a residence. For my part, I think this universal fastidiousness on the part of Americans about hearing good German the first three months is the most ludicrous phenomenon of the 19th Century. The common people you won't understand, no matter where you are, and your own dialect is so certain to be worse than the very worst you can possibly hear from educated people, that to be particular is as absurd as for a chimney sweep to refuse to sit down because there 's dust on the bench. . . .

I have been totally demoralized for more than two months past, what with sickness and weakness from these baths, and general disgust at my prospects, and have let medical science almost totally slide. I feel as if I had forgotten all I ever learned on the subject of disease and treatment, etc., since I left home, and would have to begin another three years' course of study to take my degree. For that reason would I so gladly be with you to hear you talk over your studies. But on the other hand my brain has not been totally idle, although occupied with literary matters that can't be used for anything. . . . Good-bye and good luck to you till we meet. Yours,

WM. JAMES

A paragraph from a letter written to Holmes from Dresden on May 15 reveals the characteristic educational impediments and vocational doubts, together with the growing interest in psychology: —

"I had hoped until the end of my visit to Teplitz last winter that I might be able to gèt working at physiology, not that I have any special interest in its details, but that there is work there for somebody to do, and I have a (perhaps erroneous) suspicion that psychology is not *à l'ordre du jour* until some as yet unforeseen steps are made in the physiology of the nervous system; and if I were able by assiduous pottering to define a few physiological facts, however humble, I should feel I had not lived entirely in vain. But I now see that I can probably never do laboratory work, and so am obliged to fali back on something else. The prospective burden of a wife and family being taken off my shoulders simultaneously with the placing of this "mild yoke" upon the small of my back, relieves me from imminent *material* anxiety. I nevertheless feel the want of some

particular outward responsibility to prevent my wasting time. I shall continue to study, or rather *begin* to, in a general psychological direction, hoping that soon I may get into a particular channel. Perhaps a practical application may present itself sometime — the only thing I can now think of is a professorship of "moral philosophy" in some western academy, but I have no idea how such things are attainable, nor if they are attainable at all to men of a non-spiritualistic mould." [1]

To Tom Ward, James wrote a summary of his Dresden-Teplitz period: —

Dresden, May 24, 1868

My well beloved Tom, —

. . . I have now given up all idea of ever doing anything at physiology, and for the last two months my mind has been off the tolerably steady mechanical track in which I had succeeded in keeping it in Berlin. Consequence: dissatisfaction and general listlessness and scepticism, with, however, a few random gleams of light that would not have met me if I had kept on reading physiology. First of these is a better insight into that which makes the Greek things so peculiar to us. I looked at the casts here in the Museum and read a great part of Homer (in Dutch) over again. Second, the beginning of a real acquaintance with Goethe as an individual, and the acquaintance of Schiller. Third, the friendship of a young American lady here in the house, who has stirred chords in this desiccated heart which I long thought had turned to dust. To begin with number three. First, let me disclaim sincerely anything like flirtation. I soar in a region above that, I think. The young woman is a prey to her nerves and is in a sort of hysterical, hypochondriac state, but her mind is perfectly free from sentimentality and disorder of any sort, and she has really genius for music. I never heard a piano speak as she makes it.[2] Now what is beautiful and so to speak absolute and finished about her has struck into me so deeply as quite to rejuvenate my feeling. I am naturally almost as sceptical as you, and from not having come into contact for the past year with any living human reason, had sunk ever deeper into the drifting slough of indifference and disrespect for individual manifestations of life, which seems to me to be the Devil's own drug with which he benumbs

[1] The remainder of this letter will be found below, 512.
[2] The pianist was a Miss Havens of New York.

our souls before catching them. Now to the phenomena of this young lady my eyes happened not to be clogged and blurred as they were to almost all other phenomena. For I reckon that every phenomenon *can* be seen, if the sight is sound, hanging by some sort of a navel-string to the Infinite womb. And I was seized, as I saw an absoluteness in the phenomena of this young person (a something whereby their place in the phenomenal series of which they were members seemed *not* to exhaust their significance), with a horror of the hideous waste of life that I was wallowing in. "Life is *such!* And what have *I* been making it? About! my heart, my brain!" This *Auseinandersetzen* of the everyday occurrence of a man's having his soul aroused and inspired at the sight of the good, true, or beautiful, may amuse you. But it is nevertheless a goodly experience. The only trouble is that the reverberation dies away so soon in the soul and the bog closes around one again. Nothing is so efficacious as the actual, sensible intuition of these portions of the unveiled absolute. . . .

I should like to know very much what you are busying yourself with now, and if the clouds are breaking about you. Whatever happens, my dear Tom, keep a stiff upper lip, and don't drop that courage and bottom in pursuit of the Best, that you have always shown, and by which you have so often sent me away with a fresh fire in my gizzard and determination in my breast. The longer I live, it seems to me, the more worthily I think of personal good qualities whether they be immediately successful or not. . . .

If you go to Boston, I wish you would try to get in with Wendell Holmes. I'm pretty sure when you get to understand each other you will like each other. You and he are my best friends so far, and he has heard me talk a great deal about you. He is particularly alive to everyone's good points, especially the various degrees of excellence and expression with which one reacts against the mystery of the kosmos, and you will each profit by the other's experience and ideas.

I have written a few book notices lately, to earn a few dollars. . . . I tell you of these not because they contain anything of interest that you don't know, but because it seems fraternal to let you know what I 'm about. Adieu, my dear Tom. . . . Believe me ever your affectionate friend

WM. JAMES

This same letter contained James's acknowledgment of his great debt to Goethe.[3] For it was during these Teplitz and Dresden days of 1868 that James *discovered* Goethe, and found in him that "sturdy realism" by which he hoped to steer a middle course between pessimism and supernaturalism. It was this influence which, as has already been recorded, seems to have finally divided him from his father; and it is the first form of that personal belief which later became his empirical philosophy. To his brother Henry he wrote on the same theme: —

Dresden, June 4, 1868

My dear Harry, —

I have been leading a very quiet life for the three weeks I have been in Dresden, have avoided the gallery entirely, and avoided walking very largely. . . . I have been reading up Goethe a little lately — having finished today Vol. II of Eckermann's conversations with him. . . . I had read previously his and Schiller's correspondence, the perusal of which I strongly urge upon you. . . . The spectacle of two such earnestly living and working men is refreshing to the soul of anyone, but in their æsthetic discussions you will find a particular profit, I fancy. Goethe's ideas of the importance of the *subject-matter* in a work of poetry may perhaps cause you to reflect. I own that there was much in their talk about these matters to which from the want of any technical experience I could do no justice, and which will all be alive to you. . . . I have also read *Wilhelm Meister's Lehrjahre* lately, and wondered more than ever at the life and beauty of the first part. To the latter part I am perhaps not yet *gewachsen,* as they say here. It seems to me too allegorical and coldly invented. . . .

Altogether the old apparent contradiction which bothered me so in Goethe, the seeming want of humor — of that decisive glance in æsthetic and moral matters which separates the wheat from the chaff, the essential from the accidental, *intuitively* — has vanished, I can't say exactly how. He used to bother me by that incessant cataloguing of individual details, which you must have noticed in whatever you have read of his; by his pitiless manner of taking seriously *everything* that came along, as if the world for the time contained nothing else; by his noticing the binding of a copy of *Othello*, for

[3] Printed above, 159.

instance, with the same gravity as the poem itself . . . and the somewhat Tennysonian character of the humor in *Hermann and Dorothy,* and in those parts of *Wahrheit und Dichtung* where he relates a joke, strengthened the impression. In spite of the humor shown in *Egmont* and the abysses of "all is vanity" etc., opened in *Faust,* he *would* seem to me like a very serious man who, fearing to lose *any*thing of value, and not having an immediate intuition, saved up everything he got, and put the important and the accessory in one sheaf.

Now, as I say, this foolish impression of mine is dissipated, I know not exactly how. In the first place, his objectivity or literalness is to me now a merit in itself (although it may be at times tedious to me to read), and does not offend me as it did in my raw youth. At that time I remember I could not forgive him that he should describe the scenes of his childhood in Frankfurt in a dry light as they *were.* I thought he ought to have lain back and given the public those subjective feelings, sentimental, musical, visceral, whatever you please to call them, with which he recalled them from the old past in his late years. I smile now to think of my unhealthiness and weakness. And, in the second place, I have learned to distinguish between his general philosophic tendency, and his constitutional habit of *collecting.* . . . He could not bear to *waste* or dishonor any item, however small, of that which struck his senses; and as he was alive at every pore of his skin, and received *every* impression in a sort of undistracted leisure which makes the movements of his mental machinery one of the most extraordinary exhibitions which this planet ever can have witnessed, his less healthily endowed reader is often made impatient by his minute seriousness. But he *had* the intuitive glance beside, and the minutiæ he gives you are only *thrown in* extra. A little story of his called the "Novelle" contains him, it seems to me, in all his peculiarity and perfection. You 'd better read it in the original, for it is short. Of his poems read all those in elegiac meter. I tell you of them because they happen to be the ones I have just read. They are worth your trouble, epigrams and all. As a wielder of language he was a magician — there is no other word for it. His verses grow fuller with every successive reading. Schiller's, on the contrary, seem most pregnant at first.

About Goethe's "philosophy" I will say nothing now, — it must be felt to be appreciated, and it can only be felt when it is seen ap-

plied in detail. . . . I feel pretty certain he did not exhaust human life, but he worked about as wide a stretch of it into an unity as most people have done, and I feel now like passively accepting all I can of positive in him before I begin to define his short-comings.

Excuse this headlong scrawl. By the bye, I 'm sorry to mention it, but your own handwriting grows less legible with age. Beware of the slippery slope you are on. When does Father's treatise [4] appear? I expected it some time ago. . . . Lots of love to all and plenty for yourself from yours,

W. J.

On the same day James was writing to his sister on the ever-alluring theme of Germanic traits.

Dresden, June 4, 1868

Beloved Sisterkin, —

I take my pen in hand to waft you my love across the jumping waves of the Atlantic, and to express a hope that you are better. . . . Ever since I have been here I have been the object of motherly attentions from all classes of the population, which I might have sought during a long life in the U. S. and never found away from my own hearth. They are a queer race in the abundance and homeliness of their kindness. . . . We at home value people for what they have of productive and positive about them, — and try at most to enjoy them by *abstracting* our attention from their personal defects and unpleasantnesses. The Germans, "enthused" by the perception of some scrap of a good quality, proceed to stir the whole personality of its possessor up with it, making a kind of indistinguishable broth in which they take a sort of unnatural delight, half-ridiculous, half-offensive, to one of our more fastidious race. The gum-boil or the deficient teeth of a hero are thought of with the same romantic affection as his more strictly heroic "points." This want of what we call "fastidiousness" which leads to refinement of various kinds, spreads all through the German character. . . .

(I was interrupted at this point by dinner, and am just back.) . . . To return to the previous subject, here is an example of the German confounding of everything in a broth of sentiment, though it may seem to you at first sight to belong to a different order of facts.

[4] *The Secret of Swedenborg*, 1869.

When we got our strawberries I proceeded to eat them in the usual manner — when I was startled by a sudden cry from [Fräulein von] Bose: "Ach! schmecken die Erdbeeren so *wun*derschön!" I looked at her, — her eyes were closed, and she seemed to be in a sort of mystic rapture. She had been smashing her strawberries with her spoon so that they made a sort of pulp on her plate with the cream. I replied: "Ja, wunderschön"; but was rebuked by Mme. Spangenberg for leaving the berries whole on my plate, for when crushed, "Sie schmecken *so* viel schöner!" The *attendrissement* of the expression with which the words were pronounced was the *peculiarly* German part of the occurrence, and that I can't convey to you in writing. It implied a sort of religious melting of the whole emotional nature in this one small experience of the sense of taste. The washing out of all boundary lines is implied in the application of the word *wunderschön* to such an experience. It is employed continually to describe articles of diet and always with an intonation that denotes that the speaker is swimming in sentiment: "Der Kalbsbraten ist aber *wun*derschön!!! Ach!!!" And up go the eyes to heaven. And in the same way when the Germans do what they call *Partie-machen* (that is go out on holidays in the country, and sit for hours over beer and coffee at little tables, in leafy places if possible) they remain speechless and apparently vacant-minded most of the time, but at intervals say with enthusiasm: "Ach! ist es doch hier *wun*derschön zu sitzen!!!" . . . The sluices of a German's wonder and affection are ever trembling to be unlocked. The slightest touch sets the flood in motion and when it is once going, the creature abandons himself to the sentiment and cares very little about its original exciting cause.

They lack the sense of form throughout. Take, for instance, the word *Kunst* or Art. It has a magic effect on Germans which we are quite incapable of conceiving. They write poems about it, couple it with religion and virtue as one of the sacred things in human life, — lose, in short, their critical power when thinking of it, just as we do when thinking of morality, for instance. But (except, perhaps, in music) they produce no works of art good for anything, nor do I believe that as a rule those who are most struck by the divinity of *Kunst* in the abstract, have the power of discriminative appreciation thereof in the concrete. The tender emotion carries their sagacity and judgment off its legs. They believe that the mission of art is to represent or create in anticipation a regenerate world, and over every

so-called work of art, however contemptible, they are apt to cast the halo which belongs to the generic idea, and to accept it without criticizing. . . .

Heaven forbid that I should seriously find fault with a characteristic so amiable and beneficent as this soft-heartedness of the Germans. Only I am born elsewhere, and whereas they would find us Americans cold, thin, dry, and often prudish and hypocritical, I find in them a sloppiness of temper which suggests a surfeit to me before I have fairly begun to taste the sweets of their companionship. I have been the object of more advice and curiosity and sympathy about my health since I 've been here, from my different landladies, servant girls, and lady acquaintances, than would found several hospitals at home; and strange to say, instead of placating me, it rouses my scorn both for my dorsal infirmity and for the poor deluded beings who can see anything touching and "interesting" in it. How much more pleasing to *this* heart is a good insolent American girl (like yourself), who by her unconcealed repugnance of everything unhealthy about you, and ill-feigned contempt of your person generally, goads you and spurs you to desperate exertions of manliness to keep your head above water at all and in the air of her mere courtesy. . . . Ever your affectionate brother

W. J.

On June 23 James wrote to his sister: "In three days I start for Heidelberg. . . . I am sanguine after this long lapse to rise in the scale of being . . . as soon as I come in contact with the stern realities of life." But in a week he was back again, his hopes disappointed. He had caught a glimpse of Helmholtz and Wundt — that was all. The following paragraphs were addressed to his parents: —

Berlin, July 3, 1868

You will doubtless after my last letter be astonished to read the above address. The fact is I have been to Heidelberg and fled again under the influence of a blue despair which seized me for a week. Now that I am cheerful again I do not think I did unwisely. I should not have been able to stand the monotony of Heidelberg. It is a mere village shut between two precipitous hills, the scaling of which constitutes the *only* recreation of the place. As I am inadequate to that, all that remains is to take a turn down a sunny village

street and then back to my room. One of the men I went to hear does not lecture, and in the vacation of two months which begins six weeks hence I should find myself absolutely without any source of diversion outside of my own periphery, as the University closes and everyone scatters. I have learned now by experience that, my old resource of walking off tedium and trouble being taken away from me, I require to be somewhere in reach of conversation, music, French and English newspapers, or at least the sight of rushing affairs that a large city gives, to keep of sound mind.

Dresden, July 9, 1868

I enclose you the photograph of Helmholtz, Professor at Heidelberg, begging you to notice how mean is the lower part of his immortal face. He is probably the greatest scientific genius extant notwithstanding, and in his company your despised child can well afford to let rebound the shafts of your ridicule.

After several weeks of travel, James tried another cure, this time at Divonne, in the French Savoy. On April 27 he had written in his diary: "Took a superb drive this afternoon through Doppelburg, etc. It seems a sin to be doing such things while Harry is moping at home." A week or so later he had written to his sister, "I somehow feel as if I were cheating Harry of his birthright." To this self-reproachful theme he now returns: —

Divonne, Aug. 26, 1868

My dear Harry, —

You must have been envying me within the last few weeks, hearing that I was revisiting the sacred scenes of our youth, the shores of Léman, the Hôtel de l'Écu de Genève, the Rue de la Corraterie, etc. The only pang I have felt has been caused by your absence, or rather by my presence instead of yours, for I think that your abstemious and poetic soul would have got infinitely more good out of the things I have seen than my hardening and definite growing nature. . . .

The impression received on gradually coming from a German into a French atmosphere of things was unexpected and in many respects unpleasant. I have been in Germany half amused and half impatient with the slowness of execution, and the uncouthness

of taste and expression that prevails there so largely in all things — but on exchanging it for the brightness and shipshapeness of these quasi-French arrangements of life, and for the somewhat tart, firecracker-like speech of the French nation, I found myself inclined to go backwards and for a few days had quite a homesickness for the easy, ugly, substantial ways I had left. The 'tarnal smartness in the way the railroad depot counters, for example, are dressed up, the narrowish waists and white caps of the female servants, the everlasting "monsieur" and "madame," and especially the rapidity and snappishness of enunciation suggesting such an inward impatience, made me feel uncomfortable. I am getting used to it, and the French people who sit near me at table and who repelled me by the apparent artificialness with which they spoke to each other, now seem less heartless and inhuman.

I am struck more than I ever was with the hopelessness of us English, and with stronger reason the Germans, ever trying to compete with the French in matters of form or finite taste of any sort. They are sensitive to things which do not exist for us. I notice it here in manners and speech — how can a people who speak with no tonic accents in their words help being cleaner and neater in expressing themselves? On the other hand the limitations of *reach* in the French mind strike me more and more, — their delight in rallying round an official standard in all matters, in counting and dating everything from certain great names, their love of repeating catchwords and current phrases and sacrificing their independence of mind for the mere sake of meeting their hearer or reader on common ground, their metaphysical incapacity not only to deal with questions but to know what the questions are, stand out plainer and plainer the more I read in German. One wonders where the *Versöhnung* or conciliation of all these rival national qualities is going to take place. I imagine we English stand between the French and the Germans both in taste and . . . spiritual intuition. In Germany, while unable to avoid respecting that solidity of the national mind which causes such a mass of permanent work to be produced there annually, I could not help consoling myself by thinking that, after all, whatever they might *do* the Germans were a plebeian crowd and never could *be* such gentlemen as we were. I now find myself getting over the French superiority by an exactly inverse process of thought. The Frenchman must sneer at us even

more than we sneer at the Germans — and which sneer is final, his at us two, or ours at him and the Germans at us? . . .

I have read several novels lately, some of the irrepressible George Sand, *Daniella, Beaux Messieurs de Bois-Doré.* (By the bye, was it thee that wrotest the *Nation* notices on her, on Morris's new poem, and on the *Spanish Gypsy?*[5] The articles came to me unmarked. The thoughts seemed such as you write, and in some places the style, but elsewhere not.) George Sand babbles her improvisations on so that I never begin to believe a word of what she says. I also read the *Woman in White,* one or two Balzacs etc., a volume of tales by Mérimée which I bought and will try to engineer to you. . . . He is a big man. But the things which have given me the most pleasure have been some traveling sketches by Théophile Gautier. What an absolute thing genius is! That this creature with no more soul than a healthy poodle-dog, no morality, no knowledge (for I doubt exceedingly if his knowledge of architectural terms, etc., is accurate) should give one a more perfect enjoyment than his betters in all these respects, by mere force of good nature, clear eyesight and fit use of language! His style seems to me *perfect* and I should think it would pay you to study it over and over again, principally in the most trivial of his sketches of travel. . . . Another which I have read here is called *Caprices et Zigzags* and is worth buying. It contains a very amusing *French* (in the classical sense, with all its associations) description of London. I don't know whether you know Gautier at all except by the delicious *Capitaine Fracasse.* These newspaper *feuilletons* are all of as good a quality, and I should think would last as long as the language. . . .

I suppose my life for the past year would have furnished a good many subjects of observation and "motives" to the great American *nouvelliste,* especially so in this place. I wish I could pass them over to you. Such as they are you would profit by them more than I. . . . Ever yours

W. J.

A few weeks later, in a letter to his father, James records his reading of Kant, and the beginning of his acquaintance with the philosophy of Charles Renouvier, an event whose full significance he could not appreciate: "I got a little book by a number of authors,

[5] These reviews were by H.J.', *Nation,* July 2, 9, and 16, 1868.

L'Année 1867 philosophique, which may interest you if you have not got it already. The introduction, a review of the state of philosophy in France for some years back, is by one Charles Renouvier, of whom I never heard before but who, for vigor of style and compression, going to the core of half a dozen things in a single sentence, so different from the namby-pamby diffusiveness of most Frenchmen, is unequaled by anyone. He takes his stand on Kant." [6]

In a letter to Tom Ward there is the usual confession and moralizing: —

Divonne, Oct. 9 [1868]

My dear old Thomas, —

Your letter of the 23rd ult. has just reached me. I received your two previous letters written at a couple of days interval in June (I think) and oft since then have the little snakes of remorse wiggled their tails in my heart as I have thought of them unanswered. Within the last week great heavings of affection towards you and rumblings of my innards have taken place, such as are generally only relieved by the writing of a letter, so that I think this present would have been inscribed pretty soon even without yours of this afternoon. . . . I always want when I write to you to ring a trumpet blast that will wake the echoes in your will and put you in fighting tune. . . . All I can say is if you had as much energy to *regulate* your activity, as you show in spreading it, you 'd be a first-class and useful man. . . . What a bully preacher I be!

Your speculations about my study fall on me with a mocking sound, though I know they are not meant so. I dropped out of Heidelberg very soon on finding how lonesome the life there was to be. I can't study half the number of hours I used to. This forced sedentary life seems to have taken hold of my whole system and pulled me down more than it would most people. Had I *thy* vigor of muscle and stomach and brain, would n't I wallop into things, with the opportunity and leisure I have! But it 's the old story, the square peg in the round hole and *vice versa.* All I have done in the last six months is to keep up the dribbling I recommend to you, and, little as each day seems, the sum total is not disrespectable. I have not got started properly on any line of work yet, but am hovering

[6] *L.W.J.*, I, 138.

and dipping about the portals of psychology. I can't say that I have learned anything yet, or that a single guiding point of view has dawned upon me, but I have a sort of consciousness that this winter the clouds will precipitate and I shall find myself *barboter*-ing about in some little puddle which may grow bigger. I sometimes feel pretty discouraged at the inanity of my activity. The fact is that I am about as little fitted by nature to be a worker in science of any sort as anyone can be, and yet in virtue of that great law of the universe already alluded to, *miscent quadrata rotundis,* etc., my only ideal of life is a scientific life. I should feel as if all value had departed from my life if convinced of *absolute* scientific impotence, whereas in reality a man who should do nothing but keep his grandmother alive would be doing a grand thing, as I read in a book *Rudin* of Turgenev the other day. . . . Ah! Tom, Tom, you well-constructed whelps who travel on their free-will and moral responsibility are more to be envied than anyone in the world. What a solidity the web of their life has — no step they make is trivial. On purely materialistic principles they are the greatest success of any of us, the most susceptible of happiness. To get at something absolute without going out of your own skin! To measure yourself by what you strive for and not by what you reach! They are a superb form of animal, and beat the cows of whom you speak . . . beat 'em hollow, on their own track of finite absoluteness.

I am poisoned with Utilitarian venom, and sometimes when I despair of ever doing anything, say: "Why not step out into the green darkness?" But then I think that, loathsome and grotesque as most of the results of my living may be, and innocent and desirable as the fermentation and crumbling and evaporation and diffusion which will succeed them seem in comparison, yet interwoven with the former are some tatters and shreds of beauty that may as well last, as long as they have been formed. . . . There will remain and live . . . some shreds of manhood (thoughts, smiles), and, shreds though they be, they are worth more to the world than the fermentations and chemical reactions that might replace them. They are not worth more for the consciousness of your individual self, perhaps, — more of pain than of pleasure will follow in their train — but taken as existence theirs is a nobler category than the other. . . . All in all, even the sweepings of morality are better

than chemical reactions.[7] — Thus do I lash my tail and start myself up again. . . .

Adieu! my dear boy, struggle ahead a little every day and you 'll be safe. I think I ought to get well if I could only *rest,* but I have n't got the will, and one impatient morning or evening undoes the work of months. I start upon this winter, however, with a grim resolution, and intend to be better next spring at any sacrifice. . . . Excelsior! *Adieu chéri, ton*

WM. JAMES

In the autumn Bowditch came to Paris for a year of study, despite James's recommendation of Germany. James himself had not yet given up hope of resuming his studies at Heidelberg or Vienna. But the baths of Divonne proved as inefficacious as those of Teplitz. So he decided to yield to entreaties from home, and abandon his plans for a more extended residence abroad. Proceeding via Geneva, he stopped for a fortnight in Paris with Bowditch, and sailed for America on November 7. The following brief notes are to Bowditch and Ward respectively: —

Geneva, [Oct. 21? 1868]

I start hence probably Friday for Paris. . . . I have been urged by my weeping wife and family to return home without delay, and having sagaciously with finger on nose bethunk me, I believe my wisest course will be to do so. I have a better chance of getting well in the quiet of home, than in tossing about Europe like a drowned pup about a pond in a storm. . . . I shall turn up at the Hôtel Jean Bart when you least expect me, and have a clean fortnight of talk with you before starting.

Paris, Oct. 29 [1868]

I am coming home resolved to get well. This vagabond life is not the thing for me. I sail in the *Ville de Paris* from Brest November 7, and if you can manage to be on the wharf when she arrives, you may help me as well as make glad my heart at the sight of you.

[7] Written partly in French; translated by the author.

XVII

COMPLETION OF THE MEDICAL COURSE

RETURNING to Cambridge in November 1868, and resuming his place in the Quincy Street household, James was able to continue his medical studies with sufficient continuity to present himself for the degree in the following spring.

In later life, apropos of the announcement that a certain acquaintance had decided to study medicine, he said: "I should n't think that holding the hands of old women who think they are sick when they are not, would be satisfying to a thoroughbred, well-grown, handsome and rapacious young man." In his own youth, even though he was not "rapacious," it was the science rather than the art of medicine which attracted him. Resuming his studies, he also resumed his conversations with his friends; especially with Wendell Holmes, and with Charles Peirce, whose unintelligibilities fascinated him, and whose professional career now became a responsibility which he was destined to carry on his conscience for forty years. With Ward, who was living in New York, he must still communicate by letter: —

Cambridge, Dec. 16, 1868

My dear Tom, —

I have now been home near four weeks and enjoy enormously being in a house where I can talk about the things I read to some extent, that is, the things I read in magazines and newspapers, and hear others do the same — a pleasure I have not enjoyed for many long months. I have been keeping very quiet in the house, but feel no better than I should have felt four months ago after eight days of similar rest. I conclude that I did well to stay no longer abroad and that my recovery will require a good deal of faith and patience, which, however, I think I can bring to it.

I am reading medicine in a lively manner and probably shall do little else for the next six months. It grows so interesting that I find myself regretting that there is no chance for me to stick to it.

On the whole it seems to me there is no occupation on earth from which men of very different temperament and gifts can get more life and growth of character and wisdom than this. Perry seems very busy and seems to have got interested in study again through his teaching. . . . Arthur Sedgwick comes in frequently, and is always ready to plunge into deep subjects, instead of sticking to the petty gossip and joking which most of us slump down into when left to our native indolence. . . . Charley Atkinson is . . . in practical scientific matters a very intelligent and well-informed fellow. Charles S. Peirce I have seen but once, without getting a great deal out of him. I have seen no one else of any interest except Wendell Holmes and John Gray.[1] They are such first-class minds, and I like them so much personally, that I deeply regret that they should be getting more and more absorbed in legal business and study whereby the sympathies we have in common are growing very narrowed. When I think how many men I know with whom my intercourse is *wholly* respecting medicine, and how fat and satisfactory it on the whole is, I feel how much body some such common interests as that would add to my dealings with Wendell Holmes, for example, and how much the joy of life would gain by it. The mystery of the *Total* is a rather empty platform to be the only one to meet a man on. One needs to take up details in one's hands continually as one goes along. I hope, my ancient Thomas, that thou and I will not grow estranged with age in this fatal manner. I have hopes that the absurdly multifarious character of your information and interests may still keep some material threads of interest common to us whereby we may hold together. When can you come up here for Saturday and Sunday? Write a day beforehand whenever it becomes possible and we 'll make the old Kosm sing with *la manière dont nous deviserons.* Write soon to yours affectionately,

WM. JAMES

In November James had received a letter from Charles Ritter, the friend of his Geneva school days, in which the latter recounted his literary adventures. James's reply[2] reveals his interest in the relations of science and religion.

[1] John Chipman Gray, afterwards for many years a distinguished professor at the Harvard Law School, from which he had graduated in 1861. He continued to be a close friend of James until the latter's death.

[2] The original of this letter is in French; translated by the author.

Cambridge, Jan. 21, 1869

My dear Friend, —

I much fear that you have entirely ceased to believe in my fidelity. . . . I have put off writing to you so long as a measure of hygiene. . . . Now, thanks to the gods, and to the setting-hen kind of life that I have been leading for three months, I am much better, and believe that I can take up my arrears of correspondence without imprudence. . . . Since I have been at home I have been quietly busy reviewing a great deal of my medical work, for I must take my doctor's examination in the month of July. Then I shall breathe freely. At present I can undertake nothing that I am interested in studying because that would lead me to make dangerous excursions in too specialized paths. Nevertheless, I do find time to read a little outside the required grooves. For example, some weeks ago I read the three last articles on "Science of Religions" by Émile Burnouf in the *Revue des deux mondes,* and *Religion* by Vacherot.[3] Burnouf's articles are very *anregend* and contain many interesting facts and points of view, but to me he has a dry and pedantic little air that is very amusing. He speaks continually in the name of *la science,* but I believe that at the point which we have thus far reached in these matters, such pretension will scarcely pass. And his attitude towards present-day religions, and the serene and superior air with which he explains to them that they have nothing to fear from the progress of "science," seems to me very amusing too. From the fact that the scientific cosmogony of our day, and our religions as well, both have their roots in the primitive Aryan religious philosophy, it does not at all follow that *developed as they now are* they have not become mutually contradictory on many points. . . .

Vacherot's book is very interesting. What integrity of mind! What breadth of character and what gentleness! And what an advantage it is for the solution of such problems to have a good little optimistic philosophy of one's own! Humanity without religion appears to require either a disinterestedness hitherto unknown in any individual, or a terrestrial paradise. No doubt we are by short steps approaching the latter state as regards material circumstances. And on the other side we can hope for much from education towards the development of cosmic sympathies (so to say) and disinterested sentiments. . . . But all that is only an ideal, the vanishing-point

[3] Étienne Vacherot, *La Religion,* 1869.

of the perspective, and meanwhile is it not reasonable to expect that the egoism which is ingrained in most of us (and which after all is what enables us to live) will continue to seek beyond the self and in the ground of the universe something that lends it countenance — which authorizes it, in short, as all the gods have done? How does it seem to you on these matters? . . .

My brother has just left for Europe — the one that you remember from 1860. If he goes through Geneva or Morges this next summer, he will look you up. He is a *bon garçon* and very fond of French literature. . . . A thousand friendly greetings . . . to any of the old Zoffingian comrades that you may meet. Your devoted and affectionate

WM. JAMES

Bowditch being also at a distance, James continued to correspond with him, and to follow his physiological studies with keen and envious interest. The following letter is characteristic of the period, irrepressible intellectual interests contending against discouragement and yearning for repose. A thesis being required for the diploma in medicine, he had selected the topic of "cold."

Cambridge, Jan. 24–25, 1869[4]

My dear Henry, —

. . . I have just been quit by Charles S. Peirce, with whom I have been talking about a couple of articles in the St. Louis *Journal of Speculative Philosophy* by him which I have just read. They are exceedingly bold, subtle and incomprehensible and I can't say that his vocal elucidations helped me a great deal to their understanding, but they nevertheless interest me strangely.[5] The poor cuss sees no chance of getting a professorship anywhere, and is likely to go into the Observatory for good. It seems a great pity that as original a man as he is, who is willing and able to devote the powers of his life to logic and metaphysics, should be starved out of a career, when there are lots of professorships of the sort to be given in the country, to "safe," orthodox men. He has had good reason, I know, to feel

[4] Parts of this letter are reprinted from *L.W.J.*, I, 149–50.

[5] Peirce published three articles in this *Journal* in 1868, as follows: "Grounds of Validity of the Laws of Logic," "Questions Concerning Certain Faculties Claimed for Man," "Some Consequences of Four Incapacities." He was at this time employed as assistant at the Harvard Observatory.

a little discouraged about the prospect, but I think he ought to hang on, as a German would do, till he grows gray. . . .

I continue to "bide my time" here. I have a shrewd suspicion (which I will not put in the form of a categoric declaration, lest the blasted thing should hear it and go back on me as it has done before) that I have begun to get better. But I have discovered that I must not only drop exercise, but also mental labor, as it immediately tells on my back. I have consequently made up my mind to lose at least a year now in vegetating and doing nothing but survive. So I can't report to you any discoveries. I shall not make any experiments for my thesis but just compile what I find in the books under my hand. . . . Wendell Holmes comes out and we jaw once a week. I have been out two or three times in a buggy with Miss Fanny Dixwell, and derived no mean amount of joy therefrom. I am going again through the old medical textbooks, taking small doses daily, so as not to get *interested* and so fall into *study* — a poor business. . . . My brother Harry goes abroad in the spring, and will, I hope, strike Paris before you leave. . . . I hope this letter is *décousue* enough for you. What is a man to write when a reef is being taken in his existence, and absence from thought and life is all he aspires to. Better times will come, though, and with them better letters. Good-bye, ever yours,

WM. JAMES

The younger Henry James now took his turn in Europe, sailing early in February and remaining for fourteen months. Thus the positions of the brothers were reversed, Henry writing the chronicles of adventure, and William voicing the eager interest and solicitude of the family circle in Cambridge. Henry went at once to London, where the Nortons were established, and the following letter was addressed to him there: —

Cambridge, March 22, 1869

Dear Harry, —

On account of my back I will write but one sheet, though I fain would write more. I have missed your conversation bad, but not your services as errand-boy, coal-heaver, etc., at all. We have got your letter from Liverpool, and your first from London. Also a characteristically verbose one from Jane Norton about your arrival,

expressing affection for you and hopes that you would treat their family like your own. . . .

[A] short taste of comparative wellness has given me new stomach . . . for the fight, and I find I don't get bored so much now as a couple of months ago by lying down a couple of hours a day doing nothing. John La Farge came in a few nights since. My affections gushed forth to meet him, but were soon coagulated by his invincible pretentiousness, that no one can teach him anything that he does not know already, — you know what I mean. I suppose he happened to be in a particularly vicious mood that night, for it reminded me of old, rather than recent times with him. He goes abroad in September. Father and Mother get on well without you, although Mother and Alice give utterance to maudlin sighs and expressions of affection for you which I endeavor to discountenance. The scene when your letters arrived, the reading and re-reading etc., would have done your heart good. . . .

I read recently Turgenev's *Pères et Enfants,* which I thought had bigger defects than some others; and began two evenings ago Browning's *Ring and the Book,* which is magnificent so far, and can be read for pure fun just like one of Charles Reade's novels, without conscientious fear of missing fine points, etc. I wrote a notice of a book on spiritualism (*Planchette*) for the *Advertiser* and got $10.00!! *Galaxy* for April advertised this magazine with your dialogue.[6] No proof sent. It will be sent you next week. . . . All people well here that you know. Wendell Holmes unchanged. Charles W. Eliot President. I ween more bad about him than good, but we shall see. . . . Much love. Excuse conciseness. Yours,

W. J.

P.S. *Galaxy* got yesterday, and your thing reads very well. Better than when you read it to me. Father says, "Harry has decidedly got a gift."

To Henry Bowditch James continued to write of his medical studies and prospects: —

[6] This review of E. Sargent's *Planchette* appeared in the *Boston Advertiser,* March 10, 1869, and is the first evidence of James's interest in psychical research. Henry James's "dialogue" was a farce entitled "Pyramus and Thisbe," published in the *Galaxy* for April.

Cambridge, May 22, 1869

My dear Henry, —

I am mortified at the long silence I have kept towards you. I have thought of you often enough with *Sehnsucht,* but I have lacked that cheerful and definite news to give you without which writing does not seem a natural act. . . . It is totally impossible for me to study now in any way, and I have at last succeeded in *genuinely* giving up the attempt to. With all this, I never was so cheerful, — I 've done what I can, and it 's a mean thing for a man to fret about what is accidentally and externally imposed upon him. I took in my thesis and tickets to Hodges [7] yesterday. The examination takes place on June 21st, and I suppose my star will guide me through it, though I 'm ashamed of the fewness of the medical facts I know. I wrote a thesis on cold, nary experiment and nary chance of consulting any books on the subject but those I had, and a few I could send for by name to the library, — so it 's of no value. I shall keep quiet till the examination is over, and then go with my family to the country (Pomfret, Conn.) and try whether almost perfect cessation from reading and some degree of exercise out of doors will make a change in my physical condition. If not, no matter.

So much for myself. I heard from Vienna, via Henry Tuck, that Warren was considering his winter in Paris as so much time wasted. I hope you don't think it as bad, but have got something out of Ranvier and Cornil,[8] not to speak of lectures, etc., and that your mode of life during the winter has been luxurious and agreeable as well. There 's a dash of lawless and godless impatience in the French character, — an abandonment to merely physical capriciousness, a hatred of whatever bores them, combined with that subjection of theirs to merely gregarious sentiment (I hardly know how to characterize the damned thing) which, especially since I have become acquainted with the German nature, is exceedingly unpleasant to me. You will find extending through everything in Germany a deep allegiance to principles as such, which gives you a feeling of confidence and security in the critters that I know of nowhere else. They are

[7] Richard Manning Hodges was at this time adjunct professor of surgery at the Medical School.

[8] John Collins Warren received his medical degree in 1866 at Harvard, where he was afterwards for many years professor of surgery. Henry Tuck took his M.D. at Harvard in 1867. Louis-Antoine Ranvier and André Victor Cornil, French physiologists, inaugurated in Paris in 1865 laboratory research in "Histologie pathologique et de microbie."

not willing to rest on arbitrary personal likes and dislikes — while the French rather glory in their impatience; and however erring men's ideas may be, so long as they admit the existence of *discipline* in life, of something external really existing, which it is the duty of a man to bring his will into harmony with, there is hope for him, and you feel secure in his presence. You never know when the irresponsible Frenchman's contemptuous monkeyhood may flash out and get the upper hand in him. I am convinced you 'll feel this and enjoy it very much as soon as you begin to be at home in German books and among German people. I have been reading three or four German literary books this winter at odd hours and have realized more than I ever did before what a real intellectual gain it is to a man to have the freedom of the German tongue bestowed upon him. In all matters of thought (if not of form) the English and French literatures are provincial in comparison. . . . I have read no medical books this winter but the old textbooks. . . . I shall be glad to wash my hands of the subject, now that I know it is to lead to nothing for me.

Charles S. Peirce has been writing some very acute and original psychologico-metaphysical articles in the St. Louis philosophic *Journal*, though they are so crabbedly expressed that one can hardly get their exact sense. He is an original fellow, but with a capacity for arbitrariness that makes one mistrust him. C. W. Eliot was confirmed President yesterday. His great personal defects, tactlessness, meddlesomeness, and disposition to cherish petty grudges seem pretty universally acknowledged; but his ideas seem good and his economic powers first-rate, — so in the absence of any other possible candidate, he went in. It seems queer that such a place should go begging for candidates.

Our Senate and people generally, judging by newspapers, seem to me to have stultified themselves in first-class style about the Alabama question; we will of course back down; but so long as the good old American belief is not extinct that it is more creditable and "smart" to get out of a scrape unscathed than to keep clear of getting into one, backing out will not be popularly regarded as humiliating. National *dignity* for its own sake, is something the existence of which has not yet risen on the horizon of the great popular heart here; perhaps our growing intercourse with the effete governments of Europe may gradually make us aware of it. Meanwhile, our

buoyant way of doing things has on the whole great practical domestic advantages. "Buoyant" seems to me *the* adjective for us, nationally.

My brother Harry is now in England, enjoying the sights thereof mightily. I hope you may soon meet. . . . Wendell Holmes pays me a weekly visit. John Ropes[9] told me the other night he had never known of anyone in the law who studied anything like as hard as Wendell. (This must lead to Chief Justice, U. S. Supreme Court.) Wendell amuses me by being composed of at least two and a half different people rolled into one, and the way he keeps them together in one tight skin, without quarreling any more than they do, is remarkable. I like him and esteem him exceedingly. . . .

My dear old boy, write soon to a cove and give him your budget of the winter's progress. You don't know how much I want to hear from you. Ever your friend,

WM. JAMES

P.S. . . . Arthur Sedgwick writes regularly for the *Nation* (imitating Godkin so that you can't tell it from the original, only Sedgwick's is more so — of this he is regretfully conscious himself).

Meanwhile Henry James was writing frequently to his elder brother, and recording his adventures both internal and external. The following is from a letter of May 13: —

" . . . I have done little in London save go to the National Gallery. I have been there daily for two or three hours, and feel as if I knew it pretty well. It is a capital collection, — small, compact and choice. I admire Raphael; I enjoy Rubens; but I passionately love Titian. His 'Bacchus and Ariadne' in the National Gallery is certainly one of the great facts of the universe. Tell me not of nature, in the presence of such art. Such painting extends the meaning of the word. I went on Tuesday with Charles Norton to Rossetti's studio, — a delightful antique house on the river at Chelsea. His pictures, as I saw them there, moved me to great respect. He is very much of a painter and even more of a poet. It 's a pity that in each capacity he is so narrow and straitened. He

[9] John Codman Ropes (Harvard LL.B., 1861) was a fellow student of Holmes and Gray at the Law School.

paints nothing but Mrs. Morris — Mrs. M. in purple samite, on a very empty stomach. But he is a great painter. . . ."

Cambridge, June 1, 1869

Dear Harry, —

Your two of May 13th to me and to the family were received last week with the burst of joy which your letters always call forth. Your accounts of your improved condition were real good news to all of us, as you may believe, and fill us with a "deep peace" that you are in a way to get your deserts, more or less. Alice raves about you as an "angel" and re-reads your letters, so that I have for the sake of the family respectability to take the other tack and revile you, calling you "Ouida," in allusion to your low novels and use of French phrases in your letters . . . all of which contributes to the family conversation or altercation. . . .

I wrote you that my bottom rather fell out two and a half months ago. I 've not picked up since much of any. . . . This summer with *no* study and hardly any reading may start me up again. If not, I genuinely don't much care, for I have loosed the lock-jaw grasp with which I clung to the hope of accomplishing external work, and transferred my interest in the game of life to the subjective attitude, *i.e.*, become moralized, in some sort. In three weeks my medical examination is over, and I know I shall feel an enormous relief, for I 'm oppressed now not so much by the anxiety and responsibility as by the ennui of the damned mass of stuff. . . . Wendell Holmes has skipped many Saturdays often by my request, but comes pretty regular. He is very affectionate *to* me and *of* you, and seemed to enjoy very much those of your letters I read to him. I think he improves surely every year, and has that in him which makes you sure his fire won't burn out before the age of thirty, as 'most everyone else's seems to. . . .

I wrote you in my last something about the advantage of securing German — I return to it, as I was then much hurried. I have been reading for recreation since you left a good many German books, Steffens's and C. P. Moritz's autobiographies,[10] some lyric poetry, W. Humboldt's letters, Schmidt's *History of German Literature,* etc., which have brought to a head the slowing maturing feeling of the importance of the German culture. If you should go to Ger-

[10] Heinrich Steffens, *Was Ich Erlebte,* and Karl Philipp Moritz, *Anton Reiser.*

many now, you might not realize it for the first eighteen months, but then you would feel that the freedom of a great city (so to speak) had been conferred upon you. . . . Reading of the revival, or rather of the birth, of German literature, Kant, Schiller, Goethe, Jacobi, Fichte, Schelling, (the) Schlegels, Tieck, Richter, Herder, Steffens, W. Humboldt, and a number of others, puts one into a real classical period. These men were all interesting as *men*, each standing as a type or representative of a certain way of taking life, and beginning at the bottom — taking nothing for granted. In England the only parallel I can think of is Coleridge, and in France Rousseau and Diderot. . . . The upshot of it all is that I advise you to be prudent in adopting France for a residence now. Trying Germany first will not cut you off from France later, and it *may* save you the necessity of going to France at all. . . . Of course my remarks on Germany are meant only as *data* for you to mix with others in drawing a conclusion. Ever yours affectionately,

WM. JAMES

Cambridge, June 12, 1869

My dear Harry, —

O call my brother back to me,
I cannot play alone.
The summer comes with flower and bee —
Where is my brother gone?

Your second letter from Geneva . . . having just arrived has intensified the above familiar sentiment to the point of making me incontinently sit down and write ye a line. . . . Next Friday my clinical examination at the dispensary (which I tried to get exempted from, but failed) takes place and the following Monday the big examination. The thought becomes more grisly every day, and I wish the thing were over. My thesis was decent, and I suppose Dr. Holmes will veto my being plucked no matter how bad my examination may be, but the truth is I feel unprepared. I 've no doubt I 'll *éprouver* a distinct bodily improvement when it 's all over. My feeling of unpreparedness has, so far from exciting me to study, given me a disgust for the subject. . . . I made a discovery in sending my credentials to the Dean which gratified me. It was that adding in conscientiously every week in which I have

had anything to do with medicine, I can't sum up more than three years and two or three months. Three years is the minimum with which one can go up for examination; but as I began away back in '63 I have been considering myself as having studied about five years, and have felt much humiliated by the greater readiness of so many younger men to answer questions and understand cases. My physical status is *quo;* but, as I say, I suppose the summer will make some difference. Meanwhile I am perfectly contented that the power which gave me these faculties should recall them partially or totally when and in what order it sees fit. I don't think I should "give a single damn" now if I were struck blind. . . .

I have read nothing of late but Turgenev's *Nouvelles scènes de la vie russe* and your *Oniequine* of Pouchkine. The latter, even in its stiff French garb, is charming, and in the pliant Russ, lapped in the magic of metre, it must be *délirant.* I have glanced at Cherbuliez's *Ladislas Bolski. Quelle fougue! quel esprit!* But it seems to me that as he becomes more astonishingly clever he becomes vulgar like the Frenchmen and less winningly interesting and *distingué.* . . . Your story is advertised in the July *Atlantic* [11] and will be sent to you as soon as got. Henry Bowditch writes me from Bonn where he is to spend the summer, and hopes you may come there. He is an honest man. You say you mean to write me about what I wrote to you of Germany. I wrote another letter on the same subject a few days ago. . . . I hope the legislative tone of my advice does n't offend you — it is for the sake of concision. . . . Ever yours affectionately,

WM. JAMES

The passing of his medical examination "with no difficulty" on June 21, 1869, brought James relief in two senses: it was the removal of a burden, and at the same time a prop to his self-confidence. He had long since abandoned any intention of practising medicine. After his success he went with his family to Pomfret for his summer's rest, and while there he summed up this "epoch" as follows: "So there is one epoch of my life closed, and a pretty important one, I feel it, both in its scientific 'yield' and in its general educational value as enabling me to see a little the inside workings of an im-

[11] "Gabrielle de Bergerac," which ran from July to September.

portant profession and to learn from it, as an average example, how all the work of human society is performed. I feel a good deal of intellectual hunger nowadays, and if my health would allow, I think there is little doubt that I should make a creditable use of my freedom, in pretty hard study. I hope, even as it is, not to have to remain absolutely idle — and shall try to make whatever reading I can do bear on psychological subjects." [12]

Though James was now looking toward biological science or psychology, his depression and inward brooding brought a perpetual deepening of his philosophical interest. He was groping for some fundamental attitude by which to orient his life. The following note was written on a loose sheet and enclosed in an envelope marked "Pomfret": —

"(*a*) *Man* = a bundle of desires, more or less numerous. He lives, inasmuch as they are gratified, dies as they are refused.

"(*b*) They exist by mere self-affirmation; and, appealing for legitimation to no principle back of them, are the lowest terms to which man can be reduced.

"(*c*) Abridgement in extent of gratification (as natural history, painting), and in degree (personal isolation, unfathomability of everything to our knowledge). The expansive, embracing tendency, the centripetal, defensive, forming two different modes of self-assertion: sympathy and self-sufficingness. (The two combine and give respect?)

"To 'accept the universe,' to protest against it, *voluntary* alternatives. So that in a given case of evil the mind seesaws between the effort to improve it away, and resignation. The second not being resorted to till the first has failed, it would seem either that the second were an insincere *pis aller,* or the first a superfluous vanity. The solution can only lie in taking neither absolutely, but in making the resignation only provisional (that is, voluntary, conditional), and the attempt to improve to have its worth in the action rather than the result. Thus resignation affords ground and leisure to advance to new philanthropic action. Resignation should not say, 'It is good,' 'a mild yoke,' and so forth, but 'I 'm willing to stand it for the present.' This brings matters back to proposition (*a*).

[12] *L.W.J.*, I, 154.

What the man *wants,* more or less, being the ultimate appeal for him.

"Three quantities to determine. (1) how much pain I 'll stand; (2) how much other's pain I 'll inflict (by existing); (3) how much other's pain I 'll 'accept,' without ceasing to take pleasure in their existence.

"Resignation [means] 'none of my business.' "

XVIII

HENRY JAMES IN EUROPE

DURING the summer of 1869 James had received frequent letters from his brother Henry, who was making a tour of Switzerland, and was experiencing a surge of bodily vigor.[1] "I feel," he wrote on July 12, from Scheidegg, "as if every walk I take is a burning and shining light for your encouragement." And again, on August 12: "The only thing worth now putting into words is just what I can't — the deep satisfaction in being able to do all this healthy trudging and climbing. It *is* — it *is* a pledge, a token of some future potency — Amen!" In September he exchanged the physical mountain tops of Switzerland for the emotional and spiritual altitudes of Italy, and worked off his *"éblouissement"* in a series of long and glowing letters, full both of spontaneous joy and of critical appraisal: —

Venice, Sept. 25 [1869]

My dear Bill, —

. . . Venice is magnificently fair, and quite, to my perception, the Venice of romance and fancy. Taine, I remember, somewhere speaks of "Venice and Oxford — the two most picturesque cities in Europe." I personally prefer Oxford, it told me deeper and richer things than any I have learned here. It 's as if I had been born in Boston. I can't for my life frankly surrender myself to the Genius of Italy, or the Spirit of the South, or whatever one may call the confounded thing: but I nevertheless *feel* it in all my pulses. If I could only write as I might talk I should have no end of things to tell you about my last days in Switzerland, and especially my descent of the Alps — that mighty summer's day upon the Simplon when I communed with immensity and sniffed Italy from afar. This Italian tone of things which I then detected, lies richly on my

[1] A portion of this chapter has appeared in *Harvard Graduates' Magazine*, June 1933.

soul and gathers increasing weight, but it lies as a cold and foreign mass never to be absorbed and appropriated. The meaning of this superb image is that I feel I shall never look at Italy — at Venice, for instance — but from without; whereas it seemed to me at Oxford and in England generally that I was breathing the air of home. Ruskin recommends the traveller to frequent and linger in a certain glorious room at the Ducal Palace, where Paolo Veronese revels on the ceilings and Tintoretto rages on the walls, because he "nowhere else will enter so deeply into the heart of Venice." But I feel as if I might sit there forever (as I sat there a long time this morning) and only feel more and more my inexorable Yankeehood. As a puling pining Yankee, however, I enjoy things deeply.

What you will care most to hear about is the painters; so I shall not feel bound to inflict upon you any tall writing about the canals and palaces. . . . The first thing that strikes you, when you come to sum up after you 've been to the Ducal Palace and the Academy, is that you have not half so much been seeing paintings as *painters*. The accumulated mass of works by a few men drive each man home to your senses with extraordinary force. This is especially the case with the greatest of them all, Tintoretto, so much so that he ends by becoming an immense, perpetual, moral presence, brooding over the scene and worrying the mind into some species of response and acknowledgment. I have had more eyes and more thoughts for him than for anything else in Venice; and in future, I fancy, when I recall the place, I shall remember chiefly the full-streaming, dazzling light of the heavens, and Tintoretto's dark range of colour.

Ruskin truly says that it is well to devote yourself here solely to three men, Paolo Veronese, Tintoretto and Jacopo Bellini, inasmuch as you can see sufficient specimens of the rest . . . elsewhere, but must come here for even a notion of these. This is true of the three, but especially of Tintoretto, whom I finally see there is nothing for me to do but to admit (and have done with it) to be the biggest genius (as far as I yet know) who ever wielded a brush. Once do this, and you can make your abatements; but if Shakespeare is the greatest of poets, Tintoretto is assuredly the greatest of painters. He belongs to the same family and produces very much the same effect. He seems to me to have seen into painting to a distance unsuspected by any of his fellows. I don't mean into its sentimental virtues or didactic properties, but into its simple pictorial

capacity. Imagine Doré a thousand times refined in quality and then as many times multiplied in quantity, and you may have a sort of notion of him. But you must see him here at work like a great wholesale director to form an idea of his boundless invention and his passionate energy and the extraordinary possibilities of colour, for he begins by striking you as the poorest and ends by impressing you as the greatest of colourists. . . . I 'd give a great deal to be able to fling down a dozen of his pictures into prose of corresponding force and colour. . . . His especial greatness, I should be tempted to say, lies in the fact that more than any painter yet, he habitually conceived his subject as an *actual scene* which could not possibly have happened otherwise; not as a mere subject and fiction but as a great fragment wrenched out of life and history, with all its natural details clinging to it and testifying to its reality. You seem not only to look *at* his pictures, but *into* them, and this in spite of his not hesitating to open the clouds and shower down the deities and mix up heaven and earth as freely as his purpose demands. . . .

If I might talk of these things I would talk of more, and tell you in glowing accounts how beautiful a thing this month in Italy has been, and how my brain swarms with pictures and my bosom aches with memories. I should like in some neat formula to give you the *Italian feeling,* and tell you just how it is that one is conscious here of the æsthetic presence of the past. But you 'll learn one day for yourself. . . . I mean to write you again in a few days, *not* about painters.[2] *A toi,*

H. JAMES JR.

Cambridge, Oct. 2, 1869

Dearest Harry, —

Within ten days we have received two letters from you — one from Como, t'other from Brescia, and most luscious epistles were they indeed. It does one's heart good to think of you at last able

[2] Henry James's opinion of Tintoretto was later embodied in a letter to the *Nation,* entitled "From Venice to Strassburg" (March 6, 1873). A short time afterwards he received from his father the following excerpt from a letter written by Norton to Sara Sedgwick, his sister-in-law, afterwards Mrs. W. E. Darwin: "I read to Ruskin Henry James's excellent letter about Tintoret in the *Nation* of March 6, and the interest he felt in it and the pleasure he took in it were really delightful. It touched me as well as pleased me to have him say that this letter was a genuine encouragement to him, and that he should henceforward count Harry among the men for whom he should especially work."

to drink in full gulps the beautiful and the antique. As Mother said the other day, it seems as if your whole life had but been a preparation for this. Since I wrote you from Pomfret a couple of months since, so many things have happened and I have had so much to say to you of matters personal, moral, spiritual and practical that I hardly know how to begin this letter. Some things will get crowded out anyhow.

First, of my health. It kept wonderful for about six weeks at Pomfret and I began to think that all was saved, but it suddenly caved in a week before I left. . . . The result is that I find myself unable to predict my state as of yore; and I feel on the whole encouraged by it — for it shows that the condition, whatever it be, is mobile and not essential. . . . I am very much run down in nervous force and have resolved to read as little as I possibly can this winter, and absolutely not study, *i.e.*, read nothing which I can get interested and *thinking* about. There is plenty of biographical, historical and literary matter which I have always hoped to read some day, so this is just the time for it. I cal'late likewise to pay a visit every evening when it is possible, and not to stick in the house as hitherto. I cannot tell you, my dear brother, how my admiration of the silent pluck you have exhibited during those long years has risen of late. I never realized till within three or four months the full amount of endurance it must have needed to go through all that literary work, and especially all that unshirking social activity, which you accomplished. I give up like a baby in comparison, though occasionally I find my heart fired and my determination *retrempé*'d by a sudden wave of recollection of your behavior. . . .

I spent a very pleasant twenty-four hours at John La Farge's. . . . Of new things he had to show me *non multa,* but on the whole, *multum.* . . . John seemed very cheerful, but the total impression of the visit was a sad one. I got an equally vivid impression of the depth of his talent (you 've no idea of the pure splendor of some of those things) and of his destitution of that vulgar cleverness necessary to make it available. . . .

Father's book is out, *The Secret of Swedenborg,* and is selling very fast, partly I suppose by virtue of the title, to people who won't read it. I read it, and am very much enlightened as to his ideas and as to his intellectual rank thereby. I am going slowly through his other books. I will write you more when I have read more.

Suffice it that many points which before were incomprehensible to me because doubtfully fallacious, I now definitely believe to be entirely fallacious; but as this pile accumulates on one side there is left a more and more definite residuum on the other of great and original ideas, so that my respect for him is on the whole increased rather than diminished. But his ignorance of the way of thinking of other men, and his cool neglect of their difficulties, is fabulous in a writer on such subjects. It is pure theology, and not philosophy commonly so-called, that he deals with.

Thomas Sergeant Perry is back very well after his vacation. . . . His true modesty, and unreserved kind feeling to everyone, together with his humor and enthusiasm, ought not to let him be lightly estimated. The more I live in the world the more the cold-blooded, conscious egotism and conceit of people afflict me and T. S. P. is sweetly free of them. All the noble qualities of Wendell Holmes, for instance, are poisoned by them, and friendly as I want to be towards him, as yet the good he has done me is more in presenting me something to kick away from or react against than to follow and embrace. I have seen him but sparingly since the spring, but expect he will be here tonight. . . .

I am forgetting your "Gabrielle de Bergerac." Very exquisitely touched, but the *dénouement* bad in that it did not end with Coquelin's death in that stormy meeting and her being sent to a nunnery. At least Coquelin ought to have had a *lettre de cachet* and she, resisting still the Viscount, have ended in a nunnery. The end is both humdrum and improbable. I expect to write you more stiddy now. Get your belly full of enjoyment this winter. . . . Ever your loving

W. J.

Early in October, during a visit to Florence, Henry was prostrated by an illness of several weeks, and wrote of his symptoms at great length; evoking medical advice from the new M.D., as well as the following philosophical outburst of fraternal solicitude: —

"It makes me sick to think of your life being blighted by this hideous affliction. I will say nothing to the family about it, as they can do you no good, and it will only give them pain, but don't you hesitate hereafter to let me know minutely all about yourself. I hope to God you will soon find a way to make it go better. For what purpose we are thus tormented I know not, — I don't see that

Father's philosophy explains it any more than anyone else's. But as Pascal says, *'malgré les misères qui nous tiennent par la gorge,'* there 's a divine instinct in us, and at the end of life the good remains and the evil sinks into darkness. If there is to be evil in the world at all, I don't see why you or I should not be its victims as well as anyone else, — the trouble is that there should be any. . . ." [3]

Recovering from his illness, Henry moved on to Rome, where he "went reeling and moaning thro' the streets, in a fever of enjoyment," and whence he sent remarkable records of his experiences (objective and subjective) to the family in Cambridge. He did not, however, cease to discuss his brother's health, or his literary beginnings. "With all my heart," he wrote, "I rejoice that you 're going to try loafing and visiting. I discern the 'inexorable logic' of the affair; courage, and you 'll work out your redemption. . . . Your notice of Mill and Bushnell seemed to me (save the opening lines which savoured faintly of Eugene Benson) very well and fluently written." [4]

[Cambridge], Nov. 1, 1869 [5]

My dearest Harry, —

. . . If after all, you go back to England after a couple of months, I don't know that it should be considered by you in the light of a collapse, even if you should *never* see Germany. One's powers of absorbing material are limited at best, and I don't see how you could hope in any event to do *justice* to England and Germany too. We all learn sooner or later that we must gather ourselves up, and more or less arbitrarily concentrate our interests — throw much overboard to save *any*. You have made a favorable start with England, moreover, and will get more thorough cultivation from "living yourself still further *hinein*" (German idiom) than by doing both it and German superficially. Only what we truly appropriate helps us really, and England is evidently *sympathique* to you. *My* enthusiasm for Germany has been entirely on the basis of letting England slide. Your better plan would probably be the opposite; the more so as your business is to write English, and the study of English

[3] Oct. 25, 1869.

[4] Oct. 30, 1869; a part reprinted from *L.H.J.*,' I, 24–5. Eugene Benson was a portrait painter and author of numerous magazine articles, afterwards published under the title of *Art and Nature in Italy*.

[5] Another passage from this letter has been cited above, 151.

writers can best help you therein. German would perhaps even hurt you. I came t'other day across an anecdote of Schiller (by the bye 't was in Crabb Robinson[6]). Crabb saw a German Shakespeare in his library, and asked him whether he did not read him in English. Schiller said he could, but did not, as his business was writing German and the habit of other tongues, he thought, hurt the delicacy of his feeling for what was good German. You could not get even *started* in German fairly in less than fifteen months. All this to be seriously thought of by you, not only as consolation after, but in deliberation before, your return to England.

I wish now you 'd write about your back, power of reading, and sleep. *I* sleep like a top. My "power of reading" however is gone to the dogs. I regret it the more now, as my mind was never in a more active, *i.e.,* earnestly inquiring state, and problems define themselves more sharply to me. I read lately Lecky's *History of Morals* which is a fascinating work, though with a strange effect of amiability. I was much satisfied by a new volume of *Nouvelles moscovites* of your old friend Turgenev. His mind is morbid, but he is an artist through and through. His work is solid and will bear reading over and over. In other words *style* is there — that mystery. . . . Adieu. *Gute Besserung!* Yours ever,

W. J.

Cambridge, Dec. 5, 1869

Dear Harry, —

. . . Your letters from Italy are beyond praise. It is a great pity they should be born to blush unseen by the general public and that just the matter that they contain, in a little less rambling style, should not appear in the columns of the *Nation.* They are read partially to appreciative visitors, and seem to cause "unfeigned delight." Father took some to Emerson at Concord the other day. He pleaded hard to keep them for study, but Father refused. Meeting Edward [Emerson] in the Athenæum the next day, the latter said his father was doing nothing but talk of your letters. That sample ought to be enough for you.

As for my more humble self, your admirable discriminating remarks on art matters go to the right spot. I can well sympathize

[6] Henry Crabb Robinson's *Diary, Reminiscences, and Correspondence* was published in 1869.

with what must be the turmoil of your feeling before all this wealth, — that strange impulse to exorcise it by extracting the soul of it and throwing it off *in words;* which translation is in the nature of things impossible, but each attempt to storm its inaccessible heights produces, with the pang of failure, a keener sense of the reality of the ineffable subject, and a more welcome submission to its yoke. I had a touch of the fever at little Dresden, and I can't help hoping that with your larger opportunities there will be a distinct intellectual precipitate from your experience which may be communicable to others. I 'm sorry that your letter to me at Florence anent these matters should have been stifled ere its birth. It does not do to trust to the matter remaining in the mind. Nothing can take the place of notes struck off with the animal heat of the fever upon them, and I hope you are making some for your own use all this time.

What you say of the antique and of architecture touches a kindred chord in me. It seems as if the difference of classical and romantic had some metaphysic parallel, and was but a symbol. Soak yourself in the symbol and perhaps the meaning will suddenly dawn upon you. You can't tell how *satisfied* I feel at your being able at last to see these things, or how I pray that you may finally attain the power to lead a working life and let your faculties bear their legitimate fruit. After all, even if you be cut short in Italy, what I said in a recent letter remains true, — that one must have (nor try to escape it) but one intellectual *home;* if one tries to escape speciality, one misses being anything at all, and the more you get of England the better for you. I was struck yesterday in reading Sainte-Beuve's notice of Leopardi (*Portraits Contemporains,* Vol. III) to find him asserting this so well of himself as critic. He apologizes for treating of a foreigner, persuaded as he is "que la critique litéraire n'a toute sa valeur et son originalité que lorsqu'elle s'applique à des sujets dont on possède de près et de longue main le fonds, les alentours, et toutes les circonstances." In other words, we possess nothing well till we possess it to its remotest radicles. I sympathize fully with your wishing to spend some months in Paris. What I doubted was the propriety of your giving a year to it. . . .

The number of periodicals taken has been swelled by the *Academy* and *Nature.* The *Academy* is really worth taking, giving a thoroughly business-like conspectus of the *whole* literature of the month instead of the accidental fragments one gets elsewhere. I find in

my present condition that these periodicals are less odious than they have been. I have been reading Max Müller's *Chips (from a German Workshop)* lately with much pleasure, likewise a little of Leopardi, the Italian of which is by no means insurmountable, and the matter and manner of which strangely attract me. The extracts from a Persian poet which C. E. Norton sent to the last *North American Review* are mighty things.[7] Borrow the book from him if you have a chance. . . . Time passes with me like a whirlwind . . . and I am beginning to go regularly into the evening visit business.

To prove to you how well Alice is, I may tell you that today . . . she started before eleven for town, where she is to go to . . . lunch at a restaurant, alone, then to be caught up by Mother and Annie Ashburner,[8] and to go to the Boston Theatre to hear Maggie Mitchell in *The Pearl of Savoy,* and then home to dinner. Last night she was at her bee. They hoped to hear Maggie Mitchell in her great new play *Lorle, the Tiny Belle of the Canton,* but the play has been changed. Such words as "tiny," "dainty," "winsome," "booklet," etc., etc., are growing ever more prevalent in our native literature. . . . Write good news of yourself to your

W.

Rome [Dec.] 27 [1869]

Beloved Bill, —

I have just found at my bankers a long letter from you (Dec. 5th) which has gratified me so inexpressibly that although I despatched home a document only a couple of days since, I feel powerfully moved to write to you directly, — the more especially as my letter contained a promise that I would. Your letters fill me with a divine desire to occupy for an hour that old cane-bottomed chair before your bedroom fire. One of these days it will hold me for many hours. I am extremely glad you like my letters, and terrifically agitated by the thought that Emerson likes them. I never manage to write but a very small fraction of what has originally occurred to me. What you call the "animal heat" of contemplation is sure to evaporate within half an hour. I went this morning to bid farewell to Michel Angelo's "Moses" at San Pietro in Vincoli, and

[7] Norton's citations from Fitzgerald's translation of Omar Khayyám, Oct. 1869.
[8] Anne and Grace Ashburner were neighbors and friends of the elder Jameses, and aunts of Mrs. C. E. Norton and Theodora Sedgwick.

was so tremendously impressed with its sublimity that on the spot my intellect gushed forth a torrent of wisdom and eloquence; but where is that torrent now? I *have* managed tolerably well, however, which is the great thing, to *soak* myself in the various scenes and phenomena. Conclusions occasionally leap full-armed from my Jovine brain, bringing with them an immensely restful sense of their finality.

This morning I think I definitively settled the matter with regard to Michel Angelo. I believe, by the way, I never explicitly assured you of the greatness of the "Moses." . . . It is a work of magnificent beauty, — beauty very nearly equal to that of the statue of Lorenzo de' Medici. I now feel as if I could judge of Michel Angelo's merits in tolerably complete *connaissance de cause.* I have seen the great Greek things, I have seen Raphael, and I have seen all his own works. He has something — he retains something, after all experience — which belongs only to himself. This transcendent "something" invested the "Moses" this morning with a more melting, exalting power that I have ever perceived in a work of art. It was a great sensation, the greatest a work can give. I sat enthralled and fascinated by that serene "Aristide" at Naples; but I stood agitated this morning by all the forces of my soul. The beauty of such a thing as the "Aristide" is in the effect achieved; that of the "Moses," the "Lorenzo," the figures on the Sistine roof, in the absence of a limited effect. The first takes no account of the imagination; the others the largest. They have a soul. Alack! 't is poor work talking of them; *je tenais seulement* to work off something of the tremour in which they have left me, and to gratify myself by writing down in black and white and, if need be, taking my stand on it against the world, the assertion that Michel Angelo is the greatest of artists. The question remained solely as between him and the Greeks; but this morning settled it. The "Moses" alone perhaps would n't have done it, but it did it in combination with the vision of Lorenzo's tomb. . . . This energy, positiveness, courage, — call it what you will — is a simple, fundamental, primordial quality in the supremely superior genius. Alone it makes the real man of action in art, and disjoins him effectually from the critic. I felt this morning irresistibly how that Michel Angelo's greatness lay above all in the fact that he *was* this man of action — the greatest, almost, considering the temptation he had to be other-

wise, considering how his imagination embarrassed and charmed and bewildered him — the greatest perhaps, I say, that the race has produced. So far from perfection, so finite, so full of errors, so broadly a target for criticism as it sits there, the "Moses" nevertheless by the vigor with which it utters its idea, the eloquence with which it tells the tale of the author's passionate abjuration of the inaction of fancy and contemplation — his willingness to let it stand, in the interest of life and health and movement, as his *best* and his only possible — by this high transcendent spirit, it redeems itself from subjection to its details, and appeals most forcibly to the generosity and sympathy of the mind. Raphael is undecided, slack and unconvinced. . . .

I 'm sick unto death of priests and churches. Their "picturesqueness" ends by making me want to go strongly into political economy or the New England school system. I conceived at Naples a tenfold deeper loathing than ever of the hideous heritage of the past, and felt for a moment as if I should like to devote my life to laying railroads, and erecting blocks of stores on the most classic and romantic sites.[9] The age has a long row to hoe.

Your letter was full of delightful things. I can't too heartily congratulate you on your plan of visiting. *Vous allez bien voir.* You will live to do great things yet.

Assisi. Tuesday, Dec. 28th. Since writing the above I have been taking a deep delicious bath of mediævalism. I left Rome this morning by the 6.40 A.M. train and under a villainous cloudy sky, and came along in a mortally slow train (all the better to see from) through the great romantic country which leads up to Florence. Anything *more* romantic, more deeply and darkly dyed with the picturesque and all the happy chiaroscuro of song and story, it would be impossible to conceive. Perpetual alternations of the landscape of Claude and that of Salvator Rosa — an unending repetition of old steel engravings raised to the hundredth power. Oh! *Narni!* Oh! *Spoleto!* Who shall describe your unutterable picturesqueness? What words can shadow forth your happy positions aloft on sinking mountain spurs, — girt with your time-fretted crumbling bastions, incrusted with the rich deposit of history? I 've seen such passages of colour and composition, — such bits, such effects, as can only be reproduced by a moan of joy. It 's

[9] The letter written to H.J.[3] by his father on Dec. 26, 1869, is interesting in this connection. *Cf.* above, 134.

dramatic landscape. The towns are all built alike, perched on a mountain summit and huddled together within the dark-belted circuit of their walls. At 2.30, after a long morning of delight (despite occasional grievous showers) I arrived at this famous little spot, famous as the birthplace of St. Francis and the seat of that vast wondrous double church of which you, perhaps, remember the description in Taine. The town lies away up on the mountain and the church is built sheer upon its side. I got the one little *carriole* at the station to convey me thither, and found to my delight that I had time to see it tolerably well and get a hasty ramble through the terrific little city before dark. I have made a magnificent afternoon of it, and I am now scribbling this in the strangers' room of the *Leone d'Oro,* having just risen from an indigestibilissimo little repast. The church is a vast and curious edifice of a great deal of beauty and even more picturesqueness; a dark cavernous solemn sanctuary below, and above it another, — high, aspiring and filled with light and with various sadly decayed frescoes of Giotto. The position is glorious. A great aerial portico winds about it and commands a tremendous view. The whole thing is intensely mediæval, and the vocabulary of Michelet alone could furnish a proper characterization of it. And if such is the church, what are the strange, tortuous, hill-scaling little streets of the city? Never have I seen the local colour laid on so thick. They reek with antiquity. The whole place is like a little miniature museum of the *genre,* a condensation of the elements of mediævalism. . . .

I am to go on this evening by the 8.30 train to Perugia. The man who brought me up has promised me to return with his vehicle and convey me down the mountain and across the plain to the station. Meanwhile, however, the wind howls woefully, the storm seems to be rousing itself, and our transit may perhaps be uncomfortable. But I am bent on reaching Florence tomorrow night, and I wish to see Perugia in the morning. I am haunted with the apprehension that the host has bribed the little driver *not* to return, so that I may be kept over night. . . . I have vilely calumniated the establishment: the *padrona,* with the loveliest and most beaming Italian face I have ever seen, has just come in, to herald the approach of the *vetturino. Buona sera!* I shall add a word at Florence. . . . A torrent of love and longing to my parents and sister. Your brother

H.

On December 21 and 23 Henry had written to his mother an account of the Bay of Naples, of Pompeii and Pæstum, and of his arrival in Rome. "Now that I am leaving Italy," he said, "I feel with redoubled force its enchanting eloquence, and fumble over the rich contents of these last four months as fondly as a coin-collector a bag of medals."

Cambridge, Jan. 19, 1870

Dear Harry, —

Your letter from Naples the twenty-first of December and Rome the twenty-third, arrove yesterday morning. We were all heartily glad to have a tolerably cheerful report of your health, though it did not descend into details. . . . I write now a few words only, being impeded these days by an inflammation of the eyelids, produced in a remarkable way by an overdose of chloral (a new hypnotic remedy which I took for the fun of it as an experiment, but whose effects are already on the wane). I write mainly to undo the impression my last letter written about Christmas-tide must have made on you. Those days marked the turning point, and the unaccountable symptoms which have been bothering me for many months began to combine themselves about the New Year in a way which gives me the strongest suspicion that they have formed but the transition to a second stage of the complaint. . . . Had I the somewhat mystical faith of a Hosmer,[10] I suppose I should feel an inward conviction that I was from henceforth to rise; as it is, I only strongly suspect that it *may* be so. It will need another month or two to make me feel sure; and meanwhile failure will not hurt my feelings as much as if my hopes had been more confident.

What a pity that the weather, which is, I suppose, the mainspring of Naples's power to charm, failed you when there. Your wanderings and sight-seeings are beginning to foot up to quite a respectable sum, and the tolerably simple conception that it has been possible to frame of your life since you were reft from us, is fading to a many-hued chaos, with a gradually widening gulf between it and the grasping-power of our imagination. But it doeth my very gizzard good to think of your being able to lay all those meaty experiences to your soul. . . .

Father has been writing a couple of articles on woman and mar-

[10] B. G. Hosmer, whose *Poems* were published in Cambridge in 1868.

riage in the *Atlantic*.[11] I can't think he shows himself to most advantage in this kind of speculation. I will send you . . . the January number of the *Atlantic*, with a long and good poem by Lowell.[12] . . . I enjoyed last week the great pleasure of reading *The House of the Seven Gables*. I little expected so *great* a work. It 's like a great symphony, with no touch alterable without injury to the harmony. It made a deep impression on me and I thank Heaven that Hawthorne was an American. It also tickled my national feeling not a little to note the resemblance of Hawthorne's style to yours and Howells's, even as I had earlier noted the converse. That you and Howells with all the models in English literature to follow, should needs involuntarily have imitated (as it were) this American, seems to point to the existence of some real American mental quality. But I must spare my eyes and stop. Ever your devoted

WMS.

P.S. It 's a burning shame that all the while you were in Italy you should not have been able to write any "notes" for the *Nation*. Is it now too late? . . .

Great Malvern, Feb. 13, 1870

Beloved Brother, —

I have before me two letters from you, — one of Dec. 27th[13] of that dead and gone old year which will have been so heavily weighted a one in my mortal career (to say nothing of yours), the other of the 19th January in this lusty young '70. They were both received in Paris in those all too rich and rapid days that I tarried there on that memorable, that tragical, pilgrimage from Florence — from Naples, I may say — across the breadth of Europe to this actual British Malvern. . . . I have had a cheery British fire made up in my dingy British bedroom and have thus sate me down to this ghastly mockery of a fraternal talk. My heart reverts across the awful leagues of wintry ocean to that blessed library in Quincy Street, and to the image of the gathering dusk, the assembled family,

[11] The elder James published these articles in the *Atlantic* in 1870 (XXV), as follows: "The Woman Thou Gavest with Me"; "Is Marriage Holy?"; "The Logic of Marriage and Murder."

[12] "The Cathedral."

[13] This letter is omitted here as dealing almost exclusively with symptoms and remedies. It reveals W.J. as suffering both in mind and body, but hoping that he has reached the "turning-point."

the possible guest, the impending — Oh! the impending, American *tea!* In fine, if I wanted I could be as homesick as you please. All the conditions are present: *rien n'y manque.* But I 'll steep myself in action lest I perish with despair. I 'll drive the heavy-footed pen, and brush away the importunate tear.

Your last letter was a real blessing and a most indispensable supplement to the previous one. It contained, in your statement of your slowly dawning capacity for increased action, just the news that I had been expecting, that I had counted on as on the rising of tomorrow's sun. I have no doubt whatever that you have really entered upon the "second stage." You 'll find it a happier one than the first. Perhaps when I get home six months hence (Heaven forbid that at the present moment I should entertain any other hypothesis), I shall be able gently to usher you into the third and ultimate period of the malady. It does me good to think of you no longer leading that dreary lonely prison-life. . . . God speed you! I see you booked indelibly for the ringing grooves of change.

I believe that I have n't written to you since my last days in Rome, and any reflections on my subsequent adventures will have reached you through Father, Mother and Alice. Nevertheless I have had many a fancy and feeling in the course of that extraordinary achievement: the deliberate, cold-blooded, conscious turning of my back on Italy — the gradual, fatal relentless progression from Florence to Malvern — many a keen emotion and many a deep impression which I should have been glad to submit to your genial appreciation. Altogether, it has been a rather serious matter. I mean simply that you feel the interest of Italy with redoubled force when you begin to turn away from it and seek for the rare and beautiful in other lands. Brave old bonny England of ten short months ago — where are you now? Where are the old thrills of fancy, the old heart-beats, the loving lingering gaze, the charm, the fever, the desire of those innocent days? Oh! but I 'll find them again. They lie nestling away with the blossoms of the hedges — they sit waiting in the lap of the longer twilight, and they 'll burst forth once more in the green explosion of April. This I firmly count upon. . . .

I was very much disappointed in not being able to write to you at Florence, about which I fancied I had a good deal to say. Perhaps, however, this was an illusion, and that of definite statements I should

not have found many rise to my pen. One definite statement, however, I do feel warranted in making, namely, that I became interested in the place and attached to it to a degree that makes me feel that it has really entered into my life and is destined to operate there as a motive, a prompter, an inspirer of some sort. By which I suppose I mean nothing more pregnant or sapient than that one of these days I shall be very glad to return there and spend a couple of years. I doubt that I shall ever undertake — shall ever care to study Italian art, Italian history, for themselves; or with a view to discoveries or contributions, or otherwise than as an irradiating focus of light on some other matters. *Ecco!* that I hope is sapient enough for one sitting! . . .

At a first glance I found Paris strangely hollow and vulgar: but after the lapse of a few days, as soon as I had placed myself on a clean fresh basis, I began to enjoy it, — to admire it, and lo! before I left, to esteem it. I should be sorry to think that for a little paltry prettiness that confounded Italy had left me with a warped and shrunken mind. Let us be just to all men! (I 'm coming to England presently.) From Nice to Boulogne I was deeply struck with the magnificent order and method and decency and prosperity of France — with the felicity of *manner* in all things, — the completeness of form. . . .

I have now been some ten days in England. In one of your last letters you very wisely assure me that England, like every other place, would seem very flat on a second visit. For this contingency I made the most ample and providential preparation, and in this way I have eluded serious disappointments. But on the whole I don't much pretend or expect now, at best, to be ravished and charmed. I 've been to my rope's length and had my great sensations. In spite of decidedly unpropitious circumstances I find I like England still, and I expect her (if I get better) to yield me many an hour of profit and many a visible delight. . . . I find in Malvern itself, even at this dark season, all the promise of that beauty which delighted me last spring. The winter indeed here strips the landscape far less than with us or in the south. Literally (save for the orange trees) the country hereabouts looks less naked and out of season than that about Naples. The fields are all vivid with their rain-deepened green, the hedges all dark and dense and damp with immediate possibilities of verdure, the trees so multitudinously twigged

that as they rise against the watery sky a field's length away, you can fancy them touched with early leafage. And ah! that watery sky, greatest of England's glories! so high and vast and various, so many-lighted and many-shadowed, so full of poetry and motion and of a strange affinity with the swarming detail of scenery beneath! Indeed what I have most enjoyed in England since my return, what has most struck me, is the light, — or rather, if you please, the darkness: that of Du Maurier's drawings. . . .

I received your *Atlantic* with Lowell's poem, which I enjoyed largely, though it seems to be lacking in the real poetic element through excess of cleverness — the old story. I enjoyed unmitigatedly Howells's little paper.[14] I have enjoyed all his things, more even since being abroad than at home. They are really American. I 'm glad you 've been liking Hawthorne. But I mean to write as good a novel one of these days (perhaps) as *The House of the Seven Gables.*

Monday, 14th. With the above thrilling prophecy I last night laid down my pen. I see nothing left but to close my letter. When I began I had a vague intention of treating you to a grand summing up on the subject of Italy. But it won't be summed up, happily for you. . . . Farewell. Love to all. Yours most fraternally,

H. JAMES JR.

P.S. An Anecdote. You spoke recently of having read with pleasure Lecky's *History of Morals.* I found at Florence that for a fortnight at Rome I had been sitting at breakfast opposite or next to the elegant author. We never spoke. He is very young and lanky and blond and soft-looking — but most pleasant of face: with quite the look of a better-class Cambridge divinity student. . . .

[14] "By Horse-Car to Boston," *Atlantic,* Jan. 1870.

XIX

DEPRESSION AND RECOVERY

DURING the autumn and winter of 1869 James's spirits had steadily declined. He had written to Bowditch of his personal problems and difficulties, as well as of local medical gossip, of that regretted physiology which the latter was so successfully pursuing in his stead, and of the Franco-Prussian War, which touched him deeply. The following letter to Bowditch is characteristic.[1]

Cambridge, Dec. 29, 1869

Dear Henry, —

I am a low-lived wretch, I know, for keeping you all this time unwritten-to. I have been a prey to such disgust for life during the past three months as to make letter writing almost an impossibility. . . . I heard part of a letter from you to Jeffries Wyman read the other night by him, and was glad to know that you were well, and in the midst of such physiological luxury as you represent Ludwig's laboratory to be. Did you spend any time in Dresden at my old grandmother Spangenberg's, and did you get along well with her? If I were a rich man I would make her comfortable for the rest of her days. To tell you about matters at home: My own condition, I am sorry to say, goes on pretty steadily deteriorating in all respects, in spite of a fitful flash up for six weeks this summer. I have, however, begun to poke about in town and to pay visits in spite of it, which is a great refreshment. But I literally have given up all pretense to study or even to serious reading of any kind, and I look on physiology and medicine generally as dim voices from a bygone time. . . . I have only spent one evening at Wyman's since my return, and have not yet got to see his museum. He says he finds anthropology to absorb all his time now, and he does n't know when he shall get off of it.[2]

[1] *Cf.* also the letter of Aug. 12, 1869, *L.W.J.*, I, 153–6, and above, 299.
[2] *Cf.* below, 359.

Wendell Holmes is hard at work, — I fear too hard, having undertaken a two years' job to edit Kent's *Commentaries;* and being ambitious of excellence he says the time is too short for the amount of work he is resolved to put into it, and it weighs heavy on his soul. . . . I shall trust to you to tell me of any bibliographic news of consequence either in the physio- or the psycho-logic lines. . . . Of Professor Eliot's new courses of lectures,[3] the philosophic course seems to have made a successful beginning, and I hope it may be kept up and improve. The literary one seems to be a sort of mongrel and useless affair. I heard Charles Peirce lecture yesterday, one of his nine on "British Logicians." It was delivered without notes, and was admirable in matter, manner and clearness of statement. He has recently been made assistant astronomer with $2500 a year. But I wish he could get a professorship of philosophy somewhere. That is his forte, and therein he is certainly *très fort.* I never saw a man go into things so intensely and thoroughly.

Now, I confidently expect that you will sit down and write me a long letter immediately on receiving this. I will promise to treat you better in future. If you don't, 't were better you had ne'er been born, for I 'll cause you to die by tortures so lingering and horrible that the mind of man has not yet conceived of the like of them, — when you return. What would not I give to spend another ten days with you in Leipzig like unto that blissful spell of time we had together in Paris! I shall never forget the pleasure of those days, nor all you did for me. . . . Ever your affectionate friend,

WM. JAMES

His brother Henry having suddenly returned to Cambridge at the end of April 1870, most of James's former correspondents were for the next few years his neighbors or members of his household. The letters, therefore, provide a very inadequate record of this momentous period. Momentous it was because it marked the low point of James's depression and the beginnings of a permanent improvement. Three forward steps are clearly defined, despite many lesser oscillations: the spiritual crisis of 1870; the commencement of his teaching in 1872; his marriage in 1878.

[3] The so-called "University Lectures" designed for "graduates, teachers, and other competent persons."

By James's spiritual crisis I do not refer specifically to the acute attack of melancholia described in the autobiographical passage of *The Varieties of Religious Experience.*[4] The date of this experience cannot be precisely fixed, and it might have occurred at any time between his return from Europe and the definitive improvement of his health in 1872. It was symptomatic of his desperate neurasthenic condition during these years, and contributed to his understanding of religious mysticism and morbid mentality. But it was a pathological seizure rather than a spiritual crisis.

The spiritual crisis was the ebbing of the will to live, for lack of a philosophy to live by — a paralysis of action occasioned by a sense of moral impotence. On February 1, 1870, James recorded in his diary a resolve to acknowledge the supremacy of morality: "Today I about touched bottom, and perceive plainly that I must face the choice with open eyes: shall I *frankly* throw the moral business overboard, as one unsuited to my innate aptitudes, or shall I follow it, and it alone, making everything else merely stuff for it? I will give the latter alternative a fair trial. Who knows but the moral interest may become developed. . . . Hitherto I have tried to fire myself with the moral interest, as an aid in the accomplishing of certain utilitarian ends."

But the personal problem was not yet solved, for the devotee of morals may be driven to despair by the existence of evil: "Can one with full knowledge and sincerely ever bring one's self so to sympathize with the total process of the universe as heartily to assent to the evil that seems inherent in its details? Is the mind so purely fluid and plastic? If so, optimism is possible. Are, on the other hand, the private interests and sympathies of the individual so essential to his existence that they can never be swallowed up in his feeling for the total process,— and does he nevertheless imperiously crave a reconciliation or unity of some sort. Pessimism must be his portion. But if, as in Homer, a divided universe be a conception possible for his intellect to rest in, and at the same time he have vigor of will enough to look the universal death in the face without blinking, he can lead the life of moralism. A militant existence, in which the ego is posited as a monad, with the *good* as its end, and the final consolation only that of irreconcilable hatred — though evil slay me, she can't subdue me, or make me worship her. The brute

[4] *V.R.E.*. 160–1.

force is all at her command, but the final protest of my soul as she squeezes me out of existence gives me still in a certain sense the superiority."

In other words, if one adopts the alternative of "moralism," whether this assumes the form of a hope to conquer evil or a resolve to die bravely — in either case one needs that "vigor of will" which springs from the belief in its freedom. It was this which James derived from Renouvier, as recorded in his diary on April 30, 1870: "I think that yesterday was a crisis in my life. I finished the first part of Renouvier's second *Essais* and see no reason why his definition of free will — 'the sustaining of a thought *because I choose to* when I might have other thoughts' — need be the definition of an illusion. At any rate, I will assume for the present — until next year — that it is no illusion. My first act of free will shall be to believe in free will." [5]

Thus James felt his old doubts to be dispelled by a new and revolutionary insight. It is important to note two things: first, the fact that he experienced a personal crisis that could be relieved only by a *philosophical* insight; and, second, the specific quality of the philosophy which his soul-sickness required.

That he should have experienced such a crisis at all furnishes the best possible proof of James's philosophical cast of mind. He had for many years brooded upon the nature of the universe and the destiny of man. Although the problem stimulated his curiosity and fascinated his intellect, it was at the same time a vital problem. He was looking for a solution that should be not merely tenable as judged by scientific standards, but at the same time propitious enough to live by. Philosophy was never, for James, a detached and dispassionate inquiry into truth; still less was it a form of amusement. It was a quest, the outcome of which was hopefully and fearfully apprehended by a soul on trial and awaiting its sentence. It is true that the gravity of his philosophical task varied with his moods, and with the condition of his health. In his more exuberant moments he relished the play of his speculative and critical faculties, and during long periods of vigorous productivity he became, like any other investigator, interested in special problems for themselves; but behind all this, reasserting itself with every new deepening of reflection, and determining the whole tone and direction of his

[5] *L.W.J.*, I, 147.

philosophical career, was his identification of philosophy with personal conviction. His philosophy was never a mere theory, but always a set of beliefs which reconciled him to life and which he proclaimed as one preaching a way of salvation.

It is worthy of remark, then, that James required a philosophy to save him. Not less significant is the particular quality of the philosophy which was needed by his particular soul. To his essentially interested and ardent nature the counsel of resignation could never be more than a temporary anæsthetic, and he was too profoundly human to find consolation in heaven. He was too sensitive to ignore evil, too moral to tolerate it, and too ardent to accept it as inevitable. Optimism was as impossible for him as pessimism. No philosophy could possibly suit him that did not candidly recognize the dubious fortunes of mankind, and encourage him as a moral individual to buckle on his armor and go forth to battle. In other words, to cure him from his weakness he needed the strong man's medicine. He *was* a strong man, overtaken by weakness — a man of action cut off from action by bodily incapacity, a man to whom no teaching of acquiescence or evasion could be either palatable or nutritive.

What is the strong man's medicine, diluted to suit his disabled condition? *The gospel of belief.* For belief is action, and yet a sort that may be demanded even of a sick man; and belief may have action as its object. To believe *by* an act of will *in* the efficacy of will — that is a gospel which fits the temper of action, and which may be used to bring the invalid warrior back to fighting trim.

The crisis of April 1870 was a turning point but not a cure. For several years to come the road was hard, with only a very gradual upward incline. In spite of all professions to the contrary his mind was incessantly active. On December 17, 1870, James wrote to Tom Ward: "I was sorry not to see you again before your return. Talking with you has clinched my resolve to look into mathematics — not now, but if I ever get able to study. Meanwhile I like to scheme, — so write me a programme of mathematical study, what books I had better go through and in what order, beginning with analytic geometry and logarithms."

This is characteristic both of James's indefatigable industry and of his sincere conviction that he was doing nothing. During these years of felt frustration he read widely and voluminously, as he

had always done.[6] And he read to good purpose, having a quite extraordinary capacity for detecting quickly what in a book or article he could appropriate. Nor did he carry out his resolution to avoid study. He maintained his lively interest in physiology, and continued to look longingly, sometimes hopefully, in that direction. As he read he thought, and as he thought he wrote — many pages of analysis and argument, returning again and again to the problems that baffled him.

During the year 1871 James gradually resumed his scientific studies and he eagerly welcomed Bowditch's inauguration of experimental physiology at the Medical School in the autumn of that year. The winter of 1872–1873 was notable for two events — the opening of James's correspondence with Renouvier, and the beginning of his career as a teacher. His relations with Renouvier form a major topic to which we shall return later. The first letter, written in November 1872, affords proof that this philosopher had been much on his mind since the crisis of 1870. James's commitment to the teaching career began in April 1872, when he received and accepted an informal offer from Harvard. In August he was appointed instructor in physiology, to give in the following year, in collaboration with the anatomist, Dr. Timothy Dwight, an elective course open to undergraduates of Harvard College on "Comparative Anatomy and Physiology." Thus, at last, after long delays and many uncertainties, when he had reached the age of thirty, James entered upon the professional career to which he thereafter devoted himself for thirty-five years. That he was to be a teacher and scholar was now settled, but what he should teach and investigate was still subject to change. Physiology, psychology, and philosophy all attracted him, and he ended by teaching them all; physiology coming first, not because his interest was greatest, but because the first opportunity came to him in that field. Philosophy and psychology were to have their day, and it was not far distant. Furthermore, the three subjects all interpenetrated. Comparative anatomy and physiology led through the conception of evolution to philosophy of nature, and human physiology led to psychology; while psychology, as James knew it, looked for its causal explanation to physiology and for its deeper implications to theory of knowledge and metaphysics.

James was a good teacher because of the manner of man that

[6] For a list of his reading in 1869, *cf. L.W.J.*, I, 142–3.

he was, and not because of any method which he consciously adopted. In the classroom he was precisely what he was everywhere else — just as unorganized, just as stimulating and irresistibly charming. To what James made of teaching we shall return presently; the question here is what teaching made of James. It has sometimes been supposed that James as a professor was a caged bird, eager to rise into the empyrean, but imprisoned by the pedantry and routine of academic duties. We have already seen, however, that he regarded his first appointment as a "godsend." He continued to regard it as of the first importance that a man should have a fixed schedule of work and responsibility: he recommended this medicine to others, and believed in its efficacy for himself. He was, furthermore, a man who craved a hearing for the truth that he believed was in him. Teaching provided the (to him) indispensable social aspect of his scholarly vocation. He enjoyed, loved, stimulated, and sometimes berated his students. All of this helped to consume his energy, and June usually found him fagged and eager to escape. Toward the end of his career, when he was contending against the illness that ultimately proved fatal, he rejoiced in his permanent release from the yoke. But on the whole it was with his teaching as it was with everything else — he soon grew weary of whatever he was doing, and with equal promptness missed it when he gave it up. Writing in 1899 to Josiah Royce from West Malvern, England, he said: "In the midst of this secluded and pottering life one's old relations with the students loom up very delightfully."

Even the *prospect* of teaching had an immediately beneficial effect on James's health. In May 1872, his brother Henry had again gone abroad, this time accompanied by his sister, Alice James, and his "Aunt Kate" (Mrs. Walsh), and with a definite literary commission from the *Nation*. Thus the brotherly interchange of letters was resumed: —

Scarboro, Aug. 24, 1872

Beloved Henry, —

I got your letter from Grindelwald and Meyringen some ten days ago, just as I was starting for the second time for Mt. Desert. I meant to have written you immediately from there, but circumstances prevented, and in the interests of local color, 't is as well I should be

here. I drove down here yesterday evening from Portland where I arrived with Grace Ashburner after twenty-four hours on the steamboat. She went on to Boston. I could not resist the temptation of stopping and getting three sea baths. I shall return on Monday. The beach shines as of yore — it is really superb — and the wood is delightful even after Mt. Desert. . . . I write in the little parlor opposite the office. . . . The steady, heavy roaring of the surf comes through the open window, borne by the delicious salt breeze over the great bank of stooping willows, field and fence. The little horse-chestnut trees are no bigger, the cow with the board face still crops the grass. The broad sky and sea are whanging with the mellow light. All is as it was and will be. . . .

I do envy you very much what you are going to see in Italy, and a good deal what you are and have been seeing in Switzerland. Though nature as to its *essence* is the same anywhere, and many nervous puckers which were in my mind when I left Cambridge in July have been smoothed out gently and fairly by the sweet influences of many a lie on a hill-top at Mt. Desert with sky and sea and islands before me, by many a row, and a couple of sails, and by my bath and siesta on the blazing sand this morn. But I envy ye the world of art. Away from it, as we live, we sink into a flatter, blanker kind of consciousness, and indulge in an ostrich-like forgetfulness of all our richest potentialities; and they startle us now and then when by accident some rich human product, pictorial, literary, or architectural slaps us with its tail. I feel more and more as if I ought to try to learn to sketch in water-colors, but am too lazy to begin. . . .

Your letters to the *Nation*,[7] of which I have as yet seen three, have been very exquisite, and both I and others . . . have got great refreshment from them. But as one gets more appreciative one's self for fineness of perception and fineness of literary touch either in poetry or prose, one also finds how few there are to sympathize with one. I suppose, moreover, that descriptive writing is on the whole not a popular kind. Your own tendency is more and more to over-refinement, and elaboration. Recollect that for newspaporial purposes, a broader treatment hits a broader mark; and keep bearing that way as much as you can with comfort. I suppose traits

[7] The reference is to a series of communications on the places of interest which he visited, reprinted afterwards in *Transatlantic Sketches*.

of human nature and character would also agreeably speckle the columns. . . .

You will like an account of my own condition. My eyes serve from three to four hours daily. I don't wish in this vacation to use them more — seldom as much — but feel sure they will respond whenever I make the demand. My other symptoms are gradually modifying themselves, — I can hardly say for the better, except that all change is of good omen, and suggests a possible turn of the wheel into the track of soundness. The fits of languor have become somewhat rarer, but what were the healthy intervals have been assuming since your departure more and more of a morbid character, namely, just the opposite, nervousness, wakefulness, uneasiness. Perhaps the whole thing will soon smooth itself out. The appointment to teach physiology is a perfect godsend to me just now. An external motive to work, which yet does not strain me, a dealing with men instead of my own mind, and a diversion from those introspective studies which had bred a sort of philosophical hypochondria in me of late and which it will certainly do me good to drop for a year. . . . Adieu once more. Heaps of love to Alice, Aunt Kate, and yourself. From your ever affectionate

W. J.

Paris, Sept. 22 [1872]

Dear William, —

I found awaiting me at Munroe's a couple of days since your delightful and excellent letter of Aug. 24 from Scarboro, and I must let my usual Sunday letter, today, serve as an answer to it. . . . The Nortons . . . are here, and J. R. Lowell and wife, and Chauncey Wright. . . . C. W. seems in Paris just as he did in Cambridge — serenely purpurine. He lives at the Grand Hotel, and I frequently see him trundling on tip-toes along the boulevard, as he did at home along the Main Street. The Nortons are excellent, but I feel less and less at home with them, owing to a high moral *je ne sais quoi* which passes quite above my head. I went with Charles the other day to the Louvre, where he made some excellent criticisms, but he takes art altogether too hard for me to follow him, — if not in his likings, at least in his dislikes. I daily pray *not* to grow in discrimination, and to be suffered to aim at superficial pleasure. Otherwise, I shudder to think of my state of mind ten years hence.

Paris continues to seem very pleasant, but does n't become interesting. You get tired of a place which you can call nothing but *charmant*. Besides, I read the *Figaro* every day religiously, and it leaves a bad taste in my mouth. Hereabouts, moreover, the place is totally Americanized, — the Boulevard des Capucines and the Rue de la Paix are a perfect reproduction of Broadway. The want of comprehension of the real moral situation of France leaves one unsatisfied, too. Beneath all this neatness and coquetry, you seem to smell the Commune suppressed, but seething. . . .

I read your Taine and admired, though I but imperfectly understood it.[8] Charles Norton praised it to me the other day. Proceed, and all blessings attend you! . . . It seemed to me that I had much more to say, — and I have, but I must keep it for another day. Yours ever,

H. JAMES JR.

Cambridge, Oct. [10] 1872

My dear Harry, —

. . . Where you will be I know not. I write to you so seldom that I have a terrible amount of stuff to communicate, and probably the most important part of the items which I have from time to time tucked up on a shelf in my mind for you, will have evaporated. I begin by saying how good and full of information . . . your letters home have been, leaving, in fact, nothing to be desired. Your letters to the *Nation* have been rather too few, and very much enjoyed by me, and by a number of other people so large that I confess it has rather surprised me; as I thought the style ran a little more to *curliness* than suited the average mind, or in general the newspaper reader. In my opinion what you should *cultivate* is directness of style. Delicacy, subtlety and ingenuity will take care of themselves. The one that pleased me best was the first (Chester). Wendell Holmes said he was delighted with the Haddon Hall one, and his wife had had great pleasure from them. He preferred that, because in it you seemed to him to give more immediately your first impression, whereas your usual fault was to be looking too much for your second impression. . . .

I never so much as this summer felt the soothing and hygienic

[8] The review of H. Taine's "On Intelligence," *Nation*, XV (1872), is the first of William James's publications that can be said to afford any hint of his philosophical tendencies.

effects of nature upon the human spirit. Before, when I enjoyed it, it has been as a luxury, but this time 't was as a vital food, or medicine. I have regretted extremely letting my drawing die out. A man needs to keep open all his channels of activity, for the day may always come when his mind needs to change its attitude for the sake of its health. Simply getting absorbed in the look of nature is after abstract study like standing on one's feet after having been on one's head, and next summer I will, if it is at all possible, make an effort to begin painting in water-colors. I have been of late so sickened and sceptical of philosophic activity as to regret much that I did not stick to painting, and to envy those like you to whom the æsthetic relations of things were the real world. Surely they reveal a deeper part of the universal life than all the mechanical and logical abstractions do, and if I were you I would never repine that my life had got cast among them rather than elsewhere. . . .

John Fiske expressed today to Father his great regret that you were to stay away. His trip to lecture in Milwaukee was a great success. He is Librarian now, as I suppose you know. If I were well enough, now would be my chance to strike at Harvard College, for Peterson has just resigned his sub-professorship of philosophy, and I know of no very formidable opponent.[9] But it 's impossible. I keep up a small daily pegging at my physiology, whose duties don't begin till January, and which I shall find easy, I think.

Adieu! Where this gets to you and how, I know not, but suppose you 'll feel like making a short stay in England before returning to the South. Happy wretch! I hope you appreciate your lot, to spend the winter in an environment whose impression thickly assails your every sense and interest, instead of this naked vacuous America; and in a climate which in spite of its quantum of chill, on the whole lets you alone in a way that ours never thinks of, and has no northwest winds. Ever your affectionate

WM. JAMES

Cambridge, Nov. 24, 1872

Dear Harry, —

. . . I send you today the last *Nation* with your letter about Chambéry, etc., — a very delightful light bit of work, and perhaps the best of all for commercial newspaporial purposes. I must, how-

[9] Ellis Peterson's last year as assistant professor of philosophy was 1871–2. George Herbert Palmer became instructor in philosophy in 1872–3.

ever, still protest against your constant use of French phrases. There is an order of taste, and certainly a respectable one, to which they are simply maddening. I have said nothing to you about "Guest's Confession" which I read and enjoyed, admiring its cleverness though not loving it exactly. I noted at the time a couple of blemishes, one of the French phrase *les indifférents* at the end of one of her sentences which suddenly chills one's very marrow. The other the expression: "to whom I had dedicated a sentiment," earlier in the story, — I cannot well look up the page, but you will doubtless identify it. Of the people who experience a personal dislike, so to speak, of your stories, the most I think will be repelled by the element which gets expression in these two phrases, something cold, thin-blooded and priggish suddenly popping in and freezing the genial current. And I think that is the principal defect you have now to guard against. In flexibility, ease, and light power of style you clearly continue to gain — "Guest's Confession" and this last letter in the *Nation* are proofs of it; but I think you should fight shy of that note of literary reminiscence in the midst of what ought to be pure imagination absorbed in the object, which keeps every now and then betraying itself, as in these French phrases. I criticize you so much as perhaps to seem a mere caviler, but I think it ought to be of use to you to have any detailed criticism from even a wrong judge, and you don't get much from anyone else. I meanwhile say nothing of the great delight which all your pieces give me by their insight into the shades of being, and their exquisite diction and sense of beauty. . . .

Your letter describing your intimacy with J. R. Lowell, and your dinner with the irascible Frenchmen at the Hôtel de Lorraine, was received a few days ago and was very entertaining. But can't you find out a way of knowing any good French people? It seems preposterous that a man like you should be condemned to the society of washer-women and café waiters. I envy you, however, even the sight of such. Massive and teeming Paris, with its sights, sounds and smells, is so huge and real in the world, that from this insubstantial America one longs occasionally for it with a mighty yearn. Just about nightfall at this season with drizzle above and mud-paste beneath, and gas-blazing streets and restaurants, is the time that particularly appeals to me with thick-wafted associations. . . .

Wendell Holmes spent an evening here this week. He grows more and more concentrated upon his law. His mind resembles a stiff spring, which has to be abducted violently from it, and which every instant it is left to itself flies tight back. . . . Charles Peirce and wife are going to Washington again for the winter and perhaps for good. He says he is appreciated there, and only tolerated here, and would be a fool not to go there. He read us an admirable introductory chapter to his book on logic the other day. I go in to the Medical School nearly every morning to hear Bowditch lecture, or paddle round in his laboratory. It is a noble thing for one's spirits to have some responsible work to do. I enjoy my revived physiological reading greatly, and have in a corporeal sense been better for the past four or five weeks than I have been at all since you left.

You may be surprised that I have as yet not mentioned the fire.[10] But it was so snug and circumscribed an affair that one has felt no *horror* at all about it. Rich men suffered, but upon the community at large I should say its effect had been rather exhilarating than otherwise. Boston feels rather proud that the fire of youth and prodigality yet smoulders in her. Harvard College has lost nearly a quarter of a million, but last night the subscriptions to aid her footed eighty-odd thousand so that she may lose nothing in the end. And I am convinced now that each occasion for giving in charity strengthens the habit and makes it easier. No one that we know intimately seems to have lost much. But Mother will have told you already the "personalities" connected with the affair, so I hush up. Adieu! adieu! I am glad to hear that you are so well, and hope it will last. . . . Write more now about what you read and think. . . . Ever yours affectionately,

W. J.

[10] On Nov. 9 and 10 Boston was swept by a fire which covered 67 acres and destroyed property valued at $75,000,000.

XX

SETTLING INTO TIIE CAREER

How, during his absence, Henry's family served him in the rôle of critics and literary agents, and kept him informed of his brother's progress, appears in the following letters from his father and mother. William began his teaching in January and there was no doubt of its success, as judged both from his own point of view and from that of his students. His sister Alice had returned from Europe in September.

Cambridge, Jan. 14 [1873]

My darling Harry, —

We had a sitting last evening, and the evening before in the library, at which were present Mother, Alice and Willy, to whom I read the proof of your "Madonna of the Future," which I had from Howells, and which is to appear in the March *Atlantic*. . . . Willy pronounced it very *distingué*, Mother charming, Alice exquisite. I was very much struck with it as a whole, and admired it greatly also in parts. But I have a story to tell. Mr. Howells could n't agree to give twenty-five pages of one number of the magazine to it; that was positive. And then besides he had a decided shrinking from one episode, — that in which Theobald tells of his love for, and his visit from, the Titian-ic beauty, and his subsequent disgust of her worthlessness, as being risky for the magazine; and then, moreover, he objected to the interview at the end between the writer and the old English neighbor, as rubbing into the reader what was sufficiently evident without it. On both the first and second points, we all thought that while Howells *in general* is too timid, there was good ground for his timidity in the present case. Both Mother and Alice shrank from both the episodes as not helping the understanding of the story along, and as being scary, rather, in themselves. Willy thought the second quite unnecessary and superfluous, and thought the first, if it had not been

so much detailed but had been condensed into half a column, would perhaps do. But I thought they were both utterly uncalled for by the actual necessities of the tale, while they would both alike confer upon it a disagreeable, musky odour strikingly at war with its unworldly beauty. I went to Howells accordingly this morning, and told him that if he would consent to publish the whole tale in one piece, I would take upon me the responsibility of striking out the two episodes. He agreed, and he has made the connection of the parts perfect, so that no one would ever dream of anything stricken out. He promises me also to save the excluded pieces, and I will send them to you or keep them for you so that you may publish them, if you like, in your volume.[1] . . . I ought to say also that Howells admires the story very much, thinks it very beautiful, and only objects to these episodes as being too much fashioned upon French literature. . . . He was clear that you ought to publish a volume under the title of "Romances," forthwith. . . . I can help you if you are disposed to publish a selection of your tales. I think it would be a good thing for you to do, and Willy also is clear about it. You have a large number of admirers, that is evident; and I suspect the volume might be remunerative. . . .

Willy is going on with his teaching. The eleven o'clock bell has just tolled, and he is on his platform expounding the mysteries of physiology. He uses himself up now and then visiting and all the rest of it, such as debating about *Middlemarch* and other transient topics, but on the whole he gets on very well. He often talks of you. We all do that of course, but *he* very often initiates the talk. I need n't say that he always talks of you in the most tenderly affectionate and appreciative way. Yes, we are all your tender lovers, darling Harry, and none more so than your devoted Daddy.

H. J.

Cambridge, Jan. 21 [1873]

My darling Harry, —

. . . Will comes in from his lesson, and throws himself in the big green chair in the warm, broad sunshine. I say, "What shall I say to Harry?" He says, "Say I hoped to have written him long ago, but now I cannot say when I will be able to." I think he finds his lessons all that he can do. The intellectual part is easy enough,

[1] The "excluded pieces" were *not* published in later editions of the story.

but the whole thing taxes his weak nerves considerably. With habit and experience this, I hope, will abate. He complains of the loutish character of the young men generally, so few show intelligence or interest, — still there are a few. This is the usual experience of college professors. I remember Mr. Gurney once saying, "Tell William he must be sure to expect nothing from the young men." . . . Your loving MOTHER

The time was now approaching when James must adopt plans for the next year. On February 10, 1873, he wrote the following entry in his diary: "I decide today to stick to biology for a profession in case I am not called to a chair of philosophy, rather than to try to make the same amount of money by literary work, while carrying on more *general* or philosophic study. Philosophy I will nevertheless regard as my vocation and never let slip a chance to do a stroke at it." In other words, while his heart was in his philosophy, he felt that it was imperative that he should hold a responsible academic post. But a decision to teach biology might cut him off from the teaching of philosophy or psychology should such an opportunity arise! These absorbing doubts did not diminish his interest in literature, or in the career of his brother, who had been revisiting Italy since January, and remained there until June.

Cambridge, Feb. 13–14, 1873[2]

Dear Harry, —

. . . I have been prevented from writing you the many letters lately I have felt like emitting, by having my hands too full of other business. To hear of your *dolce far niente* under a summer sky, and enthroned among such high sounding, yet familiar names, both of places and of women, is like unto a dream, in white-skied Cambridge. That you speak so soundly of health and capacity for work is indeed a subject for rejoicing. And I hope that Roman impressions will some day surprise you by summating themselves suddenly into conscious increment of wisdom, as such things do surely enough, whether you worry about them or not.

Today *Advertiser* and *Tribune* are out with notices of your tale,[3]

[2] A part of this letter appears in *L.W.J.*, I, 167–8.

[3] "The Madonna of the Future." The "Bethnal Green Museum," referred to below, appeared in the *Atlantic* for Jan. 1873; "Henri Regnault" and "The Parisian Stage" in the *Nation* for Jan. 2 and 9, respectively.

which I clip out and enclose. Father decided to squeeze it into one number by docking its two episodes, I think with advantage, though the first one might have had its sense preserved, with the loss of its somewhat cold and repulsive details, had anyone here had the art to abridge it into a short and poetically vague statement that he had once broken with an iconoclastic love. On a third reading I quite agreed with Howells that the story was transparent enough without the second episode, which then became an excrescence. Altogether the story is a masterpiece. Your "Bethnal Green" article, notice of Regnault and Paris theatres, were all admirably easy in touch. What a slow and mysterious thing the growth of skill is, and how it must cheer one to be convinced that it still takes place in him! . . .

What a blasted artistic failure *Middlemarch* is, but what a well of wisdom! It may be a case of not seeing the forest for the trees, it may be that her "purpose" did not work out clear in her own mind, but the obscurity of the ending disappoints everybody. Her perpetual tendency to criticize and preach apropos of every detail makes you expect some rather distinct doctrine or conclusion to emerge from the ensemble, and its being sandwiched between those two St. Theresa covers,[4] still further stimulates you to look for it. . . .

I am enjoying a two weeks' respite from tuition, the boys being condemned to pass examinations, in which I luckily take no part at present. I find the work very interesting and stimulating. It presents two problems, the intellectual one — how best to state your matter to them; and the practical one — how to govern them, stir them up, not bore them, yet make them work, etc. I should think it not unpleasant as a permanent thing. The authority is at first rather flattering to one. So far, I seem to have succeeded in interesting them, for they are admirably attentive, and I hear expressions of satisfaction on their part. Whether it will go on next year can't at this hour, for many reasons, be decided.

I have done almost absolutely no visiting this winter, and seen hardly anyone or heard anything till last week, when a sort of frenzy took possession of me and I went to a symphony concert and thrice to the theatre. A most lovely English actress, young, innocent, refined, has been playing Juliet, which play I enjoyed most in-

[4] This is apparently a reference to the fact that *Middlemarch* begins and ends with allusions to Saint Theresa.

tensely, though it was at the Boston Theatre and her support almost as poor as it could have been. Neilson is she hight. I ne'er heard of her before. A rival American beauty has been playing a stinking thing of Sardou's (*Agnes*) at the Globe, which disgusted me with cleverness. Her name is Miss Ethel, and she is a lady-like but depressing phenomenon, all made up of nerves and American insubstantially. I have read hardly anything of late, some of the immortal Wordsworth's *Excursion* having been the best. I have simply shaken hands with Gray since his engagement, and have only seen Holmes twice this winter. I fear he is at last feeling the effects of his overwork. . . . No jokes, no anything to tell you. My own spirits are very good, as I have got some things rather straitened out in my mind lately, and this external responsibility and college work agree with human nature better than lonely self-culture. Adieu! Adieu! Enjoy and produce. . . . Yours,

W. J.

The answer to this letter was much belated, but should be introduced here: —

Rome, April 9, 1873

Dear William, —

I have had in hand from you for some time a letter of Feb. 13th, which gave me great pleasure on its arrival and of which I have just been refreshing my memory. . . .

The winter is at last fairly over, and I can look at it as a whole and decide that though under the circumstances I am fairly satisfied with it, I should n't care to spend another just like it. All of it that has been of pure Rome (with the exception of one point) has been delightful: but there is little left here now of which that can be said, and the mark of the fiend — the American fiend — is on everything. . . . I have seen few new people and no new types, and met not a single man, old or young, of any interest. There have been several interesting women "round." . . . At the Storys',[5] however, the other night I met and conversed for a few minutes with Matthew Arnold, whom, if I had more ingenuity, I suppose I might have managed to see more of. He is handsome

[5] The family of William Wetmore Story, the sculptor, who was at this time the centre of a circle in Rome. In 1903 Henry James published a book on *William Wetmore Story and His Friends*, which recalled these early days.

but not as handsome as his fame or his poetry and (to me) he said nothing momentous. . . . I suppose there are interesting individuals to know in Rome, but I doubt that there is any very edifying society. And I doubt that one meets interesting — generally interesting — individuals anywhere by going round and hungering for them. If you have some active prosperous speciality it introduces you to fellow-workers, and the interest of such is the one, I suppose, that wears best. . . .

Your letter was full of points of great interest. Your criticism on *Middlemarch* was excellent, and I have duly transcribed it into that *note-book* which it will be a relief to your mind to know I have at last set up. Better still was your expression of interest in your lectures, and of their good effect on you. Without flattery, I don't see how you could fail to please and stimulate your students, and hope the thing will develop and bring you larger opportunities. That your health, too, should keep pace with them is my cordial wish. Your praise of my articles was of great value. I feel, myself, that I constantly improve, and I have only now to strive and to let myself go, to prosper and improve indefinitely. So I think! I mean to spend a not-idle summer. . . . Farewell, dear Bill, I have n't said twenty things I meant, but it must serve. Ever yours,

H. J. JR.

James's teaching had turned him from morbid self-examination, and Renouvier had delivered him from the felt impotence of philosophical determinism. He had a work in the world, and he could undertake it with good heart, since he could now believe in its efficacy. Renouvier, too, had helped to draw the fangs of science so that it could be domesticated without peril to the soul's interests. James had come, in other words, to believe in the autonomy of the moral will, scientific pretensions to the contrary notwithstanding. To these saving gospels of work and will there was added the consolation of Wordsworth's *Excursion*. In 1868 James's poets of edification had been Goethe and Browning. From Goethe he had acquired a greater objectivity, and a more hospitable relish for nature — a willingness to accept nature on nature's own terms, rather than vainly to impose the standards of his own subjectivity. Browning's "Grammarian's Funeral" had "strengthened his back-

bone,"[6] had stirred him to venture "neck or nothing — heaven's success found, or earth's failure." Both Goethe and Browning were bracing tonics. Wordsworth's "Despondency Corrected" was a milder and more soothing medicine. It is certain that Wordsworth did not give James

> . . . an assured belief
> That the procession of our fate, howe'er
> Sad or disturbed, is ordered by a Being
> Of infinite benevolence and power . . .

but he taught him that a life of inner freedom and fidelity to duty might suffice,

> When youth's presumptuousness is mellowed down,
> And manhood's vain anxiety dismissed.

And there was refreshment in the poet's gentle mysticism, and in his gospel of sympathy and love, teaching the despondent soul to dwell contemplatively upon the good in nature and in man.[7] The following letter from his father to Henry presents an epitome of William's progress in mental hygiene: —

March 18 [1873][8]

My darling Harry, —

. . . Willy goes on swimmingly with his teaching. The students (fifty-seven) are elated with their luck in having such a professor, and next year he will have no doubt a larger class still, attracted by his fame. He came in here the other afternoon when I was sitting alone, and after walking the floor in an animated way for a moment, exclaimed "Dear me! What a difference there is between me now and me last spring this time: then so hypochondriacal" (he used that word, though perhaps in substantive form) "and now feeling my mind so cleared up and restored to sanity. It is the difference between death and life." He had a great effusion. I was afraid of interfering with it, or possibly checking it, but I ventured to ask what specially in his opinion had promoted the change. He said several things: the reading of Renouvier (specially his vindication of the freedom of the will) and Wordsworth, whom he has been feeding upon now for a good while; but especially his having

[6] *Cf. L.W.J.*, I, 129.
[7] Morley's edition of Wordsworth, *Complete Poetical Works*, 452–69.
[8] Published in part in *N.S.B.*, 264, and *L.W.J.*, I, 169–70.

given up the notion that all mental disorder required to have a physical basis. This had become perfectly untrue to him. He saw that the mind did act irrespectively of material coercion, and could be dealt with therefore at first-hand, and this was health to his bones. It was a splendid confession, and though I knew the change had taken place, from unerring signs, I never was more delighted than to hear it from his own lips so unreservedly. He has been shaking off his respect for men of mere science as such, and is even more universal and impartial in his mental judgments than I have ever known him before.

We dine the Childs on Thursday with E. P. Bradford, and will drink your health. We hear that Emerson's memory is failing him so fast that he can hardly write a letter. Edward tells Willy this. I hope it is not so bad as it sounds. Good-bye, my lovely Harry. Words can't tell how dear you are to my heart; how proud I am of your goodness and truth; of what Mr. Arnold calls your "sweet reasonableness." Truly I am a happy and grateful father at every remembrance of you. Yours ever lovingly,

[H. J.]

When, a few weeks later, Eliot offered James a renewal of his appointment in biology, with a prospect of permanence, his first impulse was to decline it, lest he be alienated from "mental science": —

Cambridge, April 6, 1873

My dear Harry, —

I take up my pen once more after this long interval to converse with my in many respects twin brother. We have not heard from you in a fortnight and eagerly expect a letter today, describing new sensual delights and luxuries in which your body and soul shall have alike been wallowing. Alice and I keep up a rather constant fire of *badinage,* etc., of which you furnish the material; she never speaking of you except as "that angel" — and I sarcastically calling you the "angel-hero-martyr." Usually towards bedtime I wander into the parlor where the three are sitting and say "I suppose that angel is now in such and such an attitude," drawing on my imagination for something very "oriental," to which Alice generally finds no better reply than a tirade upon the petty jealousies of *men.* Long

may you have the power of enjoying what luxuries you can get! . . .

I have just got through three months of tuition, and have four weeks' holiday before taking them up again for a final month. It has turned out a solider job than I anticipated, both in respect of the effort it has taken to put it through, and in respect of the information I have imparted. Altogether I look back on it with some satisfaction, while feeling all the time how much better and easier I could do it another year. Whether I shall be asked to is doubtful. Eliot offered me the other day the whole department (*i.e.*, this physiology plus Dwight's anatomy) for next year. But I told him I had resolved to fight it out in the line of mental science, and with such arrears of lost time behind me and such curtailed power of work now, could not afford to make such an expedition into anatomy. It cost me some perplexity to make the decision, for had I accepted, it might easily grow into a permanent biological appointment, to succeed Wyman, perhaps, — and that study, though less native to my taste, has many things in its favor. But I am satisfied the decision I made was a wise one, and I shall bide my time, they looking for some one man to take the work that Dwight and I have shared between us. I have done enough now to show me that the duty of teaching comes kindly to me, and that I probably should become a good instructor with practice. From what I hear reported the boys have been satisfied so far.

Another event for us has been the reception of a proof (minus the first three or four pages) of your article on Gautier.[9] It is admirable, delightful, as good as Gautier himself at his best; and when one considers that it was written impromptu, *i.e.*, from memory, it shows after all that the power one contains in his skin at a given moment does accumulate insensibly by years and experience. When one sees you doing that sort of thing so well, it makes one curse every day that passes without your trying your hand on Turgenev, Balzac, George Sand, Dumas *fils* and others. Collected, they would make a standard book. You must come to it some day, for no talent can escape its destiny. And my dying words to you are, therefore: Keep that in mind as one of your ends, and take notes with reference to it as you read. The book would be *d'autant plus* valuable if a string of generalization about the French character went through it, that is, if the special studies were but chapters

[9] "Théâtre de Théophile Gautier," *North Amer. Rev.*, April 1873.

of a general study of the French mind in certain of its aspects. I have been, or rather still am, reading a very vigorous and important book, *Frankreich und die Franzosen* by Hillebrand, which has stirred me up a good deal. I 'd give much to talk it over with you in the light of your recent experience. He, though seeing wondrously into the French mind, is yet so little sympathetic with it, *condemns* it so from the thoroughly German *Weltanschauung* in which, plunged to the armpits, he rests gleefully planted, that it arouses a spirit of antagonism in one. . . . The man's soul is not nearly so cosmopolitan as his intellect. . . .

I have been cut off this winter from the men with whom I used to gossip on *generalities,* Holmes, Putnam, Peirce, Shaler [10] and John Gray, and last, not least, yourself. I rather hanker after it, Bowditch being almost the only man I have seen anything of this winter, and that at his laboratory. . . . Child and I have struck up quite an intimacy. The poor man is stifled. . . . He wants fearfully to go abroad this summer, both for his health and for his ballads, of which a new edition is to be published, but he can't raise the money. I wish I could give it to him, for with all his intellectual shortcomings *er ist und bleibt* the cleanest and best man I know. . . . T. S. P. is my only surviving crony. He dines pretty regularly once a week here, and is acquiring something of the amplitude and settled calmness of middle life. His work and life perfectly suit him now. His review will be published tomorrow and a copy shall be mailed to you forthwith. The notice of *Middlemarch* is by him, he sweat more *ober* it and expresses himself less satisfied with it than he has ever done before, — so I 'm curious to see it. . . . . Henry Higginson goes as "Commissioner" to Vienna. . . . Father has just slung a very readable article for Howells, in the form of a review of a book of spiritualism.[11] Ever your affectionate

W. J.

[10] Dr. James J. Putnam, afterwards professor of the diseases of the nervous system at Harvard; and Nathaniel S. Shaler, professor of paleontology, and afterwards dean of the Lawrence Scientific School.

[11] Thomas Sergeant Perry's review of *Middlemarch* appeared in the *North Amer. Rev.* for April 1873. Major Henry L. Higginson was a member of the Commission appointed under the chairmanship of Charles Francis Adams to report on the Vienna Exposition. H.J."s article on spiritualism was written apropos of M. J. Williamson's *Modern Diabolism* (1873), but was a very free handling of the subject, in which the so-called "spiritualistic" phenomena are treated as only morbid or pathological manifestations of the true spirituality. The article appeared in the *Atlantic,* XXXII (1873).

As to the teaching of biology, James soon changed his mind, recording this important decision in his diary for April 10, and communicating it to his brother a month later. It was not that his passion for philosophy had abated, but that he distrusted his power to sustain it, and feared its effect upon his health: —

"Yesterday I told Eliot I would accept the anatomical instruction for next year, if well enough to perform it, and would probably stick to that department. I came to this decision mainly from the feeling that philosophical activity as a *business* is not normal for most men, and not for me. To be responsible for a complete conception of things is beyond my strength. To make the *form* of all possible thought the prevailing *matter* of one's thought breeds hypochondria. Of course my deepest interest will as ever lie with the most general problems. But as my strongest moral and intellectual craving is for some stable reality to lean upon, and as a professed philosopher pledges himself publicly never to have done with doubt on these subjects, but every day to be ready to criticize afresh and call in question the grounds of his faith of the day before, I fear the constant sense of instability generated by this attitude would be more than the voluntary faith I can keep going is sufficient to neutralize. . . . That gets reality for us in which we place our responsibility, and the concrete facts in which a biologist's responsibilities lie form a fixed basis from which to aspire as much as he pleases to the mastery of the universal questions when the gallant mood is on him; and a basis, too, upon which he can passively float, and tide over times of weakness and depression, trusting all the while blindly in the beneficence of nature's forces and the return of higher opportunities. A 'philosopher' has publicly renounced the privilege of trusting *blindly,* which every simple man owns as a right — and my sight is not always clear enough for such constant duty. Of course one may say, you could make of psychology proper just such a basis; but not so, you can't divorce psychology from introspection, and immense as is the work demanded by its purely objective physiologic part, yet it is the other part rather for which a professor thereof is expected to make himself publicly responsible.

"It is not necessary to attack the universal problems directly, and as such, in their abstract form. We work at their solution in every way, — by living and by solving minor concrete questions, as they

are involved in everything. The method of nature is patience, and that easy sitting faith, not tense strung, but smiling and with a dash of scepticism in it, which is not in despair at postponing a solution, which Goethe showed in his feeling about philosophy and nature, is no ignoble attitude, and perhaps belongs to a mode of taking life ampler and of longer reach of promise, than the hot imperious tragic way of attack. The ends of nature are all attained through means — perhaps the soundest way of recovering them is by tracking them through all the means." [12]

Cambridge, May 11, 1873

My dear Harry, —

I was delighted to get your letter of April 9th, which, despite your complaints of sleepiness and inability to do work, seemed to reveal a great physical *bien être,* — I hope not untruthfully. I am only sorry you should say that you have not met a single man of any account during the winter. I am afraid of an exclusive diet of women. . . . You miss chances in the book reviewing line by being out of the country; *e.g.,* Pater's *Studies in the Renaissance,* and Morley's *Rousseau.* Do you see the *Fortnightly Review* in Rome? If so, you will have read a big little article by Morley on Pater, whose book Alice has been reading and pronounces exquisite. Morley's self, I 'm sorry to say, has chosen the worser of the two paths that a while ago seemed open to him. He has grown more and more lavish and gushing in style and French in idiom, instead of more clean and chaste — more emotional instead of more rational; and I doubt not will develop a thoroughgoing mannerism in ten years, which one will be able to quarrel with no one for physiologically loathing. . . .

By the way, I believe I told you in my last that I had determined to stick to psychology or die. I have changed my mind, and for the present give myself to biology, *i.e.,* accept the tuition here for next year with its six hundred dollars; and this is virtually tantamount to my clinging to those subjects for the next ten or twelve years, if I linger so long. On the whole this is the wiser, if the tamer decision. The fact is, I 'm not a strong enough man to choose the other and nobler lot in life, but I can in a less penetrating way work out a philosophy in the midst of the other duties. It 's a pity you have

[12] *Cf.* also *L.W.J.,* I, 170–1.

stopped your *Nation* letters entirely. I 've heard a great many people lately say how much they had been delighted by them. Ever yours affectionately,

WM. JAMES

The following letter is a reply to William's of April 6, but the writer had heard through other channels the news of the latest decision: —

Perugia, May 19 [1873]

Dearest William, —

. . . Looking over your letter, I perceive your adjuration to prepare articles, etc., on the French, George Sand, Balzac, etc. I may come to it, some day, but there are various things I want to do first. Just at present I shall write a few more notes of travel, for two reasons: first, that a few more joined with those already published and written will make a decent little volume; and second, that now or never (I think) is my time. The *keen* love and observation of the picturesque is ebbing away from me as I grow older, and I doubt whether a year or two hence I shall have it in me to describe houses and mountains, or even cathedrals and pictures. I don't know whether I shall do anything better, but I shall have been spoiled for this. The real, natural time, — if I *could,* would have been when I was abroad before. Mysterious and incontrollable (even to one's self) is the growth of one's mind. Little by little, I trust, my abilities will catch up with my ambitions.

I am glad to hear you have decided on the physiology and anatomy place for next year. Father mentioned it in a letter received about the same time with Alice's. . . . I hope you will go on from success to success. But I shall be interested to hear how you have compromised with the desire to give time and strength to other things. Your account of Child and his tribulations was very touching. The poor little man looms up to me like a perfect Colossus of domestic heroism. . . . Love, love, love. Yours ever,

H. JAMES JR.

Despite James's improvement in mind he had not yet acquired sufficient bodily endurance to bear the strain of continuous teaching. The end of May finds him again plunged into doubt, and thinking

of another trip to Europe. But this time there is a note of hopefulness even in his discouragement. He feels convinced that health is more nearly within his grasp, and that a period of recuperation may free him permanently from his chronic invalidism. The vocational alternatives, too, have now been narrowed to several concrete possibilities, for any of which he feels himself competent, health permitting.

Cambridge, May 25, 1873

My dear Harry, —

Your letter to Alice after your return to Rome . . . arrived about a week ago, and was received with the usual enthusiasm and *attendrissement* on Alice's part. I take up the pen today mainly on a matter of business, that is, to get at as early a date as possible certain *renseignements* which may affect my choice of how to spend next winter. This is my situation: I have succeeded in doing my college work this half-year without losing ground, so far as I know, in health, but also without gaining an inch. . . . The college work, although as so much business it has been of great moral service to me, is, I am convinced, a drawback on the rate of my wished-for improvement. I get utterly collapsed and exhausted with the experimental preparations, and the regular tri-weekly recurrence of the feverish sort of erethism in which the lecture or recitation hour leaves me, cannot be good for one whose trouble seems mainly to be a nervous weakness, and who craves for sedation all the while. I told Eliot some time ago in accepting the place for the whole of next year, that the acceptance was subject to the right to back out by the middle of August if I feel so inclined. Of course my deep active desire is to go on working uninterruptedly now that, after all this delay, I have begun. . . . But lo! so easy and attractive has the study proved to the already too large division of forty-five students that have taken it this year, that it seems certain that about one hundred will elect it for next year. To make two divisions and double my working hours is simply impossible. The only alternatives are: to back out, and, letting Dwight take them for next year, hope that I shall be *gewachsen* to the task for the year following; or else to implore that on a plea of the teacher's invalidism my students be forcibly pruned down to a manageable number. . . . The former alternative commends itself to me as part of a plan for

which I would ask your advice: namely, to advertise for a pupil or ward to pay my traveling expenses . . . and spend the winter six months in Italy or elsewhere in the south of Europe with you. This would give me a sedative, mild winter, one which I think now might make a good deal of difference in my progress; it would deprive me of the ever-recurring strain and fever of lecturing, and the great fret of pressing against and always overstepping my working powers, which during the past six months has so unstrung me; it would also in a scientific point of view not be so very bad, since I could carry on with advantage a certain line of study there which I should someday have to do, and might as well then as ever; and the appeal to the senses, and so forth, would prevent my postponement of "business" from affecting my spirits as unpleasantly as would be the case were the winter so spent in Cambridge. . . . This is the point I want you to answer; from your experience of killing time in Rome and elsewhere, should you think the experiment would be a safe one for a man in my state to try? Your being there and with me (if you are willing) would of course help it through amazingly. Answer as soon as you can, so as to let me have the datum to help my decision. I confess it 's not an easy one to make anyhow. On the one hand the everlasting postponement of active life, on the other the reality of my sickness, and the misery of being ever knocked back by it from the work I burn to do from each day to the morrow. . . .

Your story in the *Galaxy*[18] has been published, and read by me, without, I must say, the delight I have so often got from your things. Ever yours affect'ly,

WM. JAMES

Florence, May 31 [1873]

Dear William, —

I got this morning with pleasure your note of May 11th . . . a voice (unheard by me for many months in the profitless society which is the dark feature of one's expatriation here) from the world of serious things. There seems something half-tragic in the tone with which you speak of having averted yourself from psychology. But I hope you have settled down calmly to it, and will have no irritating regrets. You know best, and one must do not what one

[18] "The Sweetheart of M. Briseux."

plans, but what one can. For the chance I miss to review books by moving about, I suppose there is something in it: but not over much, for I am struggling through long delay to get at something better than book reviewing. Mine is a slow progression, but a progression, I believe, it is. I saw Pater's *Studies* just after getting your letter, in the English bookseller's window: and was inflamed to think of buying it and trying a notice. But I see it treats of several things I know nothing about. . . .

I have been strolling about gently and looking at Florence, but finding in her I blush to say how little of her old magic. Rome has murdered her, — Rome a hundred times more wondrous in retrospect. Her great smiting hands have snapt the tender cords of perception to which Florence appeals. I should vainly try to tell you how one looks back on Rome and hungers for her again. . . . My blessings, dear brother, on all your renunciations and undertakings. Love to all. Yours ever,

H. JAMES JR.

On June 18 Henry replied from Glion to his brother's request for advice, and recommended Rome for its "sedative climate," its social distractions, and as "peculiarly adapted to help one get through time." He offered eagerly to join him there if he would come. But first William James enjoyed an American vacation, and experienced in the presence of nature the characteristic exaltation described in the following letters to his mother and brother: —

Magnolia [July 8, 1873]

My dearest Mar, —

. . . I never experienced in five days such a change of feelings as in the last five. The benefits of this place culminated yesterday in a sort of afternoon of rapture. It was a magnificent thought to leave my work behind me for three weeks, as I then no doubt will take it up with appetite, and its presence here now would, I know, have spoiled all the splendor of this careless and free attitude of mind. I have spent all my mornings and afternoons except yesterday morning alone in the woods, fields, and rocks, with the breath of the woods in my lungs, the smell of the laurels in my nose, the surf pounding rhythmically upon my ear, and the beautiful wash of light before my eyes. It takes all the wrinkles and puckers out of you and

washes you whole again, filling you with courage, and independence of what may happen in the future — whereas your ordinary working-day consciousness is all sicklied o'er with fretful solicitudes and apprehensions. I don't see how men can live without a month in the year of this normal life — for taking mankind as a whole the open-air existence, from day to day, has been the normal life, and the liking and need of it has deep roots in our nature. . . .

I shall write to Child, backing out of Mt. Desert. I shrink more and more from the human babel there. Adieu. Yours ever,

W. J.

Isles of Shoals, July 14–16 [1873]

Dear Harry, —

It occurs to me as I wait, this July 14, six P.M., on board the little steamer *Major* going to the Isles of Shoals, for her to start, that I may as well begin a letter to you in pencil, and be so much advanced on my way towards finishing that impending task. I left home four hours ago, where I had spent three days with Father and Mother after my visit to the coast at Magnolia, and am now off again till August, proposing to touch at various points. Today Father got your second from Berne, I getting at Magnolia your answer to my prudential inquiry. Your account of Rome was more satisfactory than anything I anticipated. I earnestly hope, however, not to have to verify it next winter, as such a step would be about equivalent to desperation of any continuous professional development, and would leave my future quite adrift again. I shall let July and August shape my decision, and bear whatever comes with as equal a mind as I can. What weighs on me perhaps as much as anything now is the ignominy of my parasitic life on the family, in view of the sweating existence of Bob and Wilky and their need of money as married men. Every hundred dollars I take or don't earn is so much less that Father can give them. The only thing with me now is my health; my ideas, my plans of study, are all straightened out. But I have no clue to the future of my strength, nor can I be *sure* what course is safest for that. I alternate between fits, lasting from four or five days to three weeks, of the most extreme languor and depression, weakness of body and head and pain in back — during which, however, I sleep well — and fits of

equally uneven duration of great exhilaration of spirits, restlessness, comparative bodily and mental activity — coupled, however, with wakefulness of the most distressing sort. . . .

Next day, noon. The far-famed Isles of Shoals are absolutely barren rocks with a great and first-class hotel on two of them. This one, Appledore, the biggest, may be walked round in half an hour. I performed the feat after breakfast . . . but the place does not yet tempt me to settle upon it for a long time. . . . I have enjoyed the vacation intensely so far. I got to Magnolia feeling pretty seedy. After five days there I had revived the spirits I used to possess at Newport. I did not know such a deep revulsion of mind was possible in so short a time. *Von allen Wissensqualm entladen,* I just lay around drinking the air and the light and the sounds. I succeeded in reading no word for three days, and then took Goethe's *Gedichte* out on my walks, and with them in my memory, the smell of the laurels and pines in my nose, and the rhythmic pounding of the surf upon my ear, I was free and happy again. How people can pass years without a week of that *normal* life I can't imagine, — life in which your cares, responsibilities and thoughts for the morrow become a far-off dream, and you are, simply, floating on from day to day, and "boarded" you don't know how, by what Providence, — washed clean, without and within, by the light and the tender air. It ought to do me good. Unluckily I can only enjoy its plenitude for ten days more. I must then do a little daily task of study, as I have to deliver about thirty new lectures next year and have hardly yet made a stroke of preparation. No joke! . . .

Another night — good sleep, and another shining day. The world recedes; and I can begin to understand Mrs. Celia Thaxter's ravings about the beauty of these rocks. Yesterday afternoon I took a long sail with a fresh breeze which quite recalled the Newport days ten years ago, as I sailed the boat myself. I will close this letter here — you perceive I have not *multa* to say. I have read nothing of late except a few of Goethe's poems which make me feel like living entirely on poetry for the rest of my days. . . . Goodbye! Perhaps, in case I should go abroad, you had better send me a list of books or other furniture you would like me to bring you. Affectionately yours,

WM. JAMES

When July and August had "shaped his decision," James found himself destined to join his brother in Europe. "The die is cast!" he wrote in September. "The six hundred dollars' salary falls into the pocket of another! And for a year I am adrift again and free. I feel the solemnity of the moment, and that I *must* get well now or give up. It seems as if I should, too . . . so you may expect me to rejoin you about November 1." He secured passage in October on the *S. S. Spain,* landed at Queenstown, and proceeded at once to Florence with only hurried glimpses of London and Paris. From Florence he wrote as follows to one of his younger brothers at home: —

Florence, Nov. 16, 1873

My dear Wilkie, —

. . . At present Harry is my spouse. I have been here with him boarding in a hotel, for two and a half weeks. I was disappointed at finding him not so completely well as I had hoped; but he seems well enough to work hard, and that seems now to be the only thing he lives for. I don't know whether he can ever be got to return home and take a position of literary drudgery, editorial or other. I am sure that some kind of drudgery with a daily external responsibility that is *done* when 't is done, and gives one no care till tomorrow comes again, is the healthiest thing for a man; and would suit his spirits better than pure literary production. But, on the other hand, he could only do it at home, and his temperament is so exclusively artistic that the vacuous, simple atmosphere of America ends by tiring him to death. So I don't know how it will turn out.

I find Florence a delightful place. One has to grow up to Europe again when he comes, just as if he 'd never been here before. For ten days after my arrival I was so disgusted with the swarming and reeking blackness of the streets and the age of everything, that enjoyment all took place under protest, as it were. But I 've left all that behind me, and can take the picturesque now without any moral afterthought. It is easier in Italy than elsewhere because of the cheerfulness and contented manners of the common people. They don't take life anything like as hard as we do, and suffer privation without being made desperate by it as we are. My old love of art returns, but not in its full force. The years have weakened it, I am afraid. There is enough for it to feed on, though, in this small

town, — which is crowded with the rarest treasures. . . . Ever yours,

W. J.

The "revival of his old love of art" took effect in much reading, observing, and pondering. A notebook of this period contains the following entries, dated November 20, 1873: —

"Why does a school of art retrograde into mannerism, etc., as soon as it ceases to advance? Because a *new* thing has salt by virtue of its mere novelty; and the qualities a painter first discovers can be treated by him with perfect sobriety and dignity, and yet not lose the sting of interest? While the lesson when familiar is insipid unless spiced by emphasis, or exaggeration of the expression in some way? Yet all new discoverers in art are not sober (Correggio and Michel Angelo). Rembrandt can't be called sober, for no follower of his can probably be more of a mannerist than his master was. Andrea del Sarto seems the best example of what I had in mind when I wrote the above, or Giotto and Fra Angelico. Their simplicity is of the true antique kind.

"Saw, today, a tomb by Dupré in Santa Maria Novella; very beautiful, especially the second female figure, which is however inspired by Michel Angelo, — nevertheless pure *beauty*. This figure and the wreath of angels in Botticelli's "Assumption" have for the moment *stung* me more than anything I have seen. The question whether great art be a thing of the past all whose essential categories, having been discovered and filled once in their flush of freshness, can never be so well filled again, may be answered by distinguishing between art as the beautiful and as the interesting. Perhaps in a headlong pressure towards the beautiful, as worthy things as ever may be struck out. For beauty admits of great, and very likely inexhaustible, individualization (Michel Angelo again). Mannerists as such usually have sought the interesting.

"I am sure that an age will come when our present devotion to history, and scrupulous care for what men have done before us merely as fact, will seem incomprehensible; when acquaintance with books will be no duty, but a pleasure for odd individuals; when Emerson's philosophy will be in our bones, not our dramatic imaginations."

On November 28, accompanied by his brother, James went from

Florence to Rome, where he experienced a mixture of awe and repugnance — expressing it all most vehemently in a letter with which we are already familiar.[14] While impressed by the splendor of Rome and its rich antiquity, he felt a strong moral revulsion to its decay, its paganism, and its traditionalism, a moral revulsion which he thought his father alone could adequately voice. That the fascination of Rome grew upon him, however, is indicated by a letter which his brother wrote home a few weeks later: —

Rome, Dec. 22, 1873

Dear Father, —

. . . Willy will have written you about himself and given you, I hope, as good accounts of his progress as he daily gives me, and as his whole appearance and daily exploits testify to so eloquently. He seems greatly contented with his condition and is sensible of its growing constantly better. He has just been into my room, flushed with health and strength, to see whether I had found any letters at the bankers this morning and to ask where he should go today. Seeing me writing, he says, — "Give them my love and tell them I am doing splendidly." He does in fact, a great deal, and walks, climbs Roman staircases, and sees sights in a way most satisfactory to behold. It has been a measureless blessing that the weather, ever since our arrival in Rome, has been the finest, on the whole, I ever saw — as brilliant and clear and still as our finest Octobers and yet even milder than our mildest autumns. The last day or two has [brought] some gray skies and soft sirocco; but it is still winter with all the edge melted off — still delicious out-of-door weather. . . .

I don't know that I have any more news for you, or any to add to what I said about Willy, — which on reading it over does n't seem to me at all too *couleur de rose.* Certainly, a man could n't look better — and what he distinctly says of himself quite justifies his looks. He got, some days since, a charming letter from John Fiske whom we may meet later in Florence. Lowell is there now, I believe, but unlikely to come to Rome. Story, last evening, was in despair at not being able to produce him in the world. Willy, who at first hung fire over Rome, has now quite ignited, and confesses to its sovereign influence. But he enjoys all the melancholy of an-

[14] *Cf.* above, 162.

tiquity under a constant protest, which pleases me as a symptom of growing optimism and elasticity in his own disposition. His talk, as you may imagine, on all things, is most rich and vivacious. My own more sluggish perceptions can hardly keep pace with it. Ever, dear Father, with love to all, your loving

H. J.

Compelled by an attack of malarial fever to leave Rome at the end of December, William returned to Florence, his brother following later. Then in February the former began his homeward journey, going first to Venice, whence he addressed the following to his sister: —

Feb. 13, 1874

Beloved Beautlet, —

. . . I bade good-bye to Florence three days ago with many a sting of regret, for I had hardly done it justice in the past month, the sickness of the "angel" and my being out of sorts myself had made me unfit for my opportunities. But Venice has put me on my sight-seeing feet again. Three days have I gondoled and picture-gazed, under a cloudless sky, but a neager and a nipping air — especially in the Academy, where the poor custodians have a cold time of it. Such glory of painting and such actual decay, I never saw. This afternoon I mounted the Campanile and got a view which explained to me much of Venetian art — *i.e.,* the light as one of the *dramatis personæ.* While the gondola . . . makes one understand how figures seen from below against the sky . . . came so natural to them. . . .

Altogether my visit is a great success. . . . Tomorrow to Munich stopping six hours in Verona. At Dresden I must decide whether to return in March or not, a hard step. . . . *Addio,* sweet babe. Ever your loving

Wm.

In March James sailed for home from Bremen, having visited the "Tweedies" in Dresden. The following letter to his brother Robertson is characteristic of his *usual* state of mind just after returning from Europe.

Cambridge, March 29 [1874]

My dear old Bob, —

. . . I fit into my old place here just as if there had been no break. At first things looked rather bare and mean after the teeming pic-

turesqueness that I had been steeped in, and I don't think I shall care to go again to Europe soon, as it upsets one's content with the small scale of passive delights which he has learned to use and enjoy here. *Your* scale must be still smaller, but I think one can learn the secrets anywhere, and end by getting as deep a satisfaction out of a new wooden paling in the place where one belongs, as out of a picture-gallery abroad. Before I left I was beginning to take a new delight in things here — helped thereto, I think, by reading Wordsworth's *Excursion* — and now I 'll have toilsomely to struggle back to that point of view. . . . Yours ever,

W. J.

Cambridge, April 18, 1874

Dear Harry, —

. . . Any gossip about Florence you can still communicate will be greedily sucked in by me, who feel towards it as I do towards the old Albany of our childhood, with afternoon shadows of trees, etc. Not but that I am happy here, — more so than I ever was there, because I 'm in a permanent path, and it shows me how for our type of character the thought of the *whole* dominates the particular moments. All my moments here are inferior to those in Italy, but they are parts of a long plan which is good, so they content me more than the Italian ones which only existed for themselves. I have been feeling uncommonly strong for almost three weeks . . . and done a good deal of work in Bowditch's laboratory. . . . I went yesterday to dine with Mrs. Tappan and did not get out till midnight through the snow storm. She lives on Beacon Street looking down Dartmouth, and Emerson and Ellen, Dr. Holmes, and Miss Georgiana Putnam[15] were the guests. None oped the mouth save Holmes, at table. Emerson looks in magnificent health, but the refined idiocy of his manner seems as if it must be affectation. . . . I confess that we seem a poor lot on the whole. My short stay abroad has given me quite a new sense of what you used to call the provinciality of Boston, but that is no harm. What displeases me is the want of stoutness and squareness in the people, their ultra quietness, prudence, slyness, intellectualness of gait. Not that their intellects amount to anything, either. You will be discouraged, I remain happy!

[15] Georgiana Lowell Putnam was the daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Samuel Raymond Putnam, and niece of James Russell Lowell.

But this brings me to the subject of your return, of which I have thought much. It is evident that you will have to eat your bread in sorrow for a time here; it is equally evident that time . . . will prove a remedy for a great deal of the trouble, and you will attune your at present coarse senses to snatch a fearful joy from wooden fences and commercial faces, a joy the more thrilling for being so subtly extracted. Are you ready to make the heroic effort? . . . This is your dilemma: The congeniality of Europe, on the one hand, plus the difficulty of making an entire living out of original writing, and its abnormality as a matter of mental hygiene . . . on the other hand, the dreariness of American conditions of life plus a mechanical, routine occupation possibly to be obtained, which from day to day is *done* when 't is done, mixed up with the writing into which you distil your essence. . . . In short, don't come unless with a *resolute* intention. If you come, your worst years will be the first. If you stay, the bad years may be the later ones, when, moreover, you can't change. And I have a suspicion that if you come, too, and *can* get once acclimated, the quality of what you write will be higher than it would be in Europe. . . . It seems to me a very critical moment in your history. But you have several months to decide. Good-bye.

[W. J.]

Cambridge, Sept. 20, 1874 [16]

My dear Bob, —

I received your letter some time since and read it with much pleasure. I can't say that I altogether congratulate you on having become a householder at Prairie du Chien, as it seems prophetic of a prolonged stay there, and from all you say of the place I do not think that is a consummation to be devoutly wished by you or anyone else. But I 'm glad you, so long as you are there, are contented enough not to seem to worry for a change. I don't know, however, what you may do inwardly. Next June I trust to know better, for I think there is little doubt that I shall then be your guest.

We are established for the winter, Harry very well indeed and seeming glad to be back. The only event that has happened of any interest is the marriage of Edward Emerson and Miss Keyes yester-

[16] A similar letter of this period with impressions of the Emerson family will be found in *Alice James. Her Brothers. Her Journal,* 19–20. "Bob" had married Mary Holton in 1872 and was at this time living in Prairie du Chien, Wis.

day at the Keyes' house. I went up with half a car load of people from town, — the Forbes crowd, and various other relatives. The day was warm, drizzly and dripping, bringing out the moist green of the country beautifully. The wedding was a delightful thing, being, with the exception of Aunt Kate's and Wendell Holmes's — which latter took place in a church — the first I ever attended. All my friends have been so high-toned of late, T. S. Perry, Ellen Gurney, John La Farge, Clover Adams, etc., as to get married in secret, so that no mortal eye should profane the ceremony, and I had passively accepted that as the only fitting way for a person of "culture" who respected himself. But the affair of yesterday entirely opened my eyes and when I get married I shall have a cheerful sociable crowd round me. The crowd there all had the worthy, reliable, Concord look — all called each other by their first names, and you felt that the men and especially the woman standing next you, though you did not know them, were people worthy of your esteem. Tom Ward was there, and the famous Miss Lizzie Simmons who is very good looking; the Bartlett family looking all like baked apples; and old Mr. Emerson more gaunt and lop-sided than ever; Mr. Sanborn, who supported himself by leaning his hand against the ceiling and who sent his regards to you and Wilky. All the people seem to remember you, for more asked about you than I can now remember, — Miss Elizabeth Hoar, for example, and Mrs. Simmons. Ellen Emerson looked beautiful in a white dress and lilac crape shawl, and Edith Forbes was there sumptuously attired, with three magnificent looking children. The person that pleased me most was Malcolm Forbes's young wife, who is as pretty faced and voiced as she can be, and a very bright little talker. Edward looked and behaved very well, while Miss Keyes, who had just recovered from a sharp illness, looked a little too bony and had two bright crimson spots on her cheek bones.[17] Will Forbes has asked me to Naushon for a few days at the end of the week. Edward and his bride will be there, and they will have a deer hunt. I will write to Wilky about it.

[17] The bride was Miss Annie Shepard Keyes, daughter of Judge John S. Keyes. Dr. Josiah Bartlett was the well-known Concord physician. Miss Elizabeth Hoar, sister of Judge Ebenezer R. Hoar, had been engaged to Charles Emerson, who died a few months before the marriage was to take place. Mrs. George Francis Simmons was formerly Miss Mary Ripley of Concord and Miss Lizzie Simmons was her daughter. Mr. Sanborn was the well-known Frank B. Sanborn whose school the younger James boys had attended. Mrs. John Malcolm Forbes was the former Miss Sarah Jones.

Today I went on my regular Sunday morning visit to the Sedgwicks and dined with the Bootts off roast beef and potatoes baked in the drippings of the joint under the beef, a mode of cooking them which I earnestly recommend to Mary as a means of securing forever your affection. I am glad to hear such good accounts of your baby, and only hope that the half promise you made in the spring of getting on here this winter will be kept. It will be a great disappointment to us if it is not. A few of the photographs Harry brought home would interest you.

I see Tilton is out with a new "statement" which Heaven forbid that I should read. Between the supposition of a villainy more fiendish than that of Iago and Richard III rolled into one on the part of Moulton,[18] or of a cheek and brazen genius for hypocrisy on Beecher's part almost as incredible, it seems hard to choose. Either horn of the dilemma is an improbability.

Cambridge is washing up and preparing for the winter's work, and I with it. I hope and expect it will sit lightly on me if I take it easy, which is perhaps hard to do. How are your eyes now? Give my best love to Mary and a kiss to the *brat* and believe me, dear Bob, always your loving

W. J.

[18] In the famous Tilton-Beecher dispute Francis D. Moulton played the rôle of "mutual friend."

XXI

ESTABLISHED IN LIFE

In 1874–1875 James resumed his teaching, this time in full charge of "Natural History 3," on "The Comparative Anatomy and Physiology of Vertebrates," which he continued to give for five consecutive years. After Jeffries Wyman's death in 1874 James temporarily succeeded to the direction of both the laboratory and the Museum of Comparative Anatomy, which the former had established in Boylston Hall and in the Peabody Museum of American Archæology and Ethnology.[1] From Boylston Hall James was ousted by the chemists in 1875. I am indebted to Professor Charles Loring Jackson for the following account of a visit which James made to that building during the autumn, apparently to remove supplies that he had left behind: "His call on us must have been at the beginning of '75–6, as he stayed half an hour, and if I had got started on my benzyl work (a month after the beginning) he could not have stayed five minutes. I had just returned from two years in Europe, and, talking of my work, I said that once when I was working with amyl nitrite in Berlin an Englishman who was also in the loggia began singing and laughing as though he were drunk. By the evening I was in the same state. James was immensely interested and asked to try some of it. At first he very properly held the bottle at a distance, and waved the vapor toward himself; but when to his continual questions, 'Is my face flushing?' we answered 'No,' he at last put it against his nose and took a good sniff. Then he felt blindly for the table, put the bottle on it and said, 'O! how queer I feel!' took up two battery-jars full of alcohol (two quarts if I remember) and started across the Yard." It seems that James arrived safely at his destination, which was presumably the Museum of Comparative Zoölogy on Oxford Street.

In this autumn of 1875 James announced a graduate course on

[1] *Cf. The Harvard Book*, 1875, I, 127.

"The Relations between Physiology and Psychology," and a similar course for undergraduates was introduced the next year. With his promotion to an assistant professorship in 1876, he was established professionally. The changes in the content of instruction, and his transfer to the department of philosophy, belong to the history of his thought rather than to the history of his education.

Though his health, like his occupation, was now stabilized, he continued for several years to suffer at intervals from excessive fatigue, and was frequently denied the use of his eyes. He was never rugged, and was perpetually led by his ardent temperament to put too great a strain upon his bodily and nervous organization. But from 1875 until 1899 his health ceased to be a central consideration, and he was able to carry a load of work which many a normal man would have regarded as excessive.

Henry's career was definitely inaugurated almost simultaneously with his brother's. His first long novel, *Roderick Hudson,* was begun in Florence in 1874. He returned to Cambridge in the autumn of that year to settle the momentous question of his permanent residence, while *Roderick Hudson* was appearing in installments in the *Atlantic Monthly.*[2] The great decision having been made in favor of Europe, he repaired thither in the fall of 1875, not to return to America for six years. The correspondence between the brothers was thus resumed: —

Cambridge, Nov. 14, 1875

My dear Harry, —

My busyness at the Museum has begun to slacken a little of late owing to my decision not to sweat so hard at making osteological preparations which after all are to go before long to another man's professorship. I have never felt so well and have never on the whole been so busy as since your departure, though I 've read absolutely nothing of a "general" sort. We have had another club dinner[3] (at the Union Club this time) fuller and pleasanter than the last, though I confess I fear the thing is hopelessly swamped in its buttoned-up Boston respectable character. I was more struck

[2] The trials of an author residing abroad, where he had no chance to read his own proofs, are illustrated by the misadventure with his letter to the *Nation* from Pisa, in which "idle vistas and melancholy nooks" appeared as "idle sisters and melancholy monks." *Cf.* letter of H.J.[2] to W.J., June 13 [1874].

[3] "The Club" here alluded to comprised, besides his brother, a number of James's most intimate friends, such as O. W. Holmes, Jr., John C. Gray, Henry L. Higginson, Henry Adams, and T. S. Perry. *Cf. L.W.J.,* II, 9–10.

than ever by the middle-aged tone of the thing — the irresponsible confidingness of boyhood all evaporated. The other club of naturalists to which I belong, although they are men of much inferior "culture," yet have this element, which I suppose lawyers and men of society and business *überhaupt*, must necessarily lose.

I have thought several times with envy of you lately, in the Paris twilight hour. That is decidedly *the* hour for a romancer in a city to get suggestions. I experienced it twice lately in Boston. . . . I am going to be able to give Alice some work at the Museum probably. I have seen no one of your friends except Fiske, about whom naught to say. I look with great impatience for the conclusion of Christina's fate; for Roderick is of course ended, — nothing but a physical disposal of him seems now possible. I forget that I had read Sardou's *Haine*. Splendid subject and splendid mechanism, — the background of war so incessant, etc. But how much better would Dumas have made the dialogue in the last scenes! Good luck, yours ever,

W. J.

Henry announced the beginning of his Paris sojourn in a letter to his father of November 18, 1875. He was living at 29 Rue du Luxembourg: —

". . . I have been exactly a week in Paris, but it seems a long week, so permanently and comfortably am I established. I spent my first two or three days knocking about, looking for rooms, which I found wearisome and annoying work. At last, when I was on the point of collapsing upon something that only half suited me, I stumbled by accident into this place, which completely suits me, and where behold me installed for five months. . . . If you were to see me I think you would pronounce me very well off: a snug little *troisième* with the eastern sun, two bedrooms, a parlor, an antechamber, and a kitchen. Furniture clean and pretty, hence irreproachable, and a gem of a *portier* who waits upon me. I am near everything it is convenient in winter weather to be near, and altogether the material basis for existence is comfortably assured. . . .

I find Paris the same old Paris — a city of shop-fronts, a great fancy bazaar. I would give fifty of it for that great interesting old London, but if one can't be in London, this is next best. . . . Yesterday morning appeared Charles Peirce,[4] who is wintering here

[4] For further references to this meeting, *cf.* below, 536–7.

and who had heard of me from William. He took me up very vigorously, made me dine with him at the Maison Dorée and spend the evening at his rooms which are very charming. He seems quite a swell (at least from the point of view of that little house on the car-track where I last knew him) — has a secretary, etc. . . . I think I have told you everything. Tell me everything in return."

Paris, Dec. 3 [1875]

Dear William, —

I have safely received your letter of November 14th. My own from London may have come immediately after it left. . . . I am very comfortable and have every ground for contentment and, as Uncle Robertson[5] would say, for "gratitude." I am very well lodged, and hating the dismal prospect of the Paris winter weather and the in-door cold, have nothing but good to say of everything. The improvement in my physical condition which I hoped would occur upon a return to this climate, gave from the first of my arrival very marked symptoms of setting in. . . . In such of your news as was good — your own good condition, etc., I much rejoiced. May it daily increase! . . . I have seen few people — chiefly Turgenev. . . . He is a most attractive man and I took a great shine to him. . . . Also Charles Peirce, who wears beautiful clothes, etc. He is busy swinging pendulums at the Observatory, and thinks himself indifferently treated by the Paris scientists. We meet every two or three days to dine together; but though we get on very well, our sympathy is economical rather than intellectual.

I have plenty of work here, and shall be able to do it comfortably. I can think of nothing in life to put into the *Tribune:* it is quite appalling. But I suppose it will come. I see *Roderick Hudson* is out; send me any notices you see of it. . . . Write me what you (and others) think of the close of *Roderick Hudson.* I shall speedily begin, in the *Galaxy,* another novel: it is the best I can do. . . . Farewell. Yours always,

H. J. JR.

Cambridge, Dec. 12, 1875

My dear Harry, —

We have received your first letter from Paris, and last night the *Tribune* arrived with your first official one blazoned forth, as you

[5] Robertson Walsh, their mother's brother.

will no doubt see before you get this.[6] I am amused that you should have fallen into the arms of C. S. Peirce, whom I imagine you find a rather uncomfortable bedfellow, thorny and spinous, but the way to treat him is after the fabled "nettle" receipt: grasp firmly, contradict, push hard, make fun of him, and he is as pleasant as anyone; but be overawed by his sententious manner and his paradoxical and obscure statements — wait upon them, as it were, for light to dawn — and you will never get a feeling of ease with him any more than I did for years, until I changed my course and treated him more or less chaffingly. I confess I like him very much in spite of all his peculiarities, for he is a man of genius, and there 's always something in that to compel one's sympathy. I got a letter from him about Chauncey Wright in which he said he had just seen you. . . . How long does he stay in Paris and when does he return? I may feel like asking him to bring me back an instrument or two when he comes. Please tell him I got his letter, and enjoyed it, and that a subscription paper is now passing round to defray the cost of publishing Wright's remains, — forty names at $20 each are what is hoped for. Norton will be editor, and if it is decided to have any extended introductory notice, I will tell him that Peirce is willing to write an account of his [Wright's] philosophical ideas. Norton did intend giving it to Fiske, who would make a very inferior thing of it.[7]

Roderick Hudson seems to be a very common theme of conversation. . . . In looking through the volume it seems to me even better than it did, but I must tell you that I am again struck unfavorably by the tendency of the personages to reflect on themselves and give an acute critical scientific introspective classification of their own natures and states of mind, *à la* G. Sand. Take warning once more!

Yesterday Howells and wife and Godkin and Aunt dined here. Plenty of laughter, but not much else. . . . The only other thing I have done except mind my anatomy is the squib in the *Nation* which I enclose. In the interval between sending it and seeing it appear in print, I have dipped into Baudelaire and am reluctantly obliged to confess that Scherer is quite as wrong as Saintsbury.

[6] "Paris Revisited," *N. Y. Tribune*, Dec. 11, 1875.

[7] This enterprise was carried through, but without Peirce's collaboration. The title was *Philosophical Discussions*, by Chauncey Wright, with a Biographical Sketch of the author by Charles Eliot Norton, 1877.

It is a pity that every writer in France is bound to do injustice to the opposite "camp." Baudelaire is really, in his *Fleurs du Mal,* original and in a certain sense elevated, and on the whole I can bear no rancor against him, although at times he writes like a person half-awake and groping for words. The most amusing thing about it all is the impression one gets of the innocence of a generation in which the *Fleurs du Mal* should have made a *scandal.* It is a mild and spiritualistic book today. Get it and write about it in the *Nation* or *Atlantic,* if you like, and especially read a letter of Sainte-Beuve's at the end of it, which is the *ne plus ultra* of his diabolic subtlety and malice.[8]

I had an interview with C. W. Eliot the other day, who smiles on me and lets me expect $1200 this year and possibly hope for $2000 the next, which will be a sweet boon if it occurs. As the term advances I become sensible that I am really better than I was last year in almost every way; which gives me still better prospects for the future. . . . Good-bye! Heaven bless you, — get as much society as you can. Your first letter was a very good beginning, though one sees that you are to a certain extent fishing for the proper tone or level. I should like to accompany you to some of the theatres. Adieu!

W. J.

P.S. Latest American humor, quoted last night by Godkin — child (lost at fair): "Where 's my mother? I told the darned thing she 'd lose me."

Cambridge, Jan. 22, 1876

My dear Harry, —

We have been spending an unusually long time without hearing from you. Last night in the *Tribune* came your letter about Meissonier etc.,[9] but no letter in manuscript. I hope with all your other writing to do that you will never write home from a feeling of duty, but wait till the mood comes. We have had a good dose of you

[8] James's "squib" was a letter to the *Nation* in which he pretends to be composing a manual of the literature of the nineteenth century and calls attention to the flat contradiction between Saintsbury's favorable (*Fortnightly Review* for Nov. 1875) and Edward Scherer's unfavorable (*Études*) judgment of Charles Baudelaire. *Cf.* the *Nation,* Dec. 2, 1875 (XXI), 255. Sainte-Beuve's letter to Baudelaire appears in the Appendix of the first volume of the latter's *Œuvres complètes,* 1869.

[9] "Parisian Sketches," *N. Y. Tribune,* Jan. 22, 1876.

this week in the shape of the *Galaxy* with your Bernard and Flaubert, and your notice of the "Inn Album" in the *Nation*.[10] That last was done in a masterly manner, — experience tells. The Flaubert part of the *Galaxy* article was also first-rate, and so was the Bernard part, save for a tendency to repeat essentially the same thing in different connections and with different words, which I have sometimes noticed in your more hastily written things.

I can tell you no particular news about home. I have been working as usual and doing more than my usual share of visiting, and so forth. Last night I went of all places in the world to Mrs. Sargent's æsthetic tea in Chestnut Street.[11] Certain individuals read poetry, whilst others sat and longed for them to stop so that they might begin to talk. The room was full of a decidedly good-looking set of people, especially women — but New England all over! Give me a human race with some *guts* to them, no matter if they do belch at you now and then. On coming home, by the way, I read in the *Galaxy* the article on Emerson by John Burroughs, disfigured, itself, by the jerkiness etc., he speaks of, — but what first-rate perceptions the man has! I shall buy his book and hope to find in it the article on England I told you I had read in the hotel on Lake Champlain.[12] . . . *Roderick Hudson* has been praised to me by Miss Sally Russell and by William Everett,[13] who went out of his way in the library to do it, and who especially rejoiced in your having escaped the temptation to make a guide book of Italy out of it. Mother's receptions are over, all but one, which I suppose will be the fullest of the lot. I think it has been a pretty good thing to do. . . . [incomplete]

Paris, Feb. 8 [1876]

Dear William, —

I am in your debt for many letters, for all of which I have been devoutly grateful. The last, arrived yesterday, was of [January] 22nd. . . . Today I could believe I am at home. The snow is falling from a leaden sky, and the opposite house tops are piled thick

[10] "The Minor French Novelists" (Charles de Bernard and Gustave Flaubert), *Galaxy*, Feb. 1876; "Robert Browning's 'Inn Album,'" *Nation*, Jan. 20, 1876.

[11] Mrs. Sargent was the widow of Dr. Howard Sargent of Boston.

[12] Presumably "Mellow England," *Works*, Riverby Edition, II, 145 ff.

[13] Sarah Russell of Boston, sister of Mrs. Alexander Agassiz. She later married Professor James Barr Ames of the Harvard Law School. William Everett preached in various Unitarian churches in and near Boston. He was assistant professor of Latin at Harvard and master of Adams Academy.

with it. But the winter is drifting rapidly away and the European spring is not very far off. The days bring me nothing much to relate, and I am ashamed of myself that, living in Paris, I have not more rich and rare things to tell you. I do my best to collect such material, and it is not my fault if I have n't more of it. I keep seeing a little of the few people I know. I dined awhile since at the Laugels' [14] with Renan and his wife, and am invited there tomorrow evening to encounter the Duc d'Aumale, who is their great social card. Renan is hideous and charming, — more hideous, even, than his photographs and more charming even than his writing. His talk at table was really exquisite for urbanity, fineness and wit, — all quite without show-off. I talked with him for three-quarters of an hour in the corner after dinner, told him that I could n't measure his writings on the side of erudition, but that they had always been for me (and all my family!!) *"la plus haute perfection de l'expression,"* and he treated me as if I were a distinguished savant.

I saw Turgenev the other day, again, he having written me a charming note [15] (I enclose it, if I can find it, for Alice) telling me he was still ill, and asking me to come and see him. So I went and passed almost the whole of a rainy afternoon with him. He is an *amour d'homme.* He talked more about his own writings than before, and said he had never *invented* anything or anyone. Everything in his stories comes from some figure he has seen, though often the figure from whom the story has started may turn out to be a secondary figure. He said, moreover, that he never consciously *puts anything into* his people and things. To his sense all the interest, the beauty, the poetry, the strangeness etc., are there, *in* the people and things (the definite ones, whom he has seen) in much larger measure than he can get out. [He said] . . . that (what strikes him himself as a limitation of his genius) touches that are too *raffiné,* words and phrases that are too striking, or too complete, inspire him with an instinctive *méfiance;* it seems to him that they *can't* be true, — for to be true to a given individual type is the utmost he is able to strive for. In short, he gave me a sort of definition of his own mental process, which was admirably intelligent and limpidly honest. This last is the whole man; and it is written in

[14] Antoine Auguste Laugel, mining engineer and prolific writer on scientific and literary subjects. He was for some time secretary to the Duc d'Aumale.

[15] Turgenev's letter will be found below, Appendix II.

his face. He also talked much about Flaubert, with regard to whom he thinks that the great trouble is that he has never known a decent woman, — or even a woman who was a little interesting. He has passed his life exclusively *avec des courtisanes et des rien-du-tout.* In poor old Flaubert there is something almost tragic: his big intellectual temperament, machinery, etc., and his vainly colossal attempts to press out the least little drop of *passion.* So much talent, and so much naïveté and honesty, and yet so much dryness and coldness. . . .

Que vous dirai-je encore? I keep on scribbling — sending stuff to the *Nation* and the *Tribune* (whose headings and editorial remarks over my letters sicken me to the soul), and working at the novel I have begun for the *Galaxy.* The *Galaxy's* printing is as usual. I write (in that last thing) "a quiet and peaceful *nun*" — and it stands "a quiet and peaceful *man!*" . . . Love to all, and blessings on yourself. Yours ever,

H. JAMES JR.

Paris, March 14 [1876]

Dear William, —

. . . I can't say how much I thank you for the frequency of your letters. They are a balm and blessing, and I beg you to persevere, so far as you can, in your noble work. . . . I keep along seeing a little of a few people, but I form no intimacies and never have a visitor. Apropos of "intimacies," Charles Peirce departed a week since for Berlin, — my intimacy with whom Mother says "greatly amuses" you. It was no intimacy, for during the last two months of his stay I saw almost nothing of him. He is a very good fellow, and one must appreciate his mental ability; but he has too little social talent, too little art of making himself agreeable. He had, however, a very lonely and dreary winter here, and I should think would detest Paris. I did what I could to give him society . . . but I think he believed I could have done more. I could n't! I have seen no one very new or strange.

I had another talk with Renan at Madame Turgenev's, the widow of the Russian emancipationist (the William L. Garrison of Russia) [16] who lived here in exile for so many years. (She had given

[16] Madame Turgenev was the widow of Nikolai Ivanovitch, historian, who was implicated in the conspiracy of 1825 and condemned to death. He and his wife

a party to keep the anniversary of the emancipation, and Renan and I were the only non-Muscovites.) He is a most *ameno* little man, and essentially good and gentle, but I, of course, am too entirely profane, as regards his interests and occupations, to go very far with him. His conversation, equally of course, has a perfume of the highest intelligence. He thinks very ill of the prospects of France. "Je voyais tout en soir avant les élections, je vois tout en noir depuis." I don't think *that* is thoroughly intelligent, but, *enfin,* I like Renan — *bien qu'il soit d'une laideur vraiment repoussante.* His wife is a plain and excellent person, niece of Ary Scheffer,[17] and initiated into all his work, in which she assists him. The Turgenevs are of a virtue worthy of Cambridge. . . . I am sorry to say I have seen nothing, of late, of Ivan Sergeitch, nor of Flaubert; but I expect to see them both soon. The Childes [18] continue civil to me, and I dined there the other day in company with Dr. Guéneau de Mussy, the great Orleanist medical man (who shared the exile of the princes), a very pleasant fellow, and a certain Mrs. Mansfield, an Englishwoman steeped in diplomacy, and the most extraordinary, clever and entertaining woman I ever met. I can't describe her, but some day I shall clap her into a novel. Trollope, with a finer genius, might have invented her. . . . Your faithful

H. JAMES JR.

James spent the summer of 1876 in Cambridge with visits to Newport, to the Centennial Exposition at Philadelphia, and to friends at New England seaside resorts. The next place in his interest, after Renouvier, seems to have been taken at this time by Renan. The letter in which he communicated his opinions to his brother is missing, but in August he published a review of Renan's *Dialogues,* in which he assailed the author's "foppishness" and "dandified despair," and otherwise expressed the moral repugnance which was always mingled with his admiration of Renan's "exquisite literary genius."

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escaped to Paris, where he died in 1871. Ivan Sergeitch Turgenev, the novelist, was of another family. The Russian circle with which H.J.[2] was intimate also comprised Paul Joukovski, referred to in the James correspondence as "the young painter." (*Cf. L.W.J.,* I, 185.)

[17] A French painter of the classical school.

[18] Mrs. Childe, sister of Gen. Robert E. Lee, and her son, Edward Lee-Childe, were intimate friends of C. E. Norton's.

Paris, July 4 [1876]

Dear William, —

. . . Your remarks on Renan were most refreshing, and (strange as it may appear to you after my worthless account of his book in the *Tribune*) [19] quite in accordance with my own sentiments. I suspected what you say, but as it was only a vague feeling (mingled with a great admiration of his artistry) I attempted to make nothing of it (since I could make so little), and chose the tack of rather wholesale and general praise. But I am ready to believe anything bad of him. The longer I live in France the better I like the French personally, but the more convinced I am of their bottomless superficiality. . . .

C. S. Peirce passed through here a short time since, and spent three or four days during which I saw him several times, and enjoyed, by way of a change, his profound, first-class intellect reflected in his ardent eyes. It will amuse you to hear that he is an *extreme* admirer of *Roderick Hudson:* a conquest which flatters me. He wrote me a few days since from the Kew Observatory, Richmond, where he seems to be dwelling, — a charming berth. . . . Yours ever,

H. JAMES JR.

Cambridge, July 5 [1876]

My dear Harry, —

Your letters breathe more and more a spirit of domestication in the modern Babylon which is very pleasant to me to receive. I suppose from your gilded and snobbish heights you think of us here with great pity, but for my part I hurl it back at you, being on the whole contented with my outward lot. I got back last night from a week on the South Shore, including Nantucket, Martha's Vineyard, and Wendell Holmes's at Mattapoisett. There is a strange naked and lonely poetry about clean, pure little Nantucket under its tender sky. The settlement at Martha's Vineyard, "Oak Bluffs," is probably the most audacious paradise of "caddish"ness which has ever flaunted itself in the eye of day. A flat, insipid sandbank. A building company in advertising it perpetrates the most charming instance of the American defiant style of advertisement I ever met: "No vegetation to breed disease by its decay."!!! I wish

[19] H.J.'s commented on Renan's *Dialogues et fragments philosophiques* in the *N. Y. Tribune* for June 17, 1876, under the title of "Parisian Topics."

Renan and Matthew Arnold might be confined there for a season. They would write something worth reading afterwards. . . .

Your spiritual condition is evidently felicitous, with your Turgenevs, your de Broglies, your Montargis and your Longchamps. Long may you enjoy them, only keep watch and ward lest in your style you become too Parisian and lose your hold on the pulse of the great American public, to which after all you must pander for support. In your last *Tribune* letter (about the Doudan letters) [20] there were too many traces of Gallicism in manner. It will be a good thing for you to resolve never to use the word "supreme," and to take great care not to use "delicate" in the French sense of a "cultured and fastidious" person. . . .

I wish you were home to do the Centennial pictures, for well as Shinn [21] writes, he lacks a certain discretion, heats himself, and becomes too emphatic. They ought never again in a universal exhibition to make the mistake they have made in Philadelphia of admitting such a lot of trashy works of art. They spoil your eye and mind for the enjoyment of the good things. France has nothing good to show. The Maekart decorative pieces Shinn has written about, *struck* me more than anything. And an unexpected thing that much pleased me was the high average of the American pieces. It is obvious that we are a people of artistic sensibility. Not that there were there any very great American works, but there was almost nothing vile, such as every foreign school gives you in its degenerate pupils, who without a grain of inward decency or cleverness of their own, manufacture a far-off echo of someone else's *chic* or ability. An immense preponderance of the American work was landscape, and in almost every case the animus was a perfectly sincere effort to reproduce a natural aspect which had affected in some particular way the painter's sensibility. There was little schooling through it all, but genuine native refinement and, speaking in a broad way, intelligence of purpose. The English school was a most curious study, being so good in its best works, but so utterly pre-

[20] Victor, Duc de Broglie, statesman and historian. Montargis, a town about thirty miles south of Paris, was where the Lee-Childes were staying and where H.J.[3] was to visit late in July. He had been taken to Longchamps to see the annual military review by Mme. Laugel. The letter referred to appeared in the *N. Y. Tribune*, July 4, 1876, under the heading "Parisian Topics." *Mélanges et lettres*, by Ximénès Doudan, was published in Paris in 1876.

[21] Earl Shinn compiled the catalogue for the Art Gallery of the Philadelphia Centennial Exposition held in 1876. Hans Maekart, pupil of Karl Piloty, was leader of the Munich school of painting.

posterous and inartistic in some of its worst things of thirty or forty years ago; the *saugrenu,* comic Shakespeare scenes, the platitude of the book of beauty portraits, and a general tendency to go wholly off the track, showing a real want of artistic intelligence in the race, which we, with our present feebleness, do not approach. . . .

Your second instalment of *The American* is prime. The morbid little clergyman is worthy of Ivan Sergeitch. I was not a little amused to find some of my own attributes in him, — I think you found my "moral reaction" excessive when I was abroad. But I do detest the monthly, part way of publication, except in George Eliot. The feminine gush and weakness she has begun to show in *Daniel Deronda* are adorable after her big show of cynicism hitherto. Daniel's preaching is so school-girl-like that one has a sort of tender pity for the inconsistency of the authoress. I hope in addition to what you say of George Sand in the *Tribune* you 'll set to and give us a good long *North American Review* article, with lots of short extracts. I read at Nantucket *The Dilemma,* by Colonel Chesney, a novel of the Indian Mutiny, just published, which I strongly urge you to read. It left an impression of reality on me which I can't shake off — it is a strange, gloomy, manly book, and intensely English. I have also read *Cometh Up As a Flower* with deep pleasure for its heavy English atmosphere, the which I more and more grow attached to in imagination.[22]

I spent three very pleasant days with the Holmes's at Mattapoisett. I fell quite in love with she; and he exemplified in the most ridiculous way Michelet's *"mariage de l'homme et de la terre."* I told him that he looked like Millet's peasant figures as he stooped over his little plants in his flannel shirt and trousers. He is a powerful battery, formed like a planing machine to gouge a deep self-beneficial groove through life; and his virtues and faults were thrown into singular relief by the lonesomeness of the shore, which as it makes every object, rock or shrub, stand out so vividly, seemed also to put him and his wife under a sort of lens for you. . . .

You ask about Hayes. There is no doubt that both his and Tilden's candidacies are victories for the reform cause. Hayes seems to be a "high-toned" man, and the catch-words of the election

[22] *The American* began to appear serially in the *Atlantic* in June 1876. *The Dilemma,* published in 1876, was by Sir George Tomkyns Chesney; *Cometh Up As a Flower,* an autobiography, by Rhoda Broughton, 1868.

(which are the stepping stones of the people's political education) will vie in virtuousness with each other. There is no doubt there will be progress effected, whoever gets in. . . .

I shall be here off and on till August 15, when I shall probably start for a month to the Adirondacks. Yours ever,

W. J.

Étretat, July 29 [1876] [28]

Dear William, —

Your long and charming letter of July 5th came to me just before I left Paris, some ten days since. Since then, directly after my arrival here, I wrote a few words to Alice by which you will know where I am "located." Your letter, with its superior criticism of so many things, the Philadelphia Exhibition especially, interested me extremely and quickened my frequent desire to converse with you. What you said of the good effect of the American pictures there gave me great pleasure; and I have no doubt you are right about our artistic spontaneity and sensibility. My chief impression of the Salon was that four-fifths of it was purely mechanical and, *de plus*, vile. I bolted from Paris on the 20th, feeling a real need of a change of air. I found it with a vengeance here, where as I write I have just had to shut my window, for the cold. I made a mistake in not getting a room with sun, — strange, and even loathsome, as it may appear to you! The quality of the air is delicious — the only trouble is, indeed, that it has too shipboard and mid-ocean a savour. The little place is picturesque, with noble cliffs, a little casino, and queer French bathing going on all day long on the little pebbly beach. But as I am to do it in the *Tribune*, I won't steal my own thunder. . . .

I am much obliged to you for your literary encouragement and advice, — glad, especially, you like my novel. I can't judge it. Your remarks on my French tricks in my letters are doubtless most just, and shall be heeded. But it 's an odd thing that such tricks should grow at a time when my last layer of resistance to a long-encroaching weariness and satiety with the French mind and its utterance has fallen from me like a garment. I have done with 'em forever, and am turning English all over. . . .

Daniel Deronda (Daniel himself) is indeed a dead, though amiable, failure. But the book is a large affair; I shall write an article

[28] Parts of this letter have appeared in *L.H.J.*[3], I, 50–2.

of some sort about it. . . . I am glad you went to Mattapoisett, which I remember kindly, though its meagre nature seems in memory doubly meagre beside the rich picturesqueness of this fine old Normandy. What you say of nature putting Wendell Holmes and his wife under a lens there is very true. I see no one here; a common and lowish lot; and the American institution of "ringing in" is, as regards the French, impossible. I hope your own plans for the summer will prosper, and health and happiness be your portion. Give much love to Father and to the ladies. Yours always,

H. JAMES JR.

That James's philosophical mind was busy during this summer is indicated by his correspondence with Renouvier;[24] and by a letter written to the *Nation* on "The Teaching of Philosophy in Our Colleges," in which he advocated entire freedom of teaching in this field, and contended, in a manner profoundly characteristic of his later thought and practice, that the chief educational value of philosophy lay in a "wider openness of mind and a more flexible way of thinking."[25] As a matter of fact it was many years before this ideal of philosophical teaching triumphed over that of dogmatic edification, and in this change James himself played a leading part.

The autumn of 1876 was notable for the opening of James's first undergraduate course in psychology, which was the "new Spencer elective" referred to in the following letter to Thomas W. Ward: —

Cambridge, Dec. 30, 1876

My dear Tom, —

. . . My new Spencer elective has proved quite exciting and arduous. . . . How I envy you your fund of energy. I have a little spoonful ready for each day and when that 's out, as it usually is by 10 o'clock A.M., I 'm good for nothing. Every man ought to have outside of his work a chance to cultivate the ideal. I ought to be able to read biographies, histories, etc., a couple of hours every evening, for I think a professor, in addition to his *Fach,* should be a *ganzer Mensch* — but I can read nothing. A part of Doudan's letters (delightful stuff), and one half of Mlle. Lespinasse's letters[26]

[24] *Cf.* below, 664–5.

[25] *L.W.J.*, I, 190. For the article in full, *cf. Nation,* Sept. 21, 1876 (XXIII).

[26] The letters of Mlle. Julie Jeanne Elénore de Lespinasse were published in Paris in 1809, second edition in 1876.

are the literal sum total in three months. The latter show the *disease* of love about as completely as anything I ever saw. But I like human nature, and can't breathe without some suggestion of contact with lives of other people — vigorous ones, I mean. All the men here seem so dry and shopboard like. . . . I have some bright boys in my Spencer class, — but I am completely disgusted with the eminent philosopher, who seems to me more and more to be as absolutely worthless in all *fundamental* matters of thought, as he is admirable, clever and ingenious in secondary matters. His mind is a perfect puzzle to me, but the total impression is of an intensely two and sixpenny, paper-collar affair. . . . Yours always,

W. J.

London, Feb. 28 [1877]

Dear William, —

Since last writing home I have received two letters from you: the first on general topics and very welcome; the second a request to get you a *Maudsley,* which I immediately did. I hope it has safely reached you.[27] Meanwhile, the wheel of London life, for me, has been steadily revolving, turning up no great prizes, but no disappointing blanks either. I go on seeing a good many people, and yet I seem to myself to be leading a very tranquil life. I suppose it is because my relations with the people I see are very superficial and momentary, and that I encounter no one of whom I hanker to see more. All the Englishmen I meet are of the "useful-information," prosaic sort, and I don't think that in an equal lot of people I ever received such an impression of a want of imagination. Sometimes I feel as if this process of "making acquaintances" in a strange country were very dreary work: it is so empirical and experimental, and you have to try one by one so many uninteresting people to hit upon even the *possibly* interesting ones. I hope it won't be often repeated, and that I shall be able to settle down in England long enough to keep, and profit by, any sense of domestication that I may acquire. . . .

I was taken [to the Cosmopolitan Club] a while ago by Frederick Locker, Boott's[28] friend . . . (a very nice fellow), and, amid a

[27] Henry Maudsley's *Body and Mind,* 1870.

[28] Francis Boott, whom the Jameses had met in Pomfret in the summer of 1869. Boott was about the age of H.J.[1], but was a lifelong friend of William, Henry, and Alice James as well. His daughter, Elizabeth Boott, married Frank Duveneck, the artist.

little knot of parliamentary swells, conversed chiefly with Anthony Trollope, — "all gobble and glare," as he was described by someone who heard him make a speech. I lunched the other day with Andrew Lang to meet J. Addington Symonds, — a mild, cultured man, with the Oxford perfume, who invited me to visit him at Clifton, where he lives. Also, Albert Dicey . . . asked me to lunch with Henry Sidgwick.[29] About Sidgwick there is something exceptionally pleasant (in spite of a painful stammer). He has read *Roderick Hudson* (!) and asked me to stop with him at Cambridge. Further, as to lunches, I lunched yesterday with poor Leslie Stephen, whom, however, rendered more inarticulate than ever by his wife's death, I find an impossible companion, in spite of the moral and intellectual confidence that he inspires. . . . I am more and more content to have come to England, and only desire to be left soaking here for an indefinite period. I positively *suck* the atmosphere of its intimations and edifications.

This is a very personal letter, as I suppose you desire; and I trust you will answer questions without waiting for them to be asked. What is your "Herbert Spencer elective"? — to which you have alluded, but without explaining its sudden genesis. Whatever it is I am glad you like it. I often take a nap beside Herbert Spencer at the Athenæum, and feel as if I were robbing *you* of the privilege. A good speech of Matthew Arnold's, which seems to be classical here: "Oh yes, my wife is a delightful woman; she has all my sweetness, and none of my airs." I hope the family circle prospers. . . . Bless you all.

H. JAMES JR.

In June 1878, James entered into the contract with Henry Holt and Company which led (twelve years later) to the publication of his *Principles of Psychology;* and on the tenth of the next month he married Alice H. Gibbens, whom he had met two years before through his friend Thomas Davidson. Without the second of these contracts there would have been much less likelihood of his fulfilling the first. Mrs. James was a remarkable woman in her own right, distinguished in beauty, wit, and character. Her benign influence upon her husband's happiness and upon the fruitfulness of

[29] Henry Sidgwick, the Cambridge philosopher, and Albert Venn Dicey, writer and lecturer on jurisprudence, afterwards Vinerian Professor of Common Law at Oxford; both friends of William in later years.

his career can scarcely be exaggerated. She shared his intellectual and professional interests with sympathetic loyalty: in her absence he spoke of himself as "left alone and deprived of the wonted ear into which to pour all my observations, aphorisms, wishes and complaints." She watched over him with untiring devotion, protecting him against the consequences of his own rash generosity. Above all, she introduced into his household an embodiment and suggestion of the composure which his mobile and high-strung nature greatly needed. There was at the same time a quality of finality in the very fact of marriage itself — the sense of a safe anchorage, and of a steadying purpose in life.

The domestic harbor in which James anchored was not always peaceful. Its waters were ruffled by the usual incidents attending the living together of adults and small children, and James's nervous organization made him peculiarly sensitive to noises, vexations, and anxieties. Thus in 1879 he wrote to his youngest brother, Robertson, "I find the cares of a nursing father to be very different from those of a bachelor. Farewell the tranquil mind!" In 1887, writing from Chocorua, he said: "It is a good deal of a complication to life to have children! not to speak of the complications to *them!* Mothers-in-law, sisters-in-law, aunts-in-law added to them, 'mellow one up' a good deal (as that ancient *massagiste,* Horne, said of my back). I look back at my narrow and brittle-minded bachelor state as the vealiest of epochs, though there was something grateful about the feeling of potentiality attached to it." [80]

The following passage, from a letter of 1892, was written with genuine feeling, albeit with James's customary hyperbole: "It seems to me that the most solemn duty *I* can have in what remains to me of life will be to save my inexperienced fellow-beings from ignorantly taking their little ones abroad when they go for their own refreshment. To combine novel anxieties of the most agonizing kind about your children's education, nocturnal and diurnal contact of the most intimate sort with their shrieks, their quarrels, their questions, their rollings-about and tears, in short with all their emotional, intellectual and bodily functions, in what practically in these close quarters amounts to one room — to combine these things (I say) with a

[80] To his sister Alice, July 2, 1887. Other parts of this letter will be found in *L.W.J.*, I, 269–70.

holiday for *oneself* is an idea worthy to emanate from a lunatic asylum." [31]

There were times, too, as in the middle nineties, when the financial burden imposed by a growing family led James to multiply popular lectures and articles, and thus to increase the strain from which he already suffered as a consequence of his growing fame and his constantly broadening intellectual interests. But there is no reason to suppose that his domestic life afforded irritating stimuli or temptations to excess that he would not, in its absence, have found elsewhere. That he should have been prudent, and at peace with himself and the world, is unimaginable. His inborn temperament had taken care of that! What his domestic life did was to create the best possible environment for his constitutional tendencies: giving him as much stability as was consistent with his mercurial genius, directing his superabundant nervous energy into productive channels, providing in his own house those tender human relationships which his nature craved, and giving him at the core of his being the all-important sense of living a full and useful life.

The honeymoon, during the summer of 1878, was spent in Keene Valley, New York, in the farmhouse which James (together with Bowditch and the Putnams) had converted into a camp for summer holidays. This and the adjoining region of the Adirondack Mountains played a peculiar rôle in James's development. "I love it like a peasant," he wrote many years later; "and if Calais was engraved on the heart of Mary Tudor, surely Keene Valley will be engraved on mine when I die." Here, and in the White Mountains, in the vicinity of his summer home at Chocorua, New Hampshire, he found that wild aspect of nature which so deeply satisfied him. "On the whole," he said, "I prefer the works of God to those of man." [32] Although he had a painter's eye for landscape, the appeal of nature was something much deeper. The wide and unobstructed prospect gave him the sense of a breathing space, and favored contemplative detachment. He enjoyed *immersion* in the wilderness, and that simplification of clothes and personal habits which such life requires. "What I *crave* most," he once wrote from Europe, "is some wild American country. It is a curious organic-feeling need. One's

[31] *L.W.J.*, I, 321.
[32] *L.W.J.*, II, 81; *cf.* I, 194–5, 271–3.

social relations with European landscape are entirely different, everything being so fenced or planted that you can't lie down and sprawl." He enjoyed what he called the American's "wild-animal personal relations" with nature.[33]

On a memorable occasion in 1898, when he subjected himself to an unusually heavy physical strain and spent a wakeful night alone in the heart of the Adirondacks forest, he felt something more even than this organic union with nature. He felt a mystical sense of the gods of nature (so different from "the moral Gods of the inner life"), and understood the depth of the poet's impression. This experience gave him added religious insight, and is associated with that strain of naturalistic pantheism which we have already met in his admiration for Goethe and which we shall recognize again in his later metaphysics. The natural and the moral gods which so "indescribably met in his breast" on this fateful night continued to divide his allegiance.[34]

A glance at the list of James's published works affords conclusive evidence that the year 1878 was a turning point in his career, as well as in his personal life. During the decade 1867–1877 he had written some forty-five reviews, notices, and short articles. They are of comparatively slight importance, even as evidence of their author's doctrinal tendencies and quality of mind. In the year 1878, on the other hand, he published three major articles, "Remarks on Spencer's *Definition of Mind As Correspondence*," "Brute and Human Intellect," and "Quelques Considérations sur la méthode subjective," all of them highly characteristic, and indicating that certain of his most fundamental ideas in both philosophy and psychology had already crystallized. *After* 1878, the stream of James's production flowed continuously and with increasing volume for thirty years — or until within a few months of his death.

[33] *L.W.J.*, II, 158.
[34] *L.W.J.*, II, 75–9.

XXII

RECOGNITION AND CONTACTS ABROAD

AFTER 1878 that educational and vocational thread which we have been following is but a small portion of the fabric of James's development. We shall continue, however, to follow it to the end, before turning to the history of his ideas. In spite of a growing preoccupation with philosophy and psychology, James did not cease to be interested in art and literature, and to express himself about them. Frequent trips to Europe multiplied his contacts and stimulated his interest in national traits. Nor did he ever lose interest in his brother's career, or cease to read and criticize his works. This interest was reciprocated, but not in like proportion. William sent Henry his articles and later his books; they were gratefully acknowledged and sometimes read, but there is little or no comment. It is quite clear that literature was more to William than was science or philosophy to Henry.

Henry had transferred his residence from Paris to London towards the end of the year 1876. William's letters for the next four years are missing, but there are echoes of them in the replies of his brother, who described his impressions of the persons in whom William would be interested — Huxley, Morley, Gladstone, Tennyson, and "the thundering Spencer." On May 1, 1878, he wrote: "I received a few days since your article on H. Spencer, but I have not yet had time to read it. I shall very presently attack — I won't say understand it. Mother speaks to me of your articles in Renouvier's magazine — and why have you not sent me those? I wish you would do so, punctually. I met Herbert Spencer the other Sunday at George Eliot's, whither I had at last bent my steps. G. H. Lewes introduced me to him as an American; and it seemed to me that at this fact, coupled with my name, his attention was aroused and he was on the point of asking me if I were related to you. But something instantly happened to separate me from him, and soon afterwards he went away." [1]

[1] *L.H.J.*[2], I, 52 ff., 60–1.

Echoes of William's career, and evidence of Henry's brotherly interest, appear in the latter's letter to his mother of January 18, 1879: "I hope William and Alice were happy and merry at Newport. . . . I desire greatly also to hear the upshot of Gilman's visit with his money-bag, and William's liability to be tempted by him.[2] The College would be very shabby to permit itself to be outbid, and I should be very sorry to hear of his having to give up the superior civilization of Cambridge. I have just been reading his two articles — the 'Brute and Human Intellect' and the one in *Mind,* which have given me a very elevated idea of his abilities. Tell him I perused them with great interest, sufficient comprehension, and extreme profit. . . ."

Meanwhile William kept up a running fire of criticism against his brother's literary style. *The Europeans* was "thin and empty"; there was no "fatness" or "bigness" — a tendency, in short, to sacrifice subject matter to form.[3] Henry usually admits the fact without in the least conceding the principle: —

Dec. 16 [1879]

Only a line to acknowledge your note of November 27th acknowledging my return of your manuscript, and containing strictures on *Confidence,* etc. The latter were, I think, just (as regards the lightness of the tale), but I also think that, read as a whole, the thing will appear more grave. I have got (Heaven knows!) plenty of gravity within me, and I don't know why I can't put it more into the things I write. It comes from modesty and delicacy (to drop these qualities for the moment); or at least from the high state of development of my artistic conscience, which is so greatly attached to *form* that it shrinks from believing that it can supply it properly for *big* subjects, and yet is constantly studying the way to do so; so that at last, I am sure, it will arrive. I am determined that the novel I write this next year shall be "big."

I am sorry you "outgrow" so, and hardly know what remedy to suggest — as I can't, like Joshua, bid science to stand still. But keep up your heart, and sometime you will have your year or so of leisure in Europe — which I will endeavour, in the future, to further.

[2] The question of a call to Johns Hopkins University came up twice; at this time, and then again in 1888, when Stanley Hall became president of Clark University.

[3] *L.H.J.*, I, 65–6.

Nov. 27 [1880]

Thank you for what you say about my two novels.[4] The young man in *Washington Square* is not a portrait — he is sketched from the outside merely, not *fouillé*. The only good thing in the story is the girl. The other book increases, I think, in merit and interest as it goes on, and being told in a more spacious, expansive way than its predecessors, is inevitably more human, more sociable. It was the constant effort at *condensation* (which you used always to drum into my head, apropos of Mérimée etc., and when I was young you bullied me) that has deprived my former things of these qualities. I shall read what Grant Allen and Fiske reply to you in the *Atlantic,* but shall be sure not to enter into what they say as I did into your article, which I greatly appreciated.[5]

James spent the summer of 1880 recuperating in Europe. He stopped in London for a visit with his brother, who on June 20 wrote the following impression to their father: "William has arrived . . . and I have him domiciled here in the apartment [3 Bolton St.] beneath my own. It is very delightful to see him again, and we have had much interesting talk, which as well as most other things, he seems to enjoy. . . . I find him very little changed, looking no older and with the same tendency to descant on his sensations — but with all his vivacity and Williamcy of mind undimmed."

Moving on to Germany, he there renewed, in the company of Bowditch and G. Stanley Hall, his associations with physiological psychology. Hall had been James's student and associate at Harvard, and together they had frequented Bowditch's laboratory. He had been studying in Germany since 1878, and was to go to Johns Hopkins in 1881. The following is to Bowditch: —

Heidelberg, July 19 [1880]

Schurke, Lump, Unverschämter, Mensch, Halb-Physiolog, und so weiter! See what you lost by breaking your promise and running off in that cowardly way: I reached Cöln Wednesday midnight; found your letter and cards sent on from London assuring me you

[4] *Washington Square* appeared serially in *Harper's,* July–Dec., 1880. The second novel here alluded to was probably *The Portrait of a Lady,* which began in the *Atlantic* for November.

[5] The reference is to James's "Great Men, Great Thoughts and the Environment" (*Atlantic,* Oct. 1880); and to the replies by John Fiske and Grant Allen which appeared in Jan. and March, 1881.

would wait Thursday for me in Heidelberg. I accordingly sacrificed one day I expected to spend on the Rhine, telegraphed you at nine o'clock, got to Heidelberg Thursday night only to find your *teuflisch höhnisch, selbstsüchtig,* badly-spelt illegible note saying you could n't wait and boasting of your shameless carousals with Kühne (which by the way I will report to your poor wife). Meanwhile Hall (who arrived also on Thursday night) and I have been carrying on the highest and most instructive conversation, which we would have let you listen to gratis had you been here. We talked twelve hours steadily on Friday, thirteen with a two-hour intermission at Kühne's lecture on Saturday, and thirteen and a half without an instant's intermission yesterday. He is a *herrlicher Mensch* and singularly solidified since being here. Speaking seriously, I wish to heaven you had stayed; three would have been better than two, even though the third were only an H. P. Bowditch. Hall left this A.M. for Paris via Cöln. He goes soon to London and almost certainly thence in August home, where I hope he 'll get a place in Baltimore next winter. I start in an hour for Strassburg where I 'll try to speak to Goltz,[6] and then to Basel and der Schweiz. . . . Yours ever,

W. J.

In 1880 James became assistant professor of philosophy. In the summer of 1882, having secured a year's leave of absence, he went to Europe for a tour of several months. He was now not only thoroughly committed to the vocation of philosophy and psychology, but beginning to be known in Europe through his articles in *Mind* and in the *Critique philosophique.* These two periodicals are suggestive of the two complementary aspects of his philosophy, its reliance on experience, and its voluntarism. *Mind* was edited by George Croom Robertson, who sympathized with James's vigorous assaults, in the name of the older British empirical tradition, upon the prevailing idealism recently imported from Germany. The *Critique philosophique* was the organ of Renouvier, whose doctrine of freedom had been James's saving gospel in 1870. During the winter of 1882–1883, James strengthened both of these connections. He developed a strong personal friendship with Renouvier, and with

[6] Wilke Kühne was professor of physiology at the University of Heidelberg, and Friedrich Leopold Goltz held a similar position at the University of Strassburg.

the latter's friend and disciple, François Pillon. In England he saw much not only of Croom Robertson but of his whole circle, embracing Frederick Pollock, Leslie Stephen, James Sully, Edmund Gurney, and Shadworth Hodgson. The two last came to be his intimates, Hodgson securing a hold upon his mind second only to that of Renouvier. During this year he also visited Joseph R. L. Delbœuf, the Belgian psychophysicist and philologist; and returned to Germany, where he made the acquaintance of the physicist and philosopher, Ernst Mach, and laid the foundations of an enduring friendship with the psychologist Carl Stumpf. It was, in short, a great year for friendships, both professional and personal — the former, in James's case, inevitably developing into the latter. He was too intensely personal ever to divorce a man's ideas from the man himself. It was characteristic of him to acquire an author's photograph as well as his books, and to attempt by correspondence or by immediate contact to convert a relation of ideas into a relation of men.

By this time, too, James had earned that reputation which has been so happily described by a recent biographer: "He could pass in America for the most cosmopolitan of philosophers and in Europe for the most American." [7] James was now able to play that important rôle for which his early training, as well as his personal traits, so admirably fitted him — ambassador of American thought and international "messenger of good will" to the countries of Western Europe. American thought was almost unknown in Europe. James represented both his own and that of others. His command of French and German, his witty and entertaining talk, his quick appreciation of merit, and his glowing kindliness won him the attachment and affection of a wide circle. Those who commended themselves to him he recommended to one another. His European friends, or their friends, visited him in Cambridge, and his American friends took letters of introduction to his European friends. He even introduced Europeans to Europeans. He spent years (not, it must be admitted, with entire success) trying to persuade his friends Renouvier and Shadworth Hodgson of one another's superlative powers. He tried to mediate in similar fashion

[7] "Il a pu passer en Amérique pour le plus cosmopolite et en Europe pour le plus américain des philosophes"; M. Le Breton, *La Personnalité de William James*, 1929, 35.

between Renouvier and Delbœuf. It happened not infrequently that his friends loved him more than they loved one another.

James's published letters of this period breathe a note of heightened self-confidence. He has no apologies to make — for himself, for Harvard, or for America. His son has entertainingly described the somewhat blatant patriotism which he felt when he touched British soil, and which he manifested in half-mischievous defiance of his brother's views to the contrary.[8] His travels in Germany and Belgium served only to confirm this feeling: "My native *Geschwätzigkeit* triumphed over even the difficulties of the German tongue; I careered over the field, taking the pitfalls and breastworks at full run, and was fairly astounded myself at coming in alive. . . . We are a sound country and my opinion of our essential worth has risen and not fallen. We only lack abdominal depth of temperament and the power to sit for an hour over a single pot of beer without being able to tell at the end of it what we 've been thinking about. . . . I saw in Germany all the men I cared to see and talked with most of them. With three or four I had a really nutritious time. . . . Nowhere did I see a university which seems to do for *all* its students anything like what Harvard does. Our methods throughout are better. . . . I certainly got a most distinct impression of my own *information* in regard to *modern* philosophic matters being broader than that of anyone I met, and our Harvard post of observation being more cosmopolitan." [9]

In October, before going to Paris, James passed several weeks in Venice, where his old conflicts were revived — the incompatibility between theorizing about art and simply enjoying it, and the alternation between the mood of despising Italy and that of succumbing to its fascination. The following paragraph was written to his brother from Venice on October 16: "What I may do will be to return by way of Florence; which, as my mind begins to vibrate in unison with the world of art, takes the shape of an immensely rich and large city, and lures me on considerably. I have had some ideas, of which an article might possibly be made, relatively to the evolution of schools of painting, and Florence would help me out." How this article was abandoned, and why, is explained in a letter to the father whom he was never to see again: —

[8] *Cf. L.W.J.*, I, 209–10.
[9] *L.W.J.*, I, 212, 216–7.

Venice, Oct. 23, 1882

My dear old Father, —

The sight of your robust handwriting in a letter that Harry transmitted to me three or four days ago, made me wish to write to you immediately, but I have n't been able to till now. . . . I have been here in Venice twenty-three days, and leave today reluctantly in the Trieste steamer at midnight. . . . I hate to leave the indescribable Italian charm, and to go back to the harsh North again. The *laissez aller* of everything in Italy is the most comfortable of all possible mediums to be plunged in, — just the antipodes of England. The poor natives are so broken in and inured to all the ups and downs and all the sights of life, that nothing astonishes them any more or shocks them; and they leave everyone alone and expect everyone to dress and talk and eat and drink and act and think, just as he pleases, though no one else should ever have done the like before him. . . .

I hate to leave the glorious pictures, which one has to see in such an infernally unsatisfactory way. They ought to be erected into a circulating library to which one might subscribe and have a masterpiece a month in his own house throughout the year. If anything can make one a fatalist it 's the sight of the inevitable decay of each fine art after it reaches its maturity. I did think I might scribble something about it for the *Nation,* but have thought better of it, as the spirit of the cheap young Italian swell has gradually stolen over my soul, who thinks that the truest philosophy is to straddle about St. Mark's Place and watch the decay go on, with a pleasant smile on his face, a round topped hat stuck on the side of his head with a curl escaping beneath it on his forehead, a ready-made sack coat flung on his shoulders, and a six centime cigar between his teeth. Whatever he may be, he is not a man of "formulas." I suddenly realized the other evening that I had got into exactly his position, barring the curl, and felt at the same time how good it was to let the "formulas" rest a while. But the *canaille* character of the population of St. Mark's Square is something literally horrible when one thinks of what it once must have been. Cads of every race, and to the outward eye hardly anything but cads. I imagine some old patrician starting into indignant life again, merely to drive us away with his maledictions. I 'm sure we should all flee conscience-stricken at the sight of him; for the energy of old Venice, as I 've been read-

ing it, must have been something prodigious and incessant. . . .

I have felt many a time, dear old Father, in the last few weeks, how lonesome you must be, and how dreadful a separation is where one can *get no letters.* But I hope you 'll have your recompense. I wish you 'd send me the proofs of what you 're writing, as you get them. I would rather read them piecemeal. . . . I am always your loving

W. J.

The news of his father's illness reached James in Paris, and in December, when he was occupying his brother's apartment in London, he learned of his father's death. Henry, who had gone to America, lingered there until the summer of 1883. The following correspondence occurred while their posts were thus exchanged. Both were homesick and attributed their discontent to the respective places of their exile. Before leaving for Europe, James had rented his house at 18 Appian Way to Professor C. H. Toy; his wife and his two children — Henry, aged four, and William, aged seven months — were living at 18 Garden Street with Mrs. Gibbens, Mrs. James's mother. If James were now to return to Cambridge, where should he live? This question among others preyed on Henry's mind.

[London] Jan. 9, 1883[10]

My dear Harry, —

. . . The complete absence of any aggregate and outward expression of pure and direct intelligence is what is so striking here. After Paris, London seems like a mediæval village, with nothing but its blanket of golden dirt to take the place of style, beauty, and rationality. At times one feels as if the former were a poor substitute. And then one does grow impatient at times with the universal expression of aggregate stupidity — stupidity heavy and massive, with a sort of voluntary self-corroboration, the like whereof exists nowhere else under the sun. Germany is the abode of the purest grace and lucency compared with this life, clogged with every kind of senseless unnecessariness, and moving down the centuries under its thick swathings, all unconscious of its load. It appeals to me as a physical image, with which doubtless the meteorological conditions

[10] A paragraph from this letter is cited above, 165. H.J.'s of Dec. 26, 1882, is printed above, 213.

of my stay here have something to do: England under a filthy, smeary, smoky fog, lusty and happy, hale and hearty, with the eternal sunlit ether outside, and she not suspecting, or not caring to think that with a puff of her breath she might rend the veil and be there.

You ought to have seen the Rossetti exhibition, — the work of a boarding-school girl, no color, no drawing, no cleverness of any sort, nothing but feebleness incarnate, and a sort of refined intention of an extremely narrow sort, with no technical power to carry it out. Yet such expressions of admiration as I heard from the bystanders! Then the theatres, and the hippopotamus-like satisfaction of their audiences! Bad as our theatres are, they are not so massively hopeless as that. It makes Paris seem like a sort of Athens. Then the determination on the part of all who write . . . to do it as amateurs, and never to use the airs and language of a professional; to be first of all a layman and a gentleman, and to pretend that your ideas came to you accidentally as it were, and are things you care nothing about. As I said, it makes one impatient at times; and one finds himself wondering whether England can afford forever, when her rivals are living by the light of pure rationality to so great an extent, to go blundering thus unsystematically along, and trusting to mere luck to help her to find what is good, a fragment at a time. It 's a queer mystery. She never *has* failed to find it hitherto in perhaps richer measure than they, by her method of blundering into it. But will it always last? and can she *always* fight without stripping? Won't the general clearness and keenness of a rational age force her to throw some of her nonsense away, or to fall behind the rest? . . . Ever your affectionate brother,

WM. JAMES

Boston, Jan. 11, 1883

Dear William, —

I wrote you two letters within these last days, and I telegraphed you today — so that you will not have been without news of me. . . . You speak of being "determined to sail at latest in the *Servia* of Feb. 11th." This determination makes me really so sad. . . . I think that I must do what I can to keep you from breaking loose from Europe and giving up your stay there as a failure, prematurely. The *pity* of it almost brings tears to my eyes, and when I look upon the barren scene (bating your wife and babes)

that awaits you here, I feel as if I were justified in doing almost anything to keep you on the other side. I left you so comfortably established in London with such promise of improvement and stability (as far as the fundamentals or rather, materials of life could give it), that it seems a kind of "irony of fate" that will bring you back in the midst of this harsh and rasping winter to narrow and, as it were, accidental accommodation in Mrs. Gibbens's small house, where I think that for these coming months you would greatly lack space and quiet. For you to return before the summer seems a melancholy confession of failure (as regards your projects of absence), and sort of proclamation of want of continuity of purpose. . . .

It is, of course, very disappointing that you have not been able to get well at work — that you continue to feel seedy — that the London winter should not be more helpful. But there is the general fact that your being in Europe is a valuable thing, and that your undertaking there ought n't to be abandoned — to set against these things. It is a *long, long change for you* and as that, even as that alone, it seems to me you would do well to hold on to it. It is a chance, an opportunity, which may not come to you again for years. All this came over me much as this morning I went out to poor *nudified* and staring Cambridge, and thought that *that* and your life there is what you are in such a hurry to get back to! At furthest you will take up that life soon enough; *interpose,* therefore, as much as you can before that day — continue to interpose the Europe that you are already in possession of. Do this even at the cost of sacrifices. You thought it well to make a great point of going there, and you were surely not altogether wrong. You don't know when it will be possible for you to go again — therefore don't drop the occasion from your grasp. Even if you don't do your psychology, you will do something else that is good . . . and you will escape the depressing effect of seeing yourself (and being seen by others) simply *retomber* here, to domestic worries and interruptions and into circumstances from which you had undertaken to abstract yourself. It seems to Alice, of course (as well as to me), that your idea of going to live in some other house (*i.e.,* take a room somewhere in Garden St.) would give a dreary and tragic completeness to such a collapse, and have the air of your having committed yourselves to inconstant and accidental (not to say shiftless) ways. Therefore I say, stick to Europe till

the summer, in spite of everything, in the faith that you are getting a great deal out of it and that it is a good and valuable thing. . . .

Father's absence has become a natural fact — it seems (to me at least) as if he had been gone a long time. But that comes, of course, partly from my own absence. I write this in the parlour, late in the evening, after Alice has gone to bed; Duveneck's picture,[11] which is opposite to me, grows unexpectedly in value. It seems so odd that *he* should have translated, perpetuated Father! There has been a week of snowstorms and the earth is buried deep. Does the Athenæum comfort you? Ever your brother,

H. JAMES

London, Jan. 23 [1883]

My dear Harry, —

On my return from a little dinner party at Hodgson's half an hour ago, I found your long letter . . . waiting for me. . . . Your solicitude is natural enough, but it certainly flows from a great misconception of all the premises that are operative in the case. . . . As far as the opinion of outsiders and their exclamations of "failure" (which you seem so much to dread) go, I took great pains to say to everyone that I did not think I could stay the winter. . . . The horror you seem to feel at Cambridge is something with which I have no sympathy, preferring it as I do to any place in the known world. Quite as little do I feel the infinite blessing of simply being in London, or in Europe *überhaupt*. The truth is, we each of us speak from the point of view of his own work; the place where a man's work is best done seems and ought to seem the place of places to him. I feel tempted to go back now just to show you how happy a man can be in the wretched circumstances that so distress your imagination. . . .

When I decided on returning, a few weeks ago, things seemed less hopeful here than they do now. . . . The last two days I have written some psychology; and since yesterday noon a dry east wind and cold air has made me feel like a different man, — I should not have supposed that change of weather could effect such a revolution. . . . The fact is that although from a moral point of view your sympathy commands my warmest thanks, from the intellectual

[11] This portrait of H.J.[1] by Frank Duveneck is at present in the Brooklyn Museum.

point of view, it seems, first, to suppose that I am a bachelor, and second, that I am one who suffers intensely from the skinniness and aridity of America. I should perhaps suffer were I not at work there, but as it is I don't. . . . If the psychology only keeps on as it has now started, and more than all, if the air either of Paris or of an improved London — they tell me that never in the memory of man has there been so uninterruptedly depressing a winter here — starts up my eyes and sleep again, I certainly shall not think of coming home for a good many weeks to come. . . . Believe me ever your loving brother,

WILLIAM

Boston, Jan. 25, 1883

My dear William, —

. . . I got home last evening and found the letters . . . of January 9th and of later the same day; acknowledging my first two letters, the copy of Father's will, etc. The first contains two or three pages of remark and reflection upon England and the English, which, although rather gloomy and splenetic, are so admirably felt and admirably expressed that they have given me extraordinary pleasure. They put into much more vigorous form than I have ever been able to give them, the thoughts and impressions which have again and again arisen within me during all these years that I have lived in London, and which have finally landed me in the consciousness that if it is good to have one foot in England, it is still better, or at least as good, to have the other out of it. I have n't time to answer all you say at present, but of course you know, true as it all is, it is only part of the statement. There is more beside, and it is this *more beside* that I have been living on in London. Every now and then you will feel it (though as you are not a "story writer" you will feel it less than I) much as you have felt the stupidity, the dowdiness and darkness. England always seems to me like a man swimming with his clothes on his head. . . .

Your social solitude, I confess, is what I feared — but I hope that the days will bring forth some social incidents of an easy type, as well as more light, more cheerfulness, and more of the sense that underneath, as it were, you *are* getting good. I offered you introductions (letters) in my last, but don't know how, where, or whether, to begin with them, — and doubt even that the simple

dinner-party-producing-invitation-letter is just the alleviation you want. This alleviation will come from *general* causes, — partly from London brightening and improving, and partly from your getting used to it. Ever yours,

H. JAMES

London, Feb. 6 [1883]

My dear Harry, —

. . . You say you enjoyed the outpouring of my bile upon England: you will ere this have learned from my other letters that I see "the other side" as well. They are a delectable brood, and only the slow considerings of a Goethe could do them plenary justice. The great point about them seems their good-humor and *cheerfulness;* but their civilization is *stuffy.* In spite of that, *it* is, and their whole nature is, one of the most exquisite *Kunstwerke* that the womb of time has ever brought forth. It might have failed to ripen so smoothly, but fortune seconded them without a break, and they grew into the set of customs and traditions and balancing of rights that now rolls so elastically along.

. . . Your allusions to my return continue by their solemn tone to amuse me extremely. Especially are the expressions "confession of failure" and "appearance of vacillation" comical. The only possible "failure" would be to stay here longer than the refreshment, which was the only motive, either tacit or avowed, of my coming, lasted. And there can be no appearance of vacillation where there was no plan announced beyond that of staying on from week to week as long as I found it to pay. However, my reply to your first letter will have opened your eyes to all that; meanwhile the strength of your sympathy does equal credit to your head and heart. . . . Believe me ever yours,

WM. JAMES

XXIII

WRITING AND TEACHING

THE next decade following this important sojourn abroad was devoted to the writing of the *Principles of Psychology,* together with the edition of his father's *Literary Remains* and the miscellaneous philosophical addresses afterwards printed under the title of *The Will to Believe.* This was also the period of his maximum attention to psychical research, the interest having been stimulated by his new circle of English friends. His teaching ranged over a wide field embracing history of philosophy, cosmology, and ethics, as well as psychology, elementary and advanced. In spite of family sorrows, increasing domestic responsibilities, the building of the home at 95 Irving Street, Cambridge, and the purchase of the farm at Chocorua, he found himself on the whole fully equal to his load of teaching and writing. He felt that he was accomplishing little — thus in 1886 he wrote to his brother Henry, "I am killed with small businesses, that stop all progress in the larger interests of life"; but college catalogues, bibliographical records, and correspondence tell another story.

Henry James's *Bostonians* had begun to appear serially in the *Century* in February 1885, followed by *Princess Casamassima* in the *Atlantic* for September. The former had stirred up considerable local excitement owing to the resemblance of "Miss Birdseye" to the well-known Elizabeth Peabody. William's first comment on the story, in which he charged his brother with having painted a "portrait from life," is preserved only in the vigorous reply which it elicited from Henry, protesting that he had "no shadow of . . . intention" of representing Miss Peabody.[1] William evidently returned to the attack with criticisms of a more fundamental order, to judge by his brother's admission of guilt: —

"I concur absolutely in all you say, and am more conscious than any reader can be of the redundancy of the book in the way of descrip-

[1] *Cf. L.H.J.*[2], I, 115–7.

tive psychology, etc. There is far too much of the sort of thing you animadvert upon, though there is in the public mind at the same time a truly ignoble levity and puerility and aversion to any attempt on the part of a novelist to establish his people solidly. All the same, I have overdone it — for reasons I won't take time to explain. It would have been much less the case if I had ever seen a proof of *The Bostonians;* but not a page had I before me till the magazine was out. It is the same with the *Princess Casamassima,* though that story will be found probably less tedious, owing to my having made to myself all the reflections your letter contains, several months ago, and never ceased to make them since. The *Princess* will . . . be, as a finished work, a fiasco. . . ." [2]

To which William replied contritely: "Your letter from Paris in reply to my 'strictures' on *The Bostonians* showed you in such an attitude of angelic humility that I wished I had ne'er been born rather than have written such things. The best advice I can give you as an author, and the last I shall now ever give you, is to imitate your own method in your shorter stories, and in *The American* and *Roderick H.* No better models are possible." [3]

James's final judgment on *The Bostonians* was modified not only by its author's "angelic humility," but by a reading of it "in the full flamingness of its bulk." Even so it is clear that he did not wholeheartedly approve of "descriptions and psychologic commentaries" which extended to five hundred pages what might have been a "bright, short, sparkling thing of a hundred." [4]

In 1885 his sister Alice went to live in England, where she was joined by her devoted friend, Miss Katharine P. Loring, and where she remained under the watchful eye of her brother Henry until her death in 1892. The "Alice" in Cambridge was, of course, Mrs. William James. His sister was now again one of William's most regular correspondents. The following letter suggests both her rich endowment and her fortitude: —

Cambridge, Sept. 27, 1886

Dearest Alice, —

Your splendid, noble, etc., letter of the 13th has just been brought back by Harry from the post-office this warm Sabbath morning, and

[2] Oct. 9, 1885.
[3] Oct. 23, 1885.
[4] *L.W.J.*, I, 250–2.

read aloud by Alice in her bedroom (surrounded by things she was unpacking, we being but two days back from the country) with perfect squeals of delight from both of us at its flow of humor and spirit. I have tried to read psychology since, but 't is no go after such a warming up, so I sit down to a forenoon reply, which, even if your letter had not come, would have been penned all this afternoon. Since you hurl back my poor sympathy — all I have to offer — "with shrieks of laughter" from yourself and Katharine, and in general behave like a polished steel mirror to all my manifestations of tenderness, I will about give them up, and hereafter try to write to you in the major key which your invincible and amazonian spirit deserves. . . .

Your comments on the *cul-de-sac* and feather-bed character of the English mind and the diaphanousness of even the American cockroaches, were excruciatingly good. But the mystery remains that out of that *dumpf* basis there is born a higher and more effective intellectual productiveness than any we can show, — intellectual in the keenest and most diaphanous sense of the word. All round, however, one misses strangely the American edge and lucidity in England. We are coming on, however, in productiveness. The magazines show it. In social and political matters especially there seems to be a great increase of educated thinking going on — three new serious reviews, for example, in the past year, etc.

You will have lately heard from Alice about our summer. I never spent a better one myself, or one that left me more in the mood for the college struggle which begins now in four days. Psychical research shall be dropped, and writing gone on with for next year. . . . I hear everyone sing praises of Harry's *Princess Casamassima,* and am eager to get the volume into my hands. Shall never again read a novel of his in numbers. We have taken great delight in Stevenson's *Kidnapped.* So beautiful, so manly, such English! There is something about the story that *sings,* from beginning to end, and I should n't wonder if it lasted in our literature. I wanted to write him a page of gush, but courage failed. I hope he 'll live to do more work.[5] . . . Heaven bless you!

W. J.

[5] "He is simply to me the most delightful of living writers, — except Harry." (W.J. to A.J., March 22, 1885.)

Several new literary enthusiasms appear in James's letters of this period. In 1885 he was reading Dostoievski's *Crime and Punishment,* "a wonderful psychological study, — and so deep and moral withal that all the French sexual stuff seems mere snicker in comparison"; and in February 1886 it was *Anna Karénina* which was being read aloud. "Is n't Tolstoi, after all," he wrote to his brother, "the most complete of novelists? There is a sort of infallibility and effortlessness about him which is like impartial mother nature, as if one thing was as easy as another." The third of his new literary idols was Robert Louis Stevenson. These writers, together with his brother and his new summer house at Chocorua, provided his relaxation. In the background was the grim spectre of work, not only teaching, but the long-promised, long-incompleted *Principles of Psychology.*

Cambridge, Sept. 1, 1887

My dear Harry, —

It is atrociously long since I have writ you. . . . This summer I have lived in such a chaos, trying to do some writing and oversee house construction at one and the same time, that letters were impossible. . . .

Chocorua, N. H., Sept. 19. This date is a commentary on the lines which precede. I carried this letter to the Adirondacks with me, and back again, without having really had a minute in which I could complete it, although it was on my mind every day of the time. At last the hour has come. Alice has taken charge of the carpenters and graders and hired man, and I have a clear morning at my desk. I am awfully impeded by not being able to write at night; and the all but complete stoppage of my intellectual work this summer has much depressed my spirits. But the exigency is temporary; and in other respects, walking power and sleeping power, my condition is more satisfactory than it has been for a long time. . . .

After spending nine days in the imperishable beauty of the Keene Valley woods, and getting as great an amount of refreshment as I ever got in the same space of time, I came back *via* Albany and New York. . . . I go back to Cambridge in a week, ready to address the multitude (I have about 100 men in one of my courses) on the twenty-ninth of September. I *hope* to finish the manuscript of my book by Christmas time, if things run smoothly. Anyhow I

shall finish it this winter; and then a great load will be taken off me. It must seem amusing to you, who can throw off a *chef d'œuvre* every three months, to hear of my slowness. But my time is altogether taken up by other things, and almost every page of this book of mine is against a resistance which you know nothing of in your resistless air of romance, the resistance of *facts,* to begin with, each one of which must be bribed to be on one's side, and the resistance of other philosophers to end with, each one of which must be slain. It is no joke slaying the Helmholtzes as well as the Spencers. When this book is out I shall say adieu to psychology for a while and study some other things, physics a little, and history of philosophy, in which I 'm awfully in arrears. I got Ticknor's account last week — poor Father's *Literary Remains* has sold only one copy in the past six months! It is pitiful, but there 's nothing to be done about it.

If I were fond of description, I suppose I should now give you a long account of our little place; but you must wait till you see it yourself. . . . The house is very pretty shaped, shingle-covered with green trimmings, and has eleven outside doors, so that the rooms are all independent of each other. . . . There is nothing *banal* in any sense about the place.

I see that R. L. Stevenson is in this country, and I see by the papers that he has paid you a couple of handsome "tributes" in his new volume of verses. I 'm glad of it. I hope I may see him ere he leaves, for if there is an author I love 't is he; and I 'm sure he 'll be hereafter reckoned as one of our masters of good classic English. How they hang back with publishing your things! I quite thirst for something new; and I hope that another big novel will follow this period of *recueillement* on the Continent. I suppose you saw Howells's word about you in September's *Harper's.*[6] . . . I wish to heaven I could run over and see you and Alice for a moment. But, as Robert Temple used to say, "it mote not be." Send this to her with my best love and wishes, and believe me yours ever,

W. J.

The following gives a vivid contemporary picture of Henry's life and of the interests and ambitions which he confided to his brother: —

[6] Stevenson's *Underwoods* contained two poems in honor of James, entitled "Henry James," and "The Mirror" (2nd edition, 1887, 38, 40). In his "Editor's Study" W. D. Howells made a brief comparison between H.J.' and Balzac; *Harper's,* LXXV (1885).

London, Oct. 1–5, 1887

My dear Brother, —

Your good and copious letter . . . travelling swiftly, came in to me yesterday and gave me great joy — our communications had so long been cut. . . . It was a great pleasure to me that your letter breathes a spirit of respectable well-being, though also alas, of "over-pressure," and tells of too many things perpetually to do. But that seems the universal law today, and if I feel it who have neither wife nor wean, I sometimes wonder that you don't faint by the way-side. But I suppose a wife simplifies as well as complicates, — tell Alice I don't wish to seem to take too dark a view of *her!* I have always supposed that such a one (especially such a one as she) transacts for her husband some of the business of life and some of those relations with the world, that the lone bachelor has to transact for himself. My excellent but wooden-faced cook (who has exactly the same shy, frightened manner today that she had the first hour she was in my service) has just presented herself as usual (with a large, clean, white, respectful apron) to ask for the "orders for the day." It is at these moments that I feel the want of assistance, especially as the lady in question is so reverent that she never presumes to suggest. On the other hand, she and her spouse buy everything for me (I never have to go into a shop), and don't cheat me; they are on board-wages (*i.e.*, have to provide their own food) and every bone that leaves my table comes back with a persistency that makes me say, "Is your master a dog that you should treat him thus?"

But this is parenthetic. I take this morning to write to you because I am too much under the shadow of impending departure to concentrate on sterner work. My departure is only for the purpose of spending tomorrow (Sunday) and perhaps also Monday in the country. I am going down to the Frank Millets', who, with the genial and gifted little Abbey, form (there are usually two or three others, especially Sargent,[7] but he has just gone to America to paint a portrait, — I wrote about him, by the way, in the October *Harper's*) a very friendly and entertaining small summer and autumn colony at the wonderfully picturesque old village of Broadway in Worcestershire. Here they paint and walk and play lawn-tennis and receive their friends, and the whole region is a delight to me, mainly on ac-

[7] Francis Davis Millet was an American artist and writer. The others were, of course, the painters, Edwin Austin Abbey and John Singer Sargent.

count of the interest of its magnificent monumental villages. . . . I have paid them a couple of days' visit for three years running, and don't care to interrupt the tradition, as it 's American and fraternizing, and does something to keep me in touch, as they say here, with the land of my birth. Moreover, Millet is an excellent fellow who has ended by painting very well indeed (he did n't at all at first) as a consequence of mere hard Yankee "faculty"; and Abbey is a pure genius, with the biggest kind of Philadelphia twang, and an inspired vision of all old time English aspects and figures. . . .

It has been the most glorious summer, not an hour that was n't pleasant, and all the weather pale gold, — one of the summers of one's childhood, as one remembers them, thinking they have left the world, come to life again. Even yet it does n't break, — all these last days have been magnificent. I went, the last of August, among other things, to spend three days with Lowell, at Whitby, on the Yorkshire coast, where he was spending a month. The place is delightful, and he was the same; wonderfully simple and genial, at the same time as "clever," and expressively kind to me. I get on with him well though he belongs to a more primitive generation (essentially), and in spite of all his ambassadorial accretions, and the experience and fame that have come to him of late years, he is not a "man of the world." Du Maurier was also there, whom I like very much, and who is a very charming and intelligent fellow and companion (one of the most so I know) into the bargain. We are excellent friends.

The other day I spent a week with the Roseberys (to make up for not having been near them for a year, thank heaven!), but Mentmore is always a peculiar experience, half-pleasant and half-insupportable, into which it would take too long to enter. Rosebery is a gifted being and has, in the opinion of all the world, a great future before him, and yet the conditions in which he has grown up and lives are such as to make it difficult for me to take him in some ways seriously — which no doubt is a proof of scoffing shallowness on my part. At any rate now that the autumn is closing in and one's fireside begins to glow I only long to settle down to work, and gilded halls are a simple nuisance. They have been becoming so to me, more and more, for a long time past, and I begin to perceive, with delight, the fair fruits of a policy of letting them almost severely alone. I have tried for a good while now to get *out* of society, as hard as certain people are supposed to try to get into it, and I am

happy to say I am perceptibly succeeding. I have very large accumulations (of "observation of the world," etc.) and I now simply want elbow-room for the exercise, as it were, of my art. I have during the next ten years to do some things of a certain importance: if I don't, it won't be that I have n't tried hard or that I am wanting in an extreme ambition. . . .

Your plan is very interesting — the plan of your house in the country, and your existence there sounds very attractive from the loafing, out-of-doors point of view, — an element of which my life is terribly destitute. It can't be got here save by "shooting," and I don't shoot. Besides which if one shoots the loafing is the best part of it. Fishing costs £10 a bite. Switzerland is the only thing, and it is crammed with cockneys, and I never go there. . . .

I 'm afraid you won't see Louis Stevenson, who is a most moribund but fascinating being, of whom I am very fond. If he were in health he would have too much "side" as they say here, but his existence hangs but by a thread, and his almost squalid invalidism tones down the " 'Ercles' vein" [8] in him, as well as any irritation that one may feel from it. He has a most gallant spirit and an exquisite literary talent; but don't read the verses to me in his new little volume of poems, as they happen, especially the first, to be the poorest things in the book. The second was occasioned by my giving his wife the little mirror he commemorates. Both were scribbled off at the moment, — the first put on my plate one day I went to dine with him at Bournemouth, and I never dreamed that he had kept copies of them and would publish them. Four or five other pieces in the little volume are perfect and destined, I think, to live. He and Howells are the only English imaginative writers today whom I can look at.

I had n't seen the latter's "tribute" in the September *Harper's,* but I have just looked it up. It gives me pleasure, but does n't make me cease to deplore the figure that Howells makes every month in his critical department of *Harper's.* He seems to me as little as possible of a critic and expresses himself so that I wish he would "quit," and content himself with writing the novel as he thinks it should be, and not talking about it: he does the one so much better than the other. He talks from too small a point of view, and his examples (barring

[8] "This is Ercles' vein, a tyrant's vein," from Bottom's speech in *A Midsummer Night's Dream,* I, ii, 420.

the bore he makes of Tolstoi) are smaller still. There is, it seems to me, far too much talk around and about the novel in proportion to what is done. Any *genre* is good which has life. . . .

I hope indeed you may finish your *Psychology* by the date you desire. It will be a tough morsel for me to chew, but I don't despair of nibbling it slowly up. What you tell me of poor Father's book would make me weep if it were n't somehow outside and beyond weeping. After that who shall be confident or believe that one's inner conviction is a voucher? . . . Ever your

HENRY JAMES

Cambridge, Nov. 24, 1887

Dear Harry, —

Your last letter was too good to answer promptly. It gave a better impression of your heartiness than any letter you ever writ, and I have been *im Stillen* living on that remembrance. . . . I am glad you write so sanguinely of your work. That 's the way to feel. If only one *can* feel so. A strange coldness has come over me with reference to all my deeds and productions, within the past six months. I don't know whether it be the passage under the meridian of forty-five years, or due to a more reparable cause, but everything I 've done and shall do seems so *small.* Meanwhile I 'm very well again as to eyes, sleep, and working and walking power.

This is Thanksgiving day, not the sleet-storm which ushers in the winter usually upon that festival, but a real English winter's day, still, brown, misty, gelid — just about right as a change from the brightness of the previous days of November. Yale and Harvard are having it out on the football field in New York — and muddy enough they 'll be. It will be lucky if worse hurts than mud are not their portion, for their rivalry is most bitter, and the game is hard to control. Half the College has gone down to see it. Life has been absolutely monotonous since the beginning of the term. I do my work *tant bien que mal,* try to get a few hours for writing — but they amount to very few — and see a limited number of people. I read hardly anything — at present — and for some weeks to come shall have to learn (for experimental purposes) a dose of *Paradise Lost* daily by heart. I enjoy it very much. . . .

I see the *Atlantic* advertises your "The Aspern Papers" in three

numbers. No signs yet of the other short stories which you announced. . . . Send this to Alice, to whom much love, and with plenty for yourself, believe me, yours ever,

W. J.

The following exchange of letters reveals James in an unaccustomed light. George Santayana, who had graduated from Harvard College in 1886, had gone to Europe on the James Walker Fellowship. It was the custom of traveling fellows to report from time to time on the progress of their studies, and James, acting for the department of philosophy, became perforce the exponent of academic and professional standards. One gets the impression that the department had hatched a duckling, to whose aquatic ways it never became completely accustomed; although Santayana returned to Harvard in 1888, was regularized by the Ph.D in 1889, and became an instructor in the autumn of the same year. During the year 1886–1887 he was in Berlin, and in England, where, like James, he became acquainted with Shadworth Hodgson. The winter of 1887–1888 finds him again in Berlin: —

Berlin, Dec. 18, 1887

Dear Professor James, —

I have been here since the first of November, going much the same rounds as last year. I have discovered a *Privatdocent,* Dr. Simmel, whose lectures interest me very much. I am also taking Prof. Gizycki's *Übungen* on Kant's "Practical Reason." He gives them at his own house on Monday evenings, and I find them interesting, and Prof. Gizycki's vigorous utilitarianism exhilarating. I am taking some history with Prof. Bresslau,[9] and hearing a pleasant ornamental course of Prof. Grimm's on the eighteenth century.

Being under obligations to do something and not to waste my time in occasional reading and theorizing, I have tried to become methodical. I read with notebook in hand, and have one volume destined to contain the pearls of ethical and another the nuts of metaphysical wisdom. If I am expected to send something to Harvard as evidence of work not seen, I will try to bring a paper together out of some of these jottings. I do not do it for my own satisfaction,

[9] Georg Simmel, author of *Philosophie des Geldes,* etc. Georg Gizycki was professor of philosophy at the University of Berlin, and Heinrich Bresslau was professor of history.

because as a matter of fact I am far from satisfied with these results of my reading. I want more time and more experience to sift them and show me where my real sympathies carry me. For on one point I am satisfied with my conclusions, and that is that it is our sympathies that must guide our opinions. I believe you interpreted something I wrote to you last year in the sense that I was disgusted with philosophy. There was certainly a change at that time in my attitude toward my studies but hardly a change in the studies themselves. In fact since I have been in Germany I have become optimistic about the prospects in philosophy. If philosophy were the attempt to solve a given problem, I should see reason to be discouraged about its success; but it strikes me that it is rather an attempt to express a half-undiscovered reality, just as art is, and that two different renderings, if they are expressive, far from cancelling each other add to each other's value. The great bane of philosophy is the theological animus which hurries a man toward final and intolerant truths as towards his salvation. Such truths may be necessary to men but philosophy can hardly furnish them. It can only interpret nature, in parts with accuracy, in parts only with a vague symbolism. I confess I do not see why we should be so vehemently curious about the absolute truth, which is not to be made or altered by our discovery of it. But philosophy seems to me to be its own reward, and its justification lies in the delight and dignity of the art itself.

Prof. Gizycki often speaks of you and of Mr. Salter. He is interested to know whether we may soon hope to see your book on the human mind. I hear nothing this year about Harvard affairs. Loeser, who used to keep me well informed, has not written for a long time, and I do not even know where he is. Strong writes me that he is busy and contented, and is expounding Sir W. Hamilton to classes of two and three.[10] . . . I hope you will find time to drop me a line and tell me if I am expected to write something as holder of a fellowship. Wishing you and Mrs. James a very happy New Year, I am sincerely,

GEORGE SANTAYANA

[10] W. M. Salter, Mrs. James's brother-in-law, and at this time lecturer at the Society of Ethical Culture of Chicago. Charles A. Loeser, classmate of Santayana's, later lived abroad as collector of and writer on art. Charles A. Strong, Harvard '85, was one of W.J.'s most intimate friends and philosophical associates. He was at this time an instructor in philosophy at Cornell University.

Cambridge, Jan. 2, 1888

My dear Santayana, —

Your letter of the 18th of December arrived today, and was very welcome. I had long wondered where you were and what you were doing. Loeser had given me news some time back, but your *ipsissima verba* of latest date were what I required. I have n't heard a word from Strong either — but I hear he 's engaged . . . and perhaps that is a sufficient reason. I like to see the Berlin post-mark. It brings back a glimpse of the gelid winter sky, and a whiff of the odoriferous lecture-rooms that makes me for a moment feel young again. But who is Simmel the *Privatdocent,* and what does he teach? You are provokingly chary! Do you get nothing from Ebbinghaus? [11] He seemed to me as if he might be one of their best men.

What you say of philosophy and your expectations therefrom, interests me. Neither do I expect absolute illumination from human philosophizing. At most you can get arguments either to reinforce or to protect certain emotional impulses. In any minute of moral action where the path is difficult, I believe a man has deeper dealings with life than he could have in libraries of philosophizing. But as to the practical question you ask me, our fellowships are for helping men to do some definite intellectual thing, and you must expect to have to show next May (if the fellowship is to be continued) that you are on a line of investigation of some sort which is likely to result in something more than a "culture" which to the ordinary committeeman would look vague. I know your ability; and also your way of talking small about yourself. But your ability imposes arduous duties. It seems to me that for a Walker Fellow you are not profiting quite as much as you might by the resources of Berlin in the philosophical line. What you write ought to contain (in addition to the merits of expression and fresh thinking which it certainly will contain) evidence either of considerable research done (or undertaken) in the way of scholarship, or of original experiment or observation done or undertaken. I can hardly defend your cause in the committee, if on the whole you do not seem pretty definitely working on the lines which lead to philosophical professorships. For that is the way in which the Walker Fellowship is construed by those who administer it. I dare say you can easily, if you will, give

[11] Herman Ebbinghaus, professor of psychology.

the proofs required, and I write you promptly and rather hastily, that you may be warned in time.

We are all well — as well as the catarrhal Nature of Childhood permits. No great news except Palmer's marriage. But gossip, etc., I must reserve to my next letter, which will be written at a more leisurely time. A Happy New Year to you, and greet Gizycki, Herman Grimm and the rest of the boys! Yours ever,

WM. JAMES

Berlin, Jan. 28, 1888

Dear Professor James, —

I am much obliged for your letter, as well as for your article on "The Perception of Time," which I received soon after. I understand perfectly what you say about my not profiting as much as I should from the Walker Fellowship. I keep myself tolerably busy, to be sure, but I hardly work with the energy and singlemindedness which one associates with the idea of a man living on a scholarship. And what I shall write will certainly not smack so much of a professorship of philosophy as if it were on the normal jerk of the knee-pan. But then it is very doubtful that I should ever get a professorship of philosophy anyway, and I hardly care to sacrifice my tastes to that bare possibility. I mean to ask for the fellowship for one more year, but of course I should n't expect to get it if there is a more thorough student who wants it. I am quite at ease about the duties that my supposed ability imposes on me, and by no means give myself up as a bad job. But you must understand perfectly how uncertain my future is, and my preparations cannot be very definite until I know what I am to prepare for. Philosophy itself is now-a-days a tolerably broad field.

Simmel is a young man of sallow and ascetic look who lectures on pessimism and on contemporary philosophy in its relation with the natural sciences. He knows his subject like a German, and likes to go into the fine points. I go in to some lectures of Ebbinghaus's but am not taking anything with him regularly this term. Last year I took two courses with him, his psychology and his history of the same. I think him an excellent man, very clear and sound. . . . Very sincerely yours,

G. SANTAYANA

Cambridge, April 22, 1888

My dear Santayana, —

Your essay arrived this Sabbath morning, and I have read every word of it, taking great delight in the power you have of carving out things in your own way, and in the fresh and original formulation which you give to things familiar. Some things remind me a good deal of Hodgson's method, and make me wonder how much you may have been impressed by him. But I write not now to discuss the paper but that you may instantly send on your account of study and program for next year to the committee, if it be not already under way, as doubtless it is. This is a little too much like a poem, the merit of it too much like a poem's merit, to count for much in their rather literal eyes. It must be backed by a good deal of prose and appearance of practicality. . . . Yours always,

WM. JAMES

Avila, July 3, 1888

Dear Professor James, —

I am glad to know that I have been reappointed to the Walker Fellowship, as that seems to show that I have not yet quite lost my reputation. I have left Germany, however, without any desire to go back there, nor do I think that I should learn or study much if I returned. . . . Three terms of Berlin have fully convinced me that the German school, although it is well to have some acquaintance with it, is not one to which I can attach myself. After the first impression of novelty and freedom, I have become oppressed by the scholasticism of the thing and by the absurd pretension to be scientific.

In fact, my whole experience since I left college and even before, has been a series of disenchantments. First I lost my faith in the kind of philosophy that Professors Palmer and Royce are interested in; and, then, when I came to Germany, I also lost my faith in psycho-physics, and all the other attempts to discover something very momentous. A German professor like Wundt seems to me a survival of the alchemist. What is the use of patience and ingenuity, when the fundamental aim and intention is hopeless and perverse? . . . Indeed, the whole thing has sometimes seemed to me so wrong and futile, that I have suspected that I had made a mistake in taking up philosophy at all, since all the professors of it seemed to be working

along so merrily at problems that to me appeared essentially vain. But I have remembered that this very feeling of mine would make as good a ground for a philosophy as any other, if I only had the patience and audacity to work it out. This is what I hope to do in some measure next year. I have already written a good deal, but in a loose and disjointed manner. All needs rewriting. I have come here to visit my father, and expect to remain until the middle of August, when I shall go to England, and thence to America. . . . Sincerely yours,

G. SANTAYANA

Letters to his brother and sister resume the thread of James's literary and professional interests: —

Cambridge, April 19, 1888

My dear Harry, —

. . . I am well and plodding away in my slow fashion, with incessant interruptions from "bad days" at my work, — a little stirred up just now by the appointment of G. Stanley Hall of the Johns Hopkins to the presidency of a grand, newly endowed university ("Clark University") in Worcester, Massachusetts. It would be a natural thing for me to be invited to the Johns Hopkins University to fill Hall's place, and a rather hard thing to decline . . . so I can only hope that I shan't be invited, as I hate to leave this place, for the children's sake, if for no other. But I do believe in keeping the ball rolling, and I know that every man who leaves a college for the sake of higher pay elsewhere helps to reform our system of underpaying intellectual work.

I have followed your advice and not looked at the "Aspern Papers." But I have taken great satisfaction in the Stevenson and Maupassant articles.[12] The only fault I find with the Stevenson is that, having said as much as you do about the pains he takes to polish his English, you omit to say anything of the *results,* which are surely about as successful as results in that line can possibly be. I think his "Lantern Bearers" one of the most beautiful things ever written — you read his sentences over and over again, for everything about them is just *right,* — classic. In your Maupassant article you used that author's own directness more than is your wont, and I think with great good

[12] Appearing in *Fortnightly Rev.* for March and *Century* for April.

effect. If you keep on writing like that I 'll never utter another cavil as long as I live. Did you work over it more than over other things, or did it *couler de source* in that form? . . .

I rejoice in your obesity and your fencing. As for me, chest-weights are as high as I can fly. Pray send this to Alice, — it is as much for her as for you, and believe me your ever affectionate

WM. JAMES

P.S. Poor Matthew Arnold! I suppose they 'll be asking you for articles about him. His last paper on America was very sensible and good and artistically composed, in his peculiar way. The papers here, so far as I know, have behaved pretty decently about it, — nothing worse than a little chaff have I seen. Smalley sent a most asinine telegram, however, to the *Tribune* about it.[13] A whole column about Matthew's lamentable change of front due to personal spleen and peevishness, etc. The trouble about Matthew which sets so many against him is the entirely needless priggishness of his *tone.* If he had talked straightforwardly about the high things no one would have ever objected, but the everlasting little snickering about the vulgarities which they are *not,* is not the high style of treating them. His ultimate heads of classification, too, are lamentable. Think of "interesting" used as an absolute term!! I believe that the great, gross, popular plebeian mind always rightly catches the weak side of a public *character,* — and when Matthew passes for a fantastic personage among the people, and nought else, it is that (although he is much else) he is most vulnerably that as well. They are right in feeling that way about Lowell here too, — as a political teacher and wiseacre he surely ought not to be very seriously taken. Does n't "think straight," etc. Charles Norton ditto! with his "culture" never forgetting that it is not vulgarity, — but lord! how I do run on! . . .

Chocorua, Oct. 14, 1888[14]

Dear Harry and Alice, —

(For I don't know to which of you a letter is due, or to which of you I last wrote) — I take my pen in hand on this snowy New Hampshire morning to keep you *au fait* of all our fortunes. I am

[13] George W. Smalley, at this time European correspondent of the *N. Y. Tribune.*
[14] A paragraph from this letter appeared in *L.W.J.*, I, 283.

just up for the Sabbath to see the family, and go down again to-morrow. Another visit a fortnight hence, and we all go down together. We are moving the barn from the front of the house, so as to open the view a little more, down to the flat meadow below, with its margin of trees behind which the brook flows. Most people buy a site and then put a house on it. I have bought a house and am now creating a site round about it, lowering the level of the landscape, in order to make the house appear on a little higher ground. I now know what people mean when they say you always spend more than you expect on a place. . . . Men and oxen, and the brown earth, and the new chopped wood, are goodly things to dwell among; and if one had plenty of money, I can imagine no more fascinating way of throwing it away than in owning a lot of land and playing the "gentleman farmer." . . .

The Cambridge year begins with much vehemence — I with a big class in ethics, and seven graduates from other colleges in advanced psychology, giving me a good deal of work. But I feel uncommonly hearty, and shall no doubt come out of it all in good shape. There will probably be no migration to the south necessary, and we shall have a dull and steady time at home. . . . The College has not perceptibly grown this year, whilst other colleges, Yale, Cornell, etc., have. I 'm afraid we have about reached our limits for the present. . . .

I hunger and thirst for more of those short stories which I have purposely avoided reading in their periodical shape. The *Reverberator* is immortal. Aldrich told me that you had a splendid serial for next year's *Atlantic*. I don't see how you can produce at such a rate, or how you find time for a line of reading or anything else. I should think you 'd feel all hollowed out inwardly, and absolutely need to fill up. I am to have lots of reading and no writing to speak of this year, and expect to enjoy it hugely. It does do one good to read classic books. For a month past I 've done nothing else, in behalf of my ethics class — Plato, Aristotle, Adam Smith, Butler, Paley, Spinoza, etc. — no book is celebrated without deserving it for some quality, and recenter books, certain never to be celebrated, have an awfully squashy texture. . . .

Wendell Holmes is going to vote for Harrison, God knows why, except to show the shady side of himself — he could n't give an articulate reason for it the other night. He made a flying trip to

California with his wife, seeing no end of country and being elated thereby, and then he spent two months at the Clifton House at Niagara Falls, very happily as he always does. He 's just been reading the Bible through, and as John Gray says, it 's a great thing to have a virgin mind turned on to so trite a book — as odd as Gustave Doré's illustrations. I don't see how his judgeship gives him so much leisure. Speaking of judges, Judge Gray was at the last Saturday Club next to me, and spoke of you with much affection and of your novels with much anger, that you should n't *risk* anything with your personages in the way of making them plunge into action! The poor man does n't know, I suppose, that one can't deal with one's personages so at will. Well! this is as good a place to pull up as any. Good-bye to both of you. Receive a brother's blessing from your affectionate

WM. JAMES

Geneva, Oct. 29, 1888[15]

My dear William, —

Your beautiful and delightful letter of the 14th, from your country home, descended upon me two days ago, and after penetrating myself with it for 24 hours I sent it back to England, to Alice, on whom it will confer equal beatitude: not only because so copious, but because so "cheerful in tone" and appearing to show that the essentials of health and happiness are with you. . . .

You are right in surmising that it must often be a grief to me not to get more time for reading — though not in supposing that I am "hollowed out inside" by the limitations my existence has too obstinately attached to that exercise, combined with the fact that I produce a great deal. At times I do read almost as much as my wretched little *stomach* for it literally will allow, and on the whole I get much more time for it as the months and years go by. I touched bottom, in the way of missing time, during the first half of my long residence in London — and traversed then a sandy desert, in that respect — where, however, I took on board such an amount of human and social information that if the same necessary alternatives were presented to me again I should make the same choice. One can read when one is middle-aged or old; but one can mingle in the world with fresh perceptions only when one is young. The great

[15] Reprinted from *L.H.J.*, I, 139–43.

thing is to be *saturated* with something — that is, in one way or another, with life; and I chose the form of my saturation. Moreover you exaggerate the degree to which my writing takes it out of my mind, for I try to spend only the interest of my capital. . . .

I am full of gratulation on your enlarged classes, chances of reading, etc. . . . You are entering the period of keen suspense about Cleveland, and I share it even here. I have lately begun to receive and read the *Nation* after a long interval — and it seems to me very rough. Was it *ever* so? . . . Ever your affectionate

HENRY JAMES

XXIV

JAMES AND HIS SISTER ALICE

It was not until June 1889 that James again sailed for Europe — on the *Cephalonia* for Queenstown, with Wendell Holmes on the same ship "making himself delightful to all hands." The following impression is recorded on July 18 by Alice James, who was living at Leamington, and whose illness prevented her from enjoying more than fleeting glimpses of her mobile brother: —

"William had got to London only the day before, having been for three weeks in Ireland and Scotland. He does n't look much older for the three years, and all that there is to be said of him, of course, is that he is simply himself; a creature who speaks in another language, as Henry says, from the rest of mankind, and who would lend life and charm to a tread-mill. What a strange experience it was, to have what had seemed so dead and gone all these years suddenly bloom before one, a flowering oasis in this alien desert, redolent with the exquisite *family* perfume of the days gone by, made of the allusions and the point of view in common, so that my floating-particle sense was lost for an hour or so in the illusion that what is forever shattered had sprung anew, and existed outside of our memories, where it is forever green."

Another sisterly comment recorded on the occasion of this same visit is the following: "William expressed himself and his environment to perfection when he replied to my question about his house in Chocorua. 'Oh, it 's the most delightful house you ever saw; it has fourteen doors, all opening outwards.' His brain is n't limited to fourteen, perhaps unfortunately." [1]

After ten days in England James went to Paris as American representative at the International Congress of Physiological Psychology, held August 5 to 10.[2] He found the experience both stimulating and reassuring, though he approached it with misgivings. The fol-

[1] A.J., *Journal*, July 18 and Dec. 14, 1889.
[2] James wrote an account of this Congress for *Mind* (XIV), 1889.

lowing was written on the eve of his departure from London, where a common interest in psychical research had brought him into contact with F. W. H. Myers and Professor and Mrs. Henry Sidgwick.

London, July 29, 1889

My dear Alice, —

I am off tomorrow, *bona fide,* for Boulogne, having been here two days longer than I purposed. I 've been to Brighton, to Surrey, etc. The best thing was being *perdu dans la foule* yesterday afternoon on a bus ride to Hampton Court via Kew, Richmond, etc. I find I 'm more in the mood for anonymity and democracy than for sitting up straight and talking with folks. Myers and the Sidgwicks fill me with terrible psychic responsibility, — they have such a grip on that subject, and feel so earnestly. How I 'm to confront them for ten days in Paris I know not, yet such seems my doom. I have enjoyed being with Harry very much, but of London itself I 'm thoroughly sated, and never care to see its yellow-brownness and stale spaciousness again. How sad that nothing is the same to us twice over! I 'm glad to say that my *wife* stands the test of meeting again after absence, or at least has stood it so far. A letter from her this morning reports all very well. Harry has been delightful, — easier and freer than when I was here before, and beneath all the accretions of years and the world, is still the same dear, innocent old Harry of our youth. His anglicisms are but "protective resemblances," — he 's really, I won't say a Yankee, but a native of the James family, and has no other country. . . .

I 've spent half my children's future on clothes for my own idolatrous carcass, and feel like a sort of bloated Moloch. What a horrid thing this coming abroad is! With much love. Ever yours,

W. J.

The autumn of the next year saw the completion and publication of James's first book, the epoch-making *Principles of Psychology.* His brother's *Tragic Muse* had begun to appear in January 1889.

Chocorua, June 26 [1890]

My dear Harry, —

At last you 've done it and no mistake. *The Tragic Muse* caps the climax. It is a most original, wonderful, delightful and admirable production. It must make you feel jolly to have so masterfully and effortlessly answered the accusation that you could do nothing but

the international and cosmopolitan business; for cosmopolitan as the whole atmosphere of the book is, yet the people and setting are most easily and naturally English, and the perfect air of good society which reigns through the book is one of its most salient characteristics. It leaves a good taste in one's mouth, everyone in it is human and good, and although the final winding up is, as usual with you, rather a losing of the story in the sand, yet that is the way in which things lose themselves in real life. The only thing I positively find to object to in the book is the length of the chapter on Mr. Nash's portrait, which is a little too much in the Hawthornian allegorizing vein for you.

I have nothing to say in detail. The whole thing hangs together most intimately and well; and it is truly a spectacle for rejoicing to see that by the sort of practice a man gives himself he attains the plenitude and richness which you have at last got. Your sentences are straighter and simpler than before, and your felicities of observation are on every page. I wish you had managed to bring in a little more business with Julia ere the end; her love-making scene was exquisite; but it must be a difficult task to tread the crack between her charms and femininity and her hardness and politicality. The whole thing is an exquisite mirage which remains afloat in the air of one's mind. I imagine that that sort of thing is extremely educative to a certain "section" of the community. As for the question of the size of your public, I tremble. The work is too refined, too elaborate and minute, and requires to be read with too much leisure to appeal to any but the select few. But you must n't mind that. It will *always* have its audience. No reason, however, for not doing less elaborate things for wider audiences; which I hope ere long to have direct testimony that you have done.

. . . My proofs have only just begun coming in; but they promise to come thick and fast. I take little pride or pleasure in the accursed book, which has clung to me so long, but I shall be glad to have it out, just to show that I *can* write one book. . . . Yours ever,

W. J.

Vallombrosa, July 23, 1890[8]

My dear Brother, —

I had from you some ten days ago a most delightful letter written just after the heroic perusal of my interminable novel — which, according to your request, I sent off almost too precipitately to

[8] Reprinted from *L.H.J.*[3], I, 170–1.

Alice, so that I have n't it here to refer to. But I don't need to "refer" to it, inasmuch as it has plunged me into a glow of satisfaction which is far, as yet, from having faded. I can only thank you tenderly for seeing so much good in the clumsy thing — as I thanked your Alice, who wrote me a most lovely letter, a week or two ago. I have no illusions of any kind about the book, and least of all about its circulation and "popularity." . . . One has always a "public" enough if one has an audible vibration — even if it should only come from one's self. I shall never make my fortune — nor anything like it; but — I know what I shall do, and it won't be bad.

I am lingering on late in Italy, as you see, so as to keep away from London till August 1st or thereabouts. . . . I have been accompanied on this occasion by a literary irresponsibility which has caused me to enjoy Italy perhaps more than ever before; — let alone that I have never before been perched (more than three thousand feet in the air) in so perfect a paradise as this unspeakable Vallombrosa. . . . The place is extraordinarily beautiful and "sympathetic," the most romantic mountains and most admirable woods — chestnut and beech and magnificent pine forests, the densest, coolest shade, the freshest, sweetest air and the most enchanting views. It is full 20 years since I have done anything like so much wandering through dusky woods and lying with a book on warm, breezy hillsides. It has given me a sense of summer which I had lost in so many London Julys; given me almost the summer of one's childhood back again. I shall certainly come back here for other Julys and other Augusts — and I hate to go away now. May you, and all of you, these weeks, have as sweet, or half as sweet, an impression of the natural universe as yours affectionately,

HENRY JAMES

Chocorua, Aug. 22, 1890

My dear Harry, —

It gave me great pleasure to get your letter from Vallombrosa about a fortnight ago. . . . You see now why I have been urging you all these years to take more of your vacation in the face of nature. Your last two letters have breathed a spirit of youth, a sort of *Lebenslust,* which has long been absent from them, and which nothing but mother earth can give. Alternation between her and the gas-lit life of corrupt capitals is the optimum for man here below.

Neither element alone will do, but both must be there. I 'm glad you 've had such a vacation from writing. I don't see how either you or Howells can keep it up at such a rate. I am just now in the middle of his *Hazard of New Fortunes,* which is an extraordinarily vigorous production, quite up to Dickens I should say, in humor, detail of observation and geniality, with flexible human beings on the stage instead of puppets. With that work, your *Tragic Muse,* and last *but by no means least,* my *Psychology,* all appearing in it, the year 1890 will be known as the great epochal year in American literature.

I finished and posted my index yesterday, so my mind is free to turn to the universe receptively again. A wondrous boon. I have been six weeks in Cambridge all alone in the house, until the last week when Alice came down and cooked and helped; and corrected fourteen hundred pages of proofs, much of them in small type. I almost never got away from my writing-table till 9 P.M., and then used, in a starving condition, to go booming along through the sultry night on the front seat of an electric car, the finest locomotion in the world, to get my dinner between 9 and 10 at Young's or Parker's, after mailing the proofs in the Boston post-office to catch the late New York mail. It was hard on the digestive organs, but it has left no bad effects, and I look back to the month and a half of it as a most delightful period of time; only one thing to think about, and great strides of progress in that every day, — so different from the college year, with fifty things to think about, and no sensible progress made at all. But it is the sort of life to which you have been long accustomed, so it will make you smile to hear me making such a fuss. I took my breakfast *or* lunches in the club-house on Quincy Street, in our old dining-room; which, like the whole house, with its new paint and paper, hardly reminded me at all of old times, save for the outlook rather more umbrageous than of yore, from the windows.

I have just raised $4000 — $500, I hope, of them from Tweedy — for a psychological laboratory and fixings, so with that and other things I expect to have a hard-working year of it next year. We ought to get abroad for 1891–2 if it be possible to afford it, but nothing will be known about it until next spring. Alice wears well, and is in good condition morally and intellectually this summer, although suffering for ten days past with a tremendous cold. "Mama's *Nase* is *ganz abgenutzt* (worn-out)," said the infant Margaret Mary this

morning. Good-bye! Heaven bless you! Send this to Alice whom Heaven bless also, if it *can* bless! Yours,

W. J.

The interest in psychical research which James had acquired from Frederick Myers, Edmund Gurney, and the Henry Sidgwicks during his English sojourn of 1882–1883 had stirred James to intermittent investigations, especially of the famous medium, Mrs. Piper, on whom he had reported to the American Society for Psychical Research in 1886. In 1890 he sent a written report [4] on the same subject to the parent society in England, with the following astonishing result: —

London, Oct. 9 [1890]

My dear William, —

. . . Frederick Myers has written to ask *me* to read your letter on Mrs. Piper at a meeting of the Society for Psychical Research at the Westminster Town Hall on the 31st of this month, and I have said I would, though so alien to the whole business, in order not to seem to withhold from *you* any advantage, — though what "advantage" I shall confer remains to be seen. Therefore imagine me at 4 P.M. on that day, performing in your name. . . . Ever your

HENRY

Cambridge, Oct. 20 [1890]

Dear Harry, —

. . . I think your reading my Piper letter (of which this very morning proof came to me from Myers) is the most comical thing I ever heard of. It shows how first-rate a business man Myers is: he wants to bring variety and *éclat* into the meeting. I will *think of you* on the 31st at about 11 A.M. to make up for difference of longitude. . . . I wish I could run over and visit you again, — your avuncular allusions to our children are very winsome to both Alice's heart and mine! Good night.

W. J.

P.S. I sat up till 4 last night reading Stanley's book.[5] What a jolly book it is. Alice says I have not *melted* enough over your read-

[4] This report was published in the *Proc. of the S.P.R.*, VI (1890).
[5] Henry M. Stanley's *In Darkest Africa.*

ing of my paper. I *do* melt to perfect liquefaction. 'T is the most beautiful and devoted brotherly act I ever knew, and I hope it may be the beginning of a new career, on your part, of psychic apostolicism. Heaven bless you for it! Write short and often.

London, Nov. 7, 1890

My dear William, —

. . . It was a week ago today that I read you at the S. P. R. with great *éclat* — enhanced by my being introduced by Pearsall Smith as a Bostonian of Bostonians! You were very easy and interesting to read, and were altogether the "feature" of the entertainment. It was a full house and Myers was *rayonnant*. . . . Ever your

HENRY

After seeing his sister in the summer of 1889 James was much preoccupied with her condition, and during the brief interval before her death in 1892 he wrote to her constantly. In July 1890 she had sent the following anonymous communication to the New York *Nation*: —

To the Editor of the *Nation*,

Sir: For several years past I have lived in provincial England. Although so far from home, every now and then a transatlantic blast, pure and undefiled, fans to a white heat the fervor of my patriotism. This morning, most appropriately to the day, a lady from one of our eastern cities applied to my landlady for apartments. In the process of telling her that she had no rooms to let, the landlady said that there was an invalid in the house, whereupon the lady exclaimed: "In that case perhaps it is just as well that you cannot take us in, for my little girl, who is thirteen, likes to have plenty of liberty and to *scream* through the house." Yours very truly,

INVALID

England, July 4, 1890[6]

Cambridge, Aug. 13, 1890

My poor dear Alice, —

. . . Grace Norton read me the letter in the *Nation* some nights ago, and I saw unmistakable inward evidence of its source. When

[6] *Nation*, LI (1890).

you get over this "spell" you must continue to contribute, now that you 've made the plunge. I am entirely certain that you 've got a book inside of you about England, which will come out yet. Perhaps it 's the source of all your recent trouble. My book has come out — that is, the last proofs are corrected, and nothing but the index to do. I 'll send you a copy when it appears. I 've worked like a whole gang of niggers for six weeks past, and accomplished the feat of correcting 1400 pages of proof. Harry's letter from Vallombrosa has a *tone* which nothing but mingling with nature can give. He ought to do some of it every year. — Good night, my poor dear sister. This is only a word to express my sympathy. . . . Yours ever,

W. J.

In a remarkable letter of July 6, 1891, James wrote to his sister concerning death as a release from suffering and frustration,[7] and hinted at some of the ideas of immortality contained in his Ingersoll Lecture of 1897. The next letter followed soon after, from the neighborhood of Asheville, North Carolina.

Roan Mountain, Aug. 23, 1891

Dearest Sister, —

. . . I walked up here yesterday, and this peaceful sunny morning, with the billowy mountain-world spread out all round and beneath, the air is as round-edged and balmy (in spite of its vitality) as if we were on the plain instead of at a height of 6300-odd feet. Very different from the Mount Washington air!

I got your admirable, inspired and inspiring letter before I left home. It is good to hear you speak of this year as one of the best of your life. It is good to hear you speak of life and death from a standpoint so unshaken and serene, with what one of the Adirondack guides spoke of as such "heaven-up-histedness" in the point of view. A letter from Harry, received only a few days later, confirmed me in this impression. He says he is less "anxious" about you than at any former time, and I think we ought all to be so together now. Poor Lowell's disease was cancer. He never knew what it was, and in the shape of positive pain, suffered comparatively little, although he had no end of various discomforts. Now that he is gone, he

[7] The letter will be found in *L.W.J.*, I, 309–11.

seems a much more unique and rare individual than before. What a pity it is always so. I do hope that you will leave some notes on life and English life which Harry can work in hereafter, so as to make the best book he ever wrote. Charles Norton, I see, receives the bequest of Lowell's manuscripts, etc. The way that man gets his name stuck to every greatness is fabulous — Dante, Goethe, Carlyle, Ruskin, Fitzgerald, Chauncey Wright, and now Lowell! His name will dominate all the literary history of this epoch. 100 years hence, the *Revue des deux mondes* will publish an article entitled "La Vie de l'esprit aux États-Unis vers la fin du XIXme siècle; étude sur Charles Norton." He is our *foyer de lumières;* and the worst of it is that he does all the chores therewith connected, and practically fills the position rather better, than if he were the genuine article. . . .

I appear to be tougher physically and capable of more continuous head work than in many a long year. The *Psychology* turns out to be a much "bigger" book than I thought it was; and reviews in the technical periodicals (I am given to understand) are erelong to inform the world of its true greatness. . . . Our children grow lovelier every year and more confidence-inspiring. . . . God bless you, dearest sister. Your loving

W. J.

On September 12, 1891, James sailed for Europe on the *S.S. Eider* — swept by a gust of affectionate solicitude, he had gone to see his sister. On October 1 he was on his way home, having had ten days in London!

On board *City of Paris* [Oct. 1, 1891]

Darling Sister, —

Everything opens auspiciously, — brilliant weather and just enough pitching to accustom us gradually to farther possibilities. The vessel is enormous; and whatever we may have to complain of before we get in, we can't complain of *solitude* at any rate. The ship is like an enormous American hotel — very different from the gentlemanly *Eider* in which I came. . . . We are due to arrive in New York early Wednesday morning, according to the account I get.

It seems absurd for me to have come and whisked about so soon after such short interviews and such contracted opportunities for

conversation, but after all it is but part of the general queerness of all the deeper things of life; for that is just the way I feel about my wife the moment my back is turned upon her — it seems as if in the past twelve years I had had no opportunity to have any particular talks with her about the innumerable things that are of most importance. 'T is only a matter of degree. How *Harry* will miss *your* conversation when the opportunity for it is gone! Between us we promise you to try to work some of it into Philosophy and the Drama so that it shall become a part of the world's inheritance! I go back to a life of which the main interest now is that of seeing that the children turn out well — insidious change in one's ambitions brought about by life's changing course! Your name will be a mere legend amongst them — until we are all legends. So no more, my dear old Alice! Here is Queenstown harbor. God bless you forever and ever! Your brother,

W. J.

Cambridge, Nov. 22, 1891

Dearest Alice, —

. . . It is a great mercy that I went and got the impression of you which I did — seeing you so well-*minded* has colored all my imaginings of you with a cheerful tinge, which without the actual experience of your presence would probably have been . . . replaced by most gloomy heart-contractions of wondering pity. Not that the pity is absent by any means; but the *interest in the play*[8] which Katharine [Loring] says you now feel to have prevented you from getting the "full good of" *me,* has left so robustious an impression on my mind of the essence of you, that morbidness is no part of it. . . .

Oh the time! the time! You have so much! If human lots could only be averaged! On this Sabbath afternoon I at last succeeded in snatching a quarter of an hour for which I have waited two months, and gave the bull terrier a bath. "Naldires' dog soap," which I have n't used for years, brought back all the old Bunch effluvium. No dog like Bunch![9] Good night, dear child, and Heaven bless you. Alice, who now sits writing opposite, sends her warmest

[8] Alice James, enjoying her brother Henry's fullest confidence, was very much preoccupied by his dramatic interests. *The American* had been played in London for the first time on Sept. 26, 1891, having been running in the provinces during the previous summer.

[9] For the Scotch terrier Bunch, *cf. L.W.J.*, I, 183.

love; and thanks Katharine for her letter. She bursts out with: "What a big void there 'll be for us when Alice is gone! She stands for the wider sphere of reference, etc.!" True indeed! indeed! Good night. Yours,

W. J.

This gifted and heroic woman died at the age of forty-four, in the following March. She had been an invalid during the greater part of her life, and had suffered greatly, both from physical pain and from the conflict between her bodily infirmity and her high spirits. She resembled her father and her brother William in her gayety, turn of wit, and vividness of style. Her courage assumed the form of neither grim endurance nor evasion of reality, but of a tender irony, in which she both renounced life and at the same time kept her warmth of sympathy. Although she resembled her brother William, it fell to the lot of her brother Henry to be her watchful providence during the last years. The degree and the quality of his devotion can be read in her own words, written in 1890: —

"Henry came on the 10th to spend the day; Henry the Patient, I should call him. Five years ago, in November, I crossed the water, and suspended myself, like an old woman of the sea, round his neck, where to all appearances I shall remain for all time. I have given him endless care and anxiety; but notwithstanding this and the fantastic nature of my troubles, I have never seen an impatient look upon his face or heard an unsympathetic or misunderstanding sound cross his lips. He comes at my slightest sign, and 'hangs on' to whatever organ may be in eruption, and gives me calm and solace by assuring me that my nerves are his nerves, and my stomach his stomach, — this last a pitch of brotherly devotion never before approached by the race. He has never remotely hinted that he expected me to be well at any given moment, — that burden which fond friend and relative so inevitably imposes upon the cherished invalid. But he has always been the same since I can remember, and has almost as strongly as Father that personal susceptibility — what can one call it? — it seems as if it were a matter of the scarf-skin, as if they perceived through that your mood, and were saved thereby from rubbing you raw with their theory of it or blindness to it." [10]

[10] *Journal*, March 25, 1890.

During her last years her brother William was her chief link with home, both with the old circle of family and friends and with the country from which she was in her heart never expatriated. New arrivals from America or American friends who saw her on the eve of the homeward journey reminded her poignantly of her exile. It was on one such occasion that she recorded the following impression: —

"What a tide of homesickness swept me under for the moment! What a longing to see a shaft of sunshine shimmering through the pines, breathe in the resinous air, and throw my withered body down upon my mother earth, bury my face in the coarse grass, worshipping all that the ugly, raw emptiness of the blessed land stands for, — the embodiment of a huge chance for hemmed-in humanity; its flexible conditions stretching and lending themselves to all sizes of man; pallid and naked of necessity; undraped by the illusions and mystery of a moss-grown, cobwebby past, but overflowing with a divine good-humour and benignancy, a helping hand for the faltering, and indulgent thought for the discredited, a heart of hope for every outcast of tradition." [11]

These casual fragments will convey some slight idea of Alice James's quality. She had both the impulse and the capacity to write. She was keenly interested in the life about her, full of shrewd insight, and moved by a strong creative impulse. That she left so little behind her was the fault of her frail body and not of the spirit that burned so unquenchably within.

[11] *Ibid.*, May 20, 1890.

XXV

THE CLOSE OF A CAREER

BEFORE we bring this part of our study to a close and turn from James's education and career to the germination of his ideas, there is a final word to be said on his relations with his brother. William had criticized Henry's literary achievement on two grounds, the obscurity of the style and the slightness of the subject matter. He once likened him to an object which, having remained for a long time at the bottom of the sea, eventually emerges so covered with crustaceous deposits and trailing filaments as to be quite unrecognizable and formless. The fraternal discussion of the proper content and method of prose fiction culminated in a letter of November 23, 1905, in which, replying to William's comments on *The Golden Bowl,* Henry issued an unqualified declaration of independence.[1] He had never been seriously deflected from his course by William's differing judgment; quietly, modestly, but steadfastly, he had from his early boyhood days gone his own way. He had not answered his brother by word or argument, but by a no less resistant passivity. At last, however, he spoke out, in a refusal which was no less firm for being colored by a lifelong and ineradicable habit of subordination. This definitive exchange of views was as follows: —

Cambridge, Oct. 22, 1905

I read your *Golden Bowl* a month or more ago, and it put me, as most of your recenter long stories have put me, in a very puzzled state of mind. I don't enjoy the kind of "problem," especially

[1] William James's most brilliant characterization of his brother's style is contained in the published letter of May 4, 1907 (*L.W.J.*, II, 277–80), in which he speaks (apropos of *The American Scene*) of Henry's refusal to name a thing directly, preferring to breathe and "sigh all round and round it," creating "the illusion of a solid object, made . . . wholly out of impalpable materials." But there is an adequate reply to this letter by Henry, and on Oct. 6 William wrote in such high praise of the book as greatly to soften the effect of his first impulsive screed. (*Cf. L.W.J.*, II, 229.)

when, as in this case, it is treated as problematic (*viz.*, the adulterous relations between Charlotte and the Prince), and the method of narration by interminable elaboration of suggestive reference (I don't know what to call it, but you know what I mean) goes agin the grain of all my own impulses in writing; and yet in spite of it all, there is a brilliancy and cleanness of effect, and in this book especially a high-toned social atmosphere that are unique and extraordinary. Your methods and my ideals seem the reverse, the one of the other — and yet I have to admit your extreme success in this book. But why won't you, just to please Brother, sit down and write a new book, with no twilight or mustiness in the plot, with great vigor and decisiveness in the action, no fencing in the dialogue, no psychological commentaries, and absolute straightness in the style? Publish it in my name, I will acknowledge it, and give you half the proceeds. Seriously, I wish you *would,* for you *can;* and I should think it would tempt you, to embark on a "fourth manner." You of course know these feelings of mine without my writing them down, but I 'm "nothing if not" outspoken. Meanwhile you can despise me and fall back on such opposite emotions as Howells's, who seems to admire you without restriction, as well as on the records of the sale of the book. . . .

Rye, Nov. 23, 1905[2]

I mean (in response to what you write me of your having read the *Golden Bowl*) to try to produce some uncanny form of thing, in fiction, that will gratify you, as Brother — but let me say, dear William, that I shall greatly be humiliated if you *do* like it, and thereby lump it, in your affection, with things, of the current age, that I have heard you express admiration for and that I would sooner descend to a dishonoured grave than have written. Still I *will* write you your book, on that two-and-two-make-four system on which all the awful truck that surrounds us is produced, and *then* descend to my dishonoured grave — taking up the art of the slate pencil instead of, longer, the art of the brush (*vide* my lecture on Balzac).[3] But it is, seriously, too late at night, and I am too tired, for me to express myself on this question — beyond saying that I 'm always sorry when I hear of your reading anything of mine, and

[2] Reprinted from *L.H.J.*[2], II, 43–4.

[3] Delivered in Philadelphia, Jan. 12, 1905, and first published in the *Atlantic* for August of that year.

always hope you won't — you seem to me so constitutionally unable to "enjoy" it, and so condemned to look at it from a point of view remotely alien to mine in writing it, and to the conditions out of which, *as* mine, it has inevitably sprung — so that all the intentions that have been its main reason for being (with *me*) appear never to have reached you at all — and you appear even to assume that the life, the elements forming its subject-matter, deviate from felicity in not having an impossible analogy with the life of Cambridge. I see nowhere about me done or dreamed of the things that alone for me constitute the *interest* of the doing of the novel — and yet it is in a sacrifice of them on their very own ground that the thing you suggest to me evidently consists. It shows how far apart and to what different ends we have had to work out (very naturally and properly!) our respective intellectual lives. And yet I can read *you* with rapture — having three weeks ago spent three or four days with Manton Marble[4] at Brighton and found in his hands ever so many of your recent papers and discourses, which having margin of mornings in my room, through both breakfasting and lunching there (by the habit of the house), I found time to read several of — with the effect of asking you, earnestly, to address me some of those that I so often, in Irving St., saw you address to others who were not your brother. I had no time to read them there. Philosophically, in short, I am "with" you, almost completely.

Before leaving the theme of literary criticism, a place must be found for an exchange of letters with Norton, which throws light on James's attitude to poetry.

Ashfield, Mass., Aug. 8, 1907

Dear William, —

Every day of late I have speculated as to whether I could write to you a letter that would be worth sending. My condition of comfortable invalidism confines me, physically, to the limits of my chamber and the top of the piazza, and reduces me mentally to fellowship with the great mass of mankind, who have not a fresh thought from year's end to year's end, but whose minds are passive recipients of such wisdom as the newspaper and the magazine supply.

[4] Manton Marble of Brighton, England, writer on politics and history.

The book which has been oftenest and longest in my hands these weeks is the *Oxford Book of English Verse*. . . . On the whole, choosing the best of the briefer poems in the whole range of English poetry, it is surprising how few of them are supremely excellent throughout. They often begin with a splendid gush of vigorous expression to end with a trickle of feebleness. . . . Take, for instance, that in great part delightful little poem of Sir Henry Wotton's beginning, "Ye meaner beauties of the night." The first stanza is worth all the rest, though the second and third are good. Or take almost any one of Donne's lyrics. . . . The same thing is true of Wordsworth. His best shorter poems always begin with a finer poetic fervor than they end with. For instance, the first stanza of that hackneyed poem, "Three years she grew in sun and shower," is quite perfect, and in the words which nature speaks there is a befitting amplitude and stateliness, but the last stanza is nothing but old Daddy Wordsworth maundering about "a calm and quiet scene."

All that precedes is a proof that nothing has happened here. We have no events and no adventures to record. The most important incident is the opening of a new flower in the garden, or the passing up the hill to the graveyard beyond of the funeral procession of some old inhabitant of the town, not a resident of the village, with whom we have never had in life any association whatever. . . . You see I have nothing to tell you, and therefore you must attribute my writing to its true cause, namely, to prove to you that I want to pass the time of day to you, and that I am, as always, affectionately yours,

C. E. NORTON

Cambridge, Aug. 14, 1907

Dear Charles, —

I got your delightful letter at Farmington, Connecticut (where Alice and I were making a short visit), and it was read aloud at breakfast one day to our hostess, Miss Pope, to Miss Ida Tarbell, and to a fine fellow named Jaccaci who claimed to be your friend and admirer, and who united, apparently, the finest vein of mongrel bohemian perceptive intelligence to a Putnam-Jackson-like moral and human nature, — things which until now I had judged incom-

patible.[5] They all enjoyed your letter greatly. It gave *me* more than enjoyment — it explained me to myself. I had always supposed myself to "hate" English poetry, because I had never been able to finish reading a poem. You have shown me that the fault lies with the poets, and not with me — they can't finish their own poems. That lets me out, and I agree with you perfectly! I don't know Quiller-Couch's collection, but I think the *Golden Treasury* a dreadful thing in the main (I don't mean that there is no good in it!) — it is so inhuman. Have you seen a little book, *Les cent meilleurs poèmes français?* It seems to me, objectively speaking, superior to any English collection. If you don't know it, let me send it to you. But I have to admit at the outset that I am *poetry-deaf*. . . . My love to your daughters along with my sympathy with yourself . . . Yours as ever,

WM. JAMES

How far was William James's interest in his brother's work reciprocated? When Henry received *The Principles of Psychology,* he was entering upon the period of his absorbing and agitating theatrical ventures. "I blush to say," he wrote in February 1891, "that I have n't had freedom of mind or cerebral freshness (I find the drama much more *obsédant* than the novel) to tackle — more than dipping in just here and there — your mighty and magnificent book, which requires a stretch of leisure and an absence of 'crisis' in one's own egotistical little existence. As this is essentially a year of crisis, or of epoch-making, for me, I shall probably save up the great volumes till I can recline upon roses, the fruits of my production fever, and imbibe them like sips of sherbet, giving meanwhile all my cerebration to the condensation of masterpieces."[6]

There is no evidence that Henry James ever enjoyed either the mood or the leisure to imbibe his brother's psychology, or that he was especially interested in the *Will to Believe,* when that volume appeared in 1897. In July 1902, he was "reading *Varieties of Religious Experience* with rapturous deliberation," but he did not

[5] Miss Theodate Pope, now Mrs. John Wallace Riddle of Avon, Conn. Auguste F. Jaccaci was a painter and art critic, and one time art editor of *Scribner's.* Perhaps the most famous embodiment of the "Putnam-Jackson" character, typified by the family of Drs. James J. and Charles P. Putnam, was their grandfather Dr. James Jackson. For a description of him, including eulogies by O. W. Holmes and others, *cf.* the *Memoir* by J. J. Putnam, 1905, Part II, Ch. I.

[6] *L.H.J.*, I, 180–1.

comment on it. It was not until the publication of *Pragmatism* in 1907 that he was sufficiently interested in the content of his brother's thought to expound his own. Then, on October 17, he announced his adhesion, as follows: "Why the devil I did n't write to you after reading your *Pragmatism* — how I kept from it — I can't now explain save by the very fact of the spell itself (of interest and enthralment) that the book cast upon me; I simply sank down, under it, into such depths of submission and assimilation that *any* reaction, very nearly, even that of acknowledgment, would have had almost the taint of dissent or escape. Then I was lost in the wonder of the extent to which all my life I have (like M. Jourdain) unconsciously pragmatised. You are immensely and universally *right*, and I have been absorbing a number more of your followings-up of the matter in the *American* (*Journal of Psychology?*)[7] which your devouring devotee Manton Marble . . . plied, and always on invitation does ply, me with. I feel the reading of the book, at all events, to have been really the event of my summer." [8]

The Pluralistic Universe evoked a similar expression of discipleship: "All this time I 'm not thanking you in the competent way for your *Pluralistic* volume — which now I can effusively do. I read it, while in town, with a more thrilled interest than I can say; with enchantment, with pride, and almost with comprehension. It may sustain and inspire you a little to know that I 'm *with* you, all along the line — and can conceive of no sense in any philosophy that is not yours! As an artist and a 'creator' I can catch on, hold on, to pragmatism and can work in the light of it and apply it; finding, in comparison, everything else (so far as I know the same!) utterly irrelevant and useless — vainly and coldly parallel!" [9]

The final response, evoked by the publication of *The Meaning of Truth* in the autumn of 1909, is cited from a published letter of November 1: "I broke this off last night and went to bed —and now add a few remarks after a grey soft windless and miraculously rainless day . . . which has had rather a sad hole made in it by a visitation from a young person from New York . . . [who] stole from me the hour or two before my small evening feed in which I hoped to finish *The Meaning of Truth;* but I have done

[7] *The Journal of Philosophy, Psychology and Scientific Methods.*
[8] *L.H.J.*, II, 83.
[9] July 18, 1909.

much toward this since that repast, and with a renewed eagerness of inglutition. You surely make philosophy more interesting and living than anyone has ever made it before, and by a real creative and undemolishable making; whereby all you write plays into *my* poor 'creative' consciousness and artistic vision and pretension with the most extraordinary suggestiveness and force of application and inspiration. Thank the powers — that is, thank *yours!* — for a relevant and assimilable and referable philosophy, which is related to the rest of one's intellectual life otherwise and more conveniently than a fowl is related to a fish. In short, dearest William, the effect of these collected papers of your present volume — which I had read all individually before — seems to me exquisitely and adorably cumulative and, so to speak, consecrating; so that I, for my part, feel Pragmatic invulnerability constituted." [10]

It is evident from these letters that Henry let William do his philosophizing for him. There is no indication, even in these passages, of the *ideas* which the writer so greatly esteems — no exposition of them, still less a criticism. In Henry James's other correspondence there is no philosophy at all. I can only conclude, as might have been supposed, that his mind was quite naïve on that side, and that his profession of pragmatism was an extension of that admiring pride with which he had from childhood viewed all of William's superior attainments. The relation was not symmetrical. As to Henry's work, William freely offered both advice and criticism; while as to William's, Henry could offer only an undiscriminating praise. Science offered them no common ground. This they could find in literature and art, in their experience of life and of the world about them, and, above all, in a deeply rooted familial devotion that grew stronger with the years.

It was in the summer of 1898 that James, after extraordinary physical exertion, spent his *"Walpurgis Nacht"* in the Adirondack Mountains.[11] While it is no doubt true, as he reported, that his projected Edinburgh lectures on religion "made quite a hitch ahead," the strain of ten hours and a half of hard walking with a pack, coming after a fatiguing year, caused an irreparable valvular lesion of his heart. He had paid a high price for the enrichment of his experience. In the late summer of the same year he again over-

[10] *L.H.J.*[2], II, 141.
[11] *L.W.J.*, II, 75–9.

exerted himself in the high Sierras. Then, in June 1899: "I got lost in the Adirondacks and converted what was to have been a 'walk' into a thirteen-hours scramble without food and with anxiety."

Thus by a singular irony of fate he twice suffered misfortune in the spot he loved best in the world, and was thenceforth cut off from that form of recreation which he considered his "main hold on primeval sanity and health of soul." In July 1899, James carried out a European plan already formed, but instead of preparing and delivering the Gifford Lectures at the University of Edinburgh as he had hoped, he was now compelled to spend the year in the unhappy pursuit of health. He entered upon a period of invalidism of his own peculiar sort — a period during which he *felt* only frustration, and would have been justified in total inactivity, but nevertheless somehow managed by utilizing fragments of time and intermittent pulsations of strength to piece together that monument of erudition and insight which is known to the world as *The Varieties of Religious Experience.* It will be noted that the major part of James's philosophical achievement, not only the *Varieties,* but the whole development of pragmatism and the culminating phase of his metaphysical fruition, with all the lecturing, journeying, controversy, and correspondence that these involved, occurred after he had thought his career ended, and when he was already afflicted with that disability which ultimately proved fatal. It is not strange that he should have testified to the latent "energies of man."

The beginning of the year 1900 found him completely discouraged. "I regret to say," he wrote, "that I . . . seem about withdrawing from the career." Foreseeing that he would be unable to renew his teaching in the following autumn, he had written to President Eliot regarding a second year's leave of absence. Thus there began seven years of correspondence during which James was perpetually seeking to withdraw, while Eliot, with the most sympathetic consideration for his health and the most jealous regard for the reputation of the university, was trying to hold him. Extracts will throw light on James's official relations.

Cambridge, Jan. 1, 1900

Dear Dr. James, —

Your letter of December 20th from Rye has reached me this morning, and I hasten to say that the Corporation will undoubtedly

give you leave of absence for another academic year if you need it; though I question whether they would accept your suggestion that your pay during the second year be suspended. Is it not decidedly premature for you to say that you shall not be able to perform any academic duties during the College year 1900–1901? . . . Dr. Walcott [12] was saying to me only last evening that people with hearts such as you suppose yours to be easily live to be over eighty. Would it not be a good plan for you to throw up the Gifford Lectures altogether, and come home in the summer? If one has got to lead a careful and somewhat restricted life, after all there is no place like home, particularly a home which abounds in friends, children, and intellectual interests. . . .

The Philosophical Department, like the whole University for that matter, is reasonably prosperous. Münsterberg seems to be overburdened with advanced students; Palmer is enjoying some controversies over Phillips Brooks House, and some debates in the Faculty on propositions of the English Department; Royce you are now seeing or have lately seen. . . . I am just this week writing my Report for 1898–99, and as usual find it encouraging to review the work, for it is always a tale of growth and vitality. . . . Sincerely yours,

CHARLES W. ELIOT

A few days later Eliot reported that the leave of absence had been granted, on half pay — and added: "The storm centre in the University this winter is in the Medical Faculty. There are large plans there; but great difference of opinion about them. At Cambridge the atmosphere is calm."

Carqueiranne, Jan. 23, 1900

Dear President, —

Your two kind letters replying to my application for a second year's leave of absence have arrived successively, and I thank you and the Corporation heartily for their contents. . . . College work, limited even to a half course, will surely be impossible next year, but getting ten Gifford lectures written and delivered seems a much lighter matter, and towards that I shall devote what energy I can

[12] Dr. Henry Pickering Walcott was a member of the Harvard Corporation 1890–1927, and served as "acting president" during Eliot's absence in 1900–1.

accumulate. I hope in a week or two to begin to write, say at the rate of a page a day. . . .

We are extraordinarily well situated here. . . . My friend Richet [18] the physiologist offered us the use, conjointly with Fred Myers's family, of his noble château and fine grounds which he himself only occupies in summer. After a week at the Hyères-Costebelle hotel we procured two promising servants and moved in yesterday. The place lies between Hyères and Toulon, seven or eight kilometres from each. I wish that you and Mrs. Eliot could share with us the romantic conditions. We grow our own oranges, make our own wine (of which I can't taste a drop) and sit under our own palm trees in the most delicious privacy. Fires are only needed at night, we spend the entire day in the open air, which in spite of its softness is decidedly tonic, and promotes good appetite and sleep. All the same there is no place like home, and I would give anything to be prophetically certain of getting back to some amount of work there again. Believe us both, with affectionate regards to you and Mrs. Eliot, yours always faithfully,

WM. JAMES

Cambridge, Feb. 6, 1900

Dear Dr. James, —

Your letter of January 23rd is delightfully encouraging. It is a great satisfaction to hear that you feel better and are comfortably established in a good climate. Mrs. Eliot and I hope that you and Mrs. James will pamper yourselves in every possible way with minds and bodies at ease.

I think you will see in one of my letters that I did not accept your second year's absence as a fixed fact. It is still seven months and a half to the 1st of next October, and in that time you can climb up quite a long hill. However, the second year's leave of absence is yours, if you want it for Gifford lecture purposes or any other. I heartily wish that Mrs. Eliot and I could share with you your present romantic conditions; but it is impossible, unless one of us should fall sick, and that neither of us is willing to do. On the contrary, I am planning an excursion to Chicago, which is ap-

[18] Charles Robert Richet, professor of physiology at the Faculté de Médecine, Paris. For J. M. Baldwin's recollections of James at Hyères, *cf.* his *Between Two Wars*, 1926, I, 86 ff.

parently going to involve making two or three speeches a day, and sitting in committees and conferences the rest of the time. Such are the consequences of sticking to one job for thirty years and acquiring, through growing old in service, a reputation for giving interesting but impracticable advice. . . .

The death of Professor Dunbar [14] is a serious loss to the University, and a great personal loss to both Mrs. Eliot and me. . . . Ever since 1871 he has been a priceless adviser and friend. Of his four children only his son William seems likely to remain in Cambridge, and the two houses to which he was greatly attached will probably pass into the hands of strangers. It seems to be one of the consequences of American city or suburb existence that families have no permanent home generation after generation. That has not been in the past the right way to build durable families. . . . Please remember Mrs. Eliot and me affectionately to Mrs. James, and believe me sincerely yours,

CHARLES W. ELIOT

Rome, Dec. 24, 1900

Dear President, —

A couple of weeks ago I wrote to the President and Fellows, resigning my professorship.[15] . . . I hope to get the four remaining Gifford lectures on to paper before the middle of May, which is at present the expected time of their delivery; but after a fortnight of work two hours a day, I have to knock off for a month, so it is bad sledding, and I am convinced that however much I may improve I shall always be too delicate to assume the responsibility for regular courses of lectures, and that my best hope, should working days be reserved for me, is with the *pen*. So, not wishing to stand any longer in the way of a definitive settlement of the Philosophical Department, I wrote, as I have told you, to the Corporation. Of course I am disappointed. What I could have hoped for would be one course, or even half a course, regularly announced and given, but I am sure it is wiser to risk no such responsibility. . . .

I hope that you are enjoying Bermuda — I have heard you had a dreadful voyage. I enjoy Rome (abstractly) more than any place I ever was in. It gratifies one's sense for the picturesque more

[14] Charles Franklin Dunbar, professor of political economy.

[15] He also wrote directly to his friend Major Henry L. Higginson, a member of the Corporation. *Cf.* B. Perry, *Life and Letters of H.L.H.*, 1921, 414.

copiously. I say abstractly, for concretely I can't walk about enough to satiate my desires. . . . Is n't the world in a pretty mess of savagery? If I had been at home I could not in conscience have exempted myself from voting for Bryan; but I 'm very glad McKinley got in. Half-baked reforms breed reactions, and the Republicans ought to reap their whirlwind themselves and draw their own chestnuts from the fire. Poor C. C. Everett![16] How I shall miss him. An imperturbably high-minded, yet quaint figure, and so good a friend. . . . Pray don't think it necessary to write any but perhaps the very briefest acknowledgment . . . and believe me always faithfully yours,

WM. JAMES

Bermuda, Jan. 24, 1901

Dear Dr. James, —

Through Dr. Walcott, who forwarded hither your letter to the Corporation and wrote to me about it, I was fully informed concerning your resignation and your reasons for taking that step. . . . Your retirement will be a grievous loss to us, which I know you will mitigate, if you can. . . . Why do you call C. C. Everett "poor"? He lived to be over seventy, and had his wits whole until a few weeks of the end. I call him fortunate. . . .

McKinley (for whom I voted in preference to Bryan) is doing badly; but I hope he will live his new term out. Roosevelt as President would be dangerous. Mrs. Eliot and I like Bermuda very much. . . . It is a reposeful place, with infrequent mails and no possibility of hurry. . . . There is a deal of beauty on land and sea, and in the changing sky. Driving is cheap, and the roads are numerous and tolerably smooth. We find it a good place for quiet work. . . . Rome and Bermuda have one property in common — you need your thick clothes in-doors, and your thin ones out-doors. Remember Mrs. Eliot and me affectionately to Mrs. James and believe me sincerely yours,

CHARLES W. ELIOT

This same resignation, and the thought that their old relations were about to be broken off, occasioned the following exchange of letters between James and Palmer: —

[16] *Cf.* below, II, 464.

Boxford, Christmas Day [1900]

Dear James, —

Münsterberg has just written of a letter from you announcing your resignation. I cannot bear to think of it. So the relief is to think of it some more and to write you. My thoughts go back over the long years of our association — twenty-five years I think they must be — and I recall the first time I ever saw you, as you entered the railroad car somewhere near Beverly, accompanied by a dog or two. I did not then know your name, but was introduced to you shortly after. Then came my fight with Bowen over your proposal to offer a course on Spencer. And soon your marriage and my first sight of lovely Mrs. James, sitting on a low stool in the window of your rooms on Harvard Street, when I made my wedding call. These were the days when you used to visit my course on Locke, the days when you encouraged my Readings in Homer, the many hours of comradeship and difference in Department meetings, chance walks, calls at each other's house. We began at the opposite poles, you in anatomy, I in divinity. Perhaps in that early time each was narrow. I know I distrusted you and thought you ought to dislike me. But how steady the growth of confidence and affection has been! Hardly anybody in Harvard has given me so much as you. It has dignified life to have some one at hand whom I could always admire.

It is a common and delusive dream that the professional man's output is but the completed expression of his private life. We imagine that every Tennyson or Browning must be as romantic or heroic as his own verses, and please ourselves with thinking that these are but incidental in his career and sprung from its needs. Of course it is an unreasonable fancy. Professionalism has its own exactions which often run quite outside the personal element. But where, as in your case, the two are largely united and the big man expands undistorted into the solid professional, there comes a charm and weight of influence which the mere amateur or technicist never acquires. It is a vast contribution you have made to our Harvard life, ennobling and intelligizing it just at this time of transition when, but for influences like yours, it might easily have become chaotic. You have given seriousness without humbug, rationality without dilettantism, daily courage without rudeness. Because of men like you Harvard is now taking a chief place in shap-

ing the ideals of this country. That you withdraw from our teaching will be lamented almost as much by men outside the college as by us, your loving colleagues within it.

And yet I cannot blame you. I see that in writing you can better adjust your work to your powers, and with a given expenditure of force can probably have a wider influence than by spending yourself in the classroom. For a year I have had no thought of your coming back to full work. But I have hoped you might offer a single course, or at least a seminary, and so keep yourself an official member of our staff — the greatest, certainly, that any English-speaking university has ever had in philosophy. But undoubtedly there would be difficulties in this plan. You could not keep your course small. If it was the only one you gave, students would be sure to crowd it and bring labors upon you which could not be eased when days of weakness came. No, I am sorry to think you are probably right in resigning. All we can do is to tell the Corporation to appoint you Professor Emeritus and hope you will be able to mingle more or less with our students. The years of writing which will now become possible will put us under new and glad debts to you. But good as I know all this may be, I cannot help mourning for the happy old arrangements. . . .

Walcott is making a capital President. He manages the Faculty better than Eliot, does not let us talk so long or on so many questions at once. After I have called "question, question" half a dozen times, he will often put the vote. He told me he was much impressed with the solidity of our organization and with the care shown in studying administrative problems. My own impression is that we shall permanently gain through having more than one member of the Corporation understand us.

We have hurried away from Cambridge as soon as the recess began and have buried ourselves in our woods. I have brought my Noble Lectures [17] with me and am hoping for a few days' work upon them. Nothing has been possible hitherto. Time long ago ceased in Cambridge. Fatigue has more than filled its place. As soon as I return, my Boston lectures begin and have to be repeated in Providence and Fitchburg. But I shall not go west this winter. . . .

I write hurriedly. The carriage is just coming to take me to the

[17] Published, in 1901, as *The Field of Ethics.*

Christmas tree at my brother's in Andover. It was good to get a card the other day from you in Rome. Best of all, to gather from it and out of other news of you that you are really improving. We can let you off from instruction only on the condition of your doubling the years to be given to Cambridge friendship. Affectionately,

G. H. PALMER

Rome, Feb. 1, 1901

Dear Palmer, —

Your letter written from Boxford on Christmas day was one of the pleasantest things I ever received, coming as it did from an eye as unused to flow (at least in outward show of lachrimosity) and a tongue as sincere as yours; and speaking of the past in a way that made of it a gold framed picture; and emblazoning my character as 't were a figure on historic tapestry; and treating my lack of training for my profession as if so chosen, by a deliberate stroke of genius; but above all, dear Palmer, by its straight words of recognition of me as a valued co-worker and of affection from your heart. From a man as critical minded as yourself and as absolutely frank when truths are bitter, such expressions have more significance to a fellow than you yourself can probably comprehend, and your letter will surely form one of the brightest features in the "archives" to be handed as a legacy to my children. But "I ain't dead yet" — far from it — and hope still to write your obituary notice, which I will, after this, make "handsomer" than ever. I think the delightful thing about us all in the philosophical department, where each has so distinct and positive a temperament, and each has a set of "ideas," both practical and theoretical, which are the outcrop of his irresistible idiosyncrasy, is our deep appreciation of one another, and our on the whole harmonious coöperation towards the infusion of what probably is objective truth into the minds of the students. At any rate it 's genuine liberalism and non-dogmatism, with more and more joints to hang the whole mass of views together with, and more and more flexibility in them every year; and I for one hate to drop out of so healthy and complex, and I verily believe eventually *fertile* a philosophic organism, while reason still holds a seat within my cranium. So, clutching at a desperate chance, I wrote yesterday to Münsterberg, accepting his suggestion that I should offer Philosophy 6, but realizing the possibility of my break-

ing down, and trusting the Committee to squelch the plan if the question of the casual substitute proved too hard a one to crack. The fact is I am now crammed to overflowing with just the matter for that course, and of all tasks it would be the easiest. I admire Münsterberg's *Schlagfertigkeit* in thinking of it — I doubt whether it would have occurred to me myself. I feel the justness of your apprehensions about a crowded course, but for one or two years to come, I doubt that danger ensuing.

Just what is the topic of your own Noble Lectures? and how many of them must there be? I sympathize with your difficulties, and have hardly ever myself been able to do literary work whilst college work was going on. They interfere absolutely with each other in my case. I wish that you could get some time away. What are Royce's Dublin lectures? If anyone ought to have a year away it is that man — though possibly half a year would be even better. What I am afraid of is that he will spoil the quality of himself — the freer, simpler touch with deepest relations — in this unremitting close-quarter dealing with the details necessary for rapid publication. He can't get far enough away to see his own relations to the subject, and his mind will lose its spring, wonderful organ as it is. Münsterberg's is wonderful too: *Il sue le talent* — but I believe his whole construction in this great book of his to be utterly artificial. Perhaps for that very reason he will found a school as Kant did, and I shall then become as immortal as Zedlitz! I wish he had n't been quite so lengthy in his argumentative vindication of my sanity in the *Evening Post* which to my profound horror I find reproduced in the more permanent pages of the *Nation!*[18] He meant it kindly, but it shows how the newspapers have debauched the personal delicacy of the best of us. Royce's vindication I hear of but have not seen. Of course my mind, bad enough at the best, is as good as ever it was in point of quality. It 's the *quantity* that leaves so much to be desired. But I have blackened paper with a sufficient quantity of stuff to fill more than ten hours in the reading, so I 'm safe at Edinburgh in May, though for the book I ought to write possibly 250 more pages of manuscript. It goes direfully slow. When I *do* anything, either writing or walking, I run down. When I rest

[18] The "great book" was the *Grundzüge der Psychologie*, dedicated to W.J.; *cf.* below, II, 147–50. Kant's *Kritik der reinen Vernunft* (1781) was dedicated to "Freiherrn von Zedlitz, Sr. Excellenz, dem Königl. Staatsminister." For the "vindication" *cf. Nation*, LXXII (1901), 48–9.

I come up. But on the whole I more than hold my own, and my heart proper is now, thanks to these injections which I have been taking, apparently in quite normal condition. The rest is probably a matter of time, and possibly of more injections. . . . Good-bye, dear old Palmer! You don't know what a priceless letter yours was. Royce had written me another one some weeks before. Warmest regards "from both to both."

W. J.

P.S. Poor Frederick Myers died here a fortnight ago, in great suffering from his breathing, but a superb spectacle, awakening especially the admiration of his doctors, of the indifference to such temporal trifles which the firm conviction of continued life will give a man. I never saw such detachment from inferior things!

In spite of this and subsequent resignations, actual or threatened, James resumed his teaching in 1901–1902 with a half-course on "The Psychological Elements of Religious Life," and continued in active service, though on a reduced schedule, for six years! He gave a whole course in 1902–1903, a seminary throughout the year 1903–1904, a half-course in 1904–1905, a half-course together with four weeks of elementary logic in 1905–1906, and finally a half-course on "General Problems of Philosophy" in 1906–1907. In November 1902, he announced his probable resignation at the end of the college year 1903–1904, but expressed the wish to give his seminary in that year even if he gave it "gratuitously." He was evidently reluctant to abandon his teaching altogether. On December 12, 1903, he sent in a formal resignation, which was acknowledged as follows: —

Cambridge, Dec. 17, 1903

Dear Dr. James, —

I told the Corporation last Monday about your proposed resignation. They laid your note on the table, being decidedly disinclined to accept your withdrawal from the active staff. I must go to New York this afternoon for two days. When I get back I shall seek the pleasure of a conversation with you. Very truly yours,

C. W. E.

Cambridge, Jan. 18, 1904

Dear President, —

I was sorry not to have been able to see you when you made that long and kind call on my wife. I tried to see you on Friday last, but you had already left town. Under the particular circumstances, financial and other, of this year, I have felt it my duty to follow your wishes and those of the Department, and to leave my "resignation" unacted on, throughout next year. I have consequently offered half a course of instruction in "Metaphysics" — Philos. 9, three hours a week for the first half-year, Royce taking the second half-year. This justifies my name in the catalogue, and my drawing pay on the salary account. . . . Sincerely yours,

WM. JAMES

Cambridge, Jan. 20, 1904

Dear Dr. James,—

Your note of January 18 gave me great satisfaction; for your continued connection with the College is of great value. The only thing in your proposition which I distrust is that three-hours-a-week course for the first half year. . . . You see that I do not believe any plan to be good which will make you feel tied to Cambridge. While we want your name and your direction for a class of mature students, we also want to have you in good condition to write, either here or in any near-by resort which has a different climate from that of Cambridge. I suggested to Mrs. James that your whole salary should be drawn from the Gurney Fund. You remember what Gurney's wishes were with regard to giving professors time for their own productive labor. . . . Your note of the 18th settles the main point to my entire satisfaction. Very truly yours,

CHARLES W. ELIOT

James next proffered his resignation in order to be able to accept an invitation to Leland Stanford University for the year 1905–1906. Eliot took a somewhat different view of the matter: —

Cambridge, Jan. 13, 1905

Dear Dr. James, —

What I hope you will look forward to, as regards your connection with Harvard, is continued service to this University, with

certain temporary breaks, but nothing which can in the public eye detach you from the University. To have you resign as a professor in Harvard, and then become professor in the Leland Stanford University even for one year would, in my judgment, be disadvantageous to us; and I hope you will not consider that course of action at all. On the other hand, to have you go in the year 1905–06 to California for the second half of the year, retaining your connection with Harvard, would be entirely acceptable to us. . . . I cannot see why you should forgo the advantage of our retiring allowance system. The establishment of that system is one of the best things that has been done in recent years for this University and for American education; and it is highly approved by our alumni and friends, as I have had recent occasion to observe. It ought to be thoroughly carried out, and particularly ought to be visibly enjoyed by the best of the College professors. Save in this respect I agree to put aside all pecuniary questions. I cannot agree to put out of mind the advantage to Harvard which will come from your continuous connection with the University. As I look back over your entire service to the University since 1872, I cannot but think that you owe that advantage to Harvard. . . . Very truly yours,

CHARLES W. ELIOT

During the first half of the college year 1905–1906 James was in doubt about resuming his teaching in the autumn of 1906. His diary records for six weeks the diurnal fluctuations of his mind, thus: Oct. 26, "Resign!" Oct. 28, "Resign!!!!" Nov. 4, "Resign?" Nov. 7, "Resign!" Nov. 8, "Don't resign." Nov. 9, "Resign!" Nov. 16, "*Don't* resign!" Nov. 23, "Resign." Dec. 7, "Don't resign." Dec. 9, "Teach here next year."

Finally, in the spring of 1907, James again sent in his resignation and this time it was reluctantly but definitively accepted. In requesting that Eliot be invited to the dinner which was held on January 18, 1910, for the presentation of James's portrait to the university, the latter thus summarized their long association: "Eliot was my first teacher. . . . He appointed and promoted me, and has always shown confidence in me and been an excellent friend."

When the question of his retirement was settled, James experienced a profound sense of relief — "alone with God" and "truth"! For three years, until his death on August 26, 1910, he was free to

devote the whole of his limited strength to his studies and writing. He was as glad to end his teaching as he had been glad to begin. In a letter to his friend Professor Theodore Flournoy he wrote in March: "I thank you for your congratulations on my retirement. It makes me very happy. A professor has two functions: (1) to be learned and distribute bibliographical information; (2) to communicate truth. The 1st function is the essential one, officially considered. The 2nd is the only one I care for. Hitherto I have always felt like a humbug as a professor, for I am weak in the first requirement. Now I can live for the second with a free conscience." [19]

A further objection to teaching was the drain upon his strength and time. "My . . . nervous energy is a small teacup-full," he wrote to Charles Renouvier in 1896, "and is more than consumed by my duties of teaching, so that almost none is left over for writing." And in 1903 to his brother: "I see now with absolute clearness, that greatly as I have been helped and enlarged by my University business hitherto, the time has come when the remnant of my life must be passed in a different manner, contemplatively namely, and with leisure and simplification for the one remaining thing, which is to report in one book, at least, such impression as my own intellect has received from the universe. . . ." [20]

Furthermore, there was something in William James which was profoundly opposed to the whole life of scholarship, whether teaching, research, or the making of books. This was his emphasis on the incommunicable, or at least indefinable and indescribable, aspects of life. Thus he sympathized with the artist's prejudice against those who talked or wrote *about* art. "But you can't keep science out of anything in these bad times," he wrote from Florence in 1892. "Love is dead, or at any rate seems weak and shallow wherever science has taken possession. I am glad that, being incapable of anything like scholarship in any line, I still can take some pleasure from these pictures in the way of love. . . . What an awful trade that of professor is, — paid to talk, talk, talk! I have seen artists growing pale and sick whilst I talked to them without being able to stop. . . . It would be an awful universe if *everything* could be converted into words, words, words." [21]

James's career was a standing refutation of his own opinion that

[19] *L.W.J.*, II, 268.
[20] *L.W.J.*, II, 44, 190.
[21] *L.W.J.*, I, 337–8.

a teacher was expected to "distribute bibliographical information." If he failed to realize this ideal he gained, rather than lost, in the judgment both of his students and of the University as a whole. As a matter of fact his erudition was vast, and he constantly supplied his classes with bibliographical references. But his erudition and his bibliographies were not systematic, nor did he regard them as ends in themselves. His peculiar art of teaching sprang not only from the qualities of his temperament and genius, but from a deliberate purpose — of which he was conscious as early as 1876, when he said that "philosophic study means the habit of always seeing an alternative, of not taking the usual for granted, of making conventionalities fluid again, of imagining foreign states of mind." "What doctrines students take from their teachers," he continued, "are of little consequence provided they catch from them the living, philosophic attitude of mind, the independent, personal look at all the data of life, and the eagerness to harmonize them." [22]

This was clearly James's personal creed as a teacher, and he both obeyed and justified it in practice. He also exhibited its complementary defects. "Let me advise you in your teaching to be as methodical as possible," he wrote in 1900 to one of his former students, "let them see the plan of the forest as well as the individual tree. I find that my incurable disorderliness of method always stood in my way. Too incoherent and rambling." Methodical, James was not, and in advising others to be methodical he was in effect advising them not to be James — which advice they perforce accepted. Spontaneity comes in flashes, and between the flashes there are likely to be periods of darkness. There were unprofitable moments, even unprofitable hours, in James's classes. There were times when he was evidently fumbling.[23] But his students remembered his flashes when the more steady and duller illumination of their other teachers had long since faded from their minds. His surviving pupils know that they studied with James, though it may have been fifty years ago. When they describe their impressions they make use of such terms as "crisp," "unexpected," "vivid," "ac-

[22] "The Teaching of Philosophy in Our Colleges," *Nation*, XXIII (1876), 178.

[23] He would occasionally even dismiss his class because he had forgotten his notes, or otherwise felt unequal to the occasion. One of his students writes: "Sometimes Dr. James would put his hands to his head and say, 'I can't think to-day. We had better not go on with the class,' and he would dismiss us." Some students, especially scientific students who did not share James's philosophical curiosity, found him "loquacious, vague and obscure."

tive stimulant to independent thinking," "delightful," "alert," "unusual," "exuberance," "enthusiasm," "genuine and sympathetic interest," "brilliancy and originality." Or they recall *incidents,* such as an impressive reading of Tennyson's *De Profundis,* or an invitation to James's house.

James was aware of the lecturer's illusion. To one who proposed that, in the Medical School, lectures be replaced by the "case-system," he said: "I think you 're entirely right, but your learned professor would rebel. He much prefers sitting and hearing his own beautiful voice to guiding the stumbling minds of the students. I know it myself. If you know something and have a little practice there is nothing easier than to hear yourself talk, while to direct the stumbling minds of the students soon becomes intolerable."

But if teaching which is subjectively satisfying to the teacher himself can be unprofitable to the student, the reverse is also true. In James's case teaching that felt ineffective was often in reality effective, because of the candor and personal vividness with which he gave utterance to his difficulties or even to his boredom. When he first taught logic (Mill's *Logic*) in 1881–1882 he taught "wretchedly," as he afterwards wrote apologetically to a member of the class. But the latter remembers it otherwise: —

"That was the James side of the story. My own side as a student is very different. James was rather hampered, perhaps, by the textbook used, but he could have given a good course with anything for a textbook, Plato's *Dialogues* or Tupper's poems: perhaps a course with the latter might have been quite as good as with the former because it would have had more, I take it, of James himself in it. . . . The very fact that he had not well organized the course and that he was perhaps rather bored with the textbook, gave him opportunity to show his own personal reactions. He was thinking his way clear in regard to the points discussed, and took students with him in his thinking. He was refreshingly straightforward and frank, did not hesitate even to express a different view to-day from what he did yesterday, and to say, perhaps, that yesterday he was all wrong. . . .

"As regards my own personal experience, I have the memory of most delightful talks with James outside of the class. I might stop for a minute at the close of the lecture to ask a question or the like. James was very apt to reply, 'Come over to the house and we

will talk it over.' This I was only too glad to do; and to lunch with James and Mrs. James, and perhaps the mother and sister of Mrs. James, was a rare treat; and then after lunch James and I would talk the matter over in his study. Thus the loosely organized course by which James thought 'he had taught us so wretchedly,' was, as I look back upon it, one of the best I ever had because it brought me into contact with a fertile mind while doing its own thinking, and gave me the stimulus and inspiration of direct contact with a frank, outspoken, honest thinker and charming personality."

Since no method stood between James and his students, his teaching was essentially a personal relation infused with his personal qualities. His humor, his playful exaggeration, directness, above all his generosity and comradeship, made him loved by his students as he was by his friends. Another former student, recalling the James of 1878, writes: "He was the most inspiring teacher I ever had — treating his pupils as fellow-students with himself, and giving to our crude opinions a weight that greatly encouraged us." [24]

Writing of his brother William, Henry James once said that "the varieties of his application had been as little wasted for him as those of my vagueness had really been for me." [25] This was intended to refer to the youth and preparatory period of William James's life, but it might have been said with equal truth of his later years, when education was succeeded by career, or rather when education took the form of career. It is easy to point to the fact that James was fatigued by his professorial duties, but dangerous to suggest that he would therefore have been less fatigued without them. A man who is highly fatigable is fatigued by whatever he does, and also by what he does not do. James was fatigued by teaching, but so he was by writing, by reading, by traveling, by social intercourse, and even by recreation. It must not be forgotten that the overstrain which most fundamentally affected his health was physical, and was the result of the exuberance of his sense of well-being. He was instinctively prodigal of his energy, so that the effect of accumulated reserve was to induce a greater recklessness of spending. He also suffered intermittently from those vague maladies which in our ignorance we group together as nervous and

[24] The human quality of James's teaching has been admirably portrayed by Dr. Dickinson S. Miller, as quoted in *L.W.J.*, II, 11–7.

[25] *N.S.B.*, 444.

mental. The delicacy of his neuro-mental balance was complicated by a sanguine temperament, which doomed him to alternations of flooding and ebbing enthusiasm. There is not, so far as I can see, the slightest reason to believe that his professional life was here unfavorable. Of course it exhausted him, and of course it depressed him, as did everything else in its turn. But it provided him with a variety of activities, and permitted a frequent change of scene, while at the same time involving fixed duties from which he derived a sense of stability and usefulness. His profession brought him agreeable and diverse human relations, and a continuous stream of appreciative audiences. Above all it secured his continuous growth, in competence and in fame. Progressively successful as a writer and teacher, he was saved from a sense of futility and enjoyed a belief in his own genius and mission.

PART III

EARLY PHILOSOPHICAL ORIENTATION

XXVI

JAMES THE EMPIRICIST

THE philosophy of William James cannot be forced within the bounds of any orderly system. He had no interest in intellectual architecture: he was an explorer, and not a surveyor or map maker. Love of adventure and insatiable curiosity were his profoundest traits. He was inventive and positive, quick to affirm the latest ideas that flashed upon him without asking the consent of the ideas which he had already affirmed — more concerned with the new wine than with the old bottles. Nevertheless there is in James's thought that unconscious self-consistency which is the miracle of creative minds. It will help us to understand the stages of his development, as well as his relation to his times, if we can grasp that self-consistency at the outset; and I shall now attempt to expound it, in the hope that if it seem forced and schematic this effect will be corrected by the fuller detail that will follow.

The simplest formula is unfortunately contrary to the facts. It is sometimes said that James began as a physiologist and ended as a religious mystic, having passed successively through psychology, epistemology, and metaphysics on the way. There is some justification of this view in his formal schooling and in the chronological sequence of his teaching and writing. The partisans of science are tempted to find in such an order the characteristic philosophical decline from vigor to senility; while the partisans of religion would like to find in the same order a growth of depth and insight. As a matter of fact James's scientific and religious interests were equally early and equally enduring. His religion was not a reaction against the rigors of a scientific schooling, nor was his science a reaction against the excesses of an adolescent religion. In the liberal and tolerant atmosphere of his early environment it was possible for him to be both religious and scientific at the same time, and both in moderation. If he was ever a philosopher he was always a philosopher. There were changes of emphasis, but they were oscillatory

rather than cyclical, and symptomatic of momentary fatigue and satiety, rather than of any fundamental change of disposition. Philosophy was the deepest and most persistent attachment of his life — his wedded wife, for better or worse, to whom he was fundamentally loyal despite occasional infidelities. He would suffer no outsider to attack her, though he might quarrel with her himself. Thus in 1865 he pledged himself to study philosophy all his days, and in 1873 remarked that "of course" his interest would, "as ever, lie with the most general problems"; while in the last year of his life he declared that it was to the "epistemological and metaphysical phase" of his development that he attached the most importance. But this lifelong devotion did not prevent his writing in 1895 that he was unfit to be a philosopher because at bottom he hated philosophy, especially at the beginning of a vacation, with the fragrance of the spruces and sweet ferns all soaking him through with the conviction that "it is better to *be* than to define your being!" [1]

From his adolescence James was both fascinated and tormented by ultimate problems. As his faculties developed he found science congenial, not on account of its technique, still less on account of its pretensions and negations, but on account of its fidelity to fact. The form of his scientific bias was due to his inaptitude for mathematics and laboratory experimentation, and to his deep distrust of logical form. What he admired and sought to emulate in his scientific teachers was their first-hand acquaintance with the raw materials of nature. At the same time he was haunted by a cosmic nostalgia — by those deeper doubts and hopes which are the perpetual spring of religion. He felt these emotions both in his own behalf and vicariously in behalf of every sincerely troubled human soul. The circumstances of his youth as well as his incorrigible individualism forbade his finding a solution in the offices of the church; while his intellectual emancipation forbade his acceptance of dogma. It was inevitable, therefore, that he should look to philosophy for a way of reconciling science with the equally undeniable need for a sustaining faith.

His attitude to both science and religion was positive and conciliatory. He accepted their affirmations and rejected their negations, as one who welcomed light from any quarter. Thus while he accepted as a matter of course the *discoveries* of science, he de-

[1] *L.W.J.*, I, 53, 171; II, 332, 22–3.

tested its arrogance, and both used and risked his own scientific reputation to controvert every form of scientific orthodoxy. He had no patience with the titular claims of science, whether based on its generalized theories or on its method; he conceded only so much territory as was occupied and cultivated. The negations of science, its excommunications, inquisitions, and *index expurgatorius,* he believed to be abuses of authority, in which science borrowed the most indefensible practices of its opponents. He was zealously watchful of that point at which science leaves the ground of observable particulars and extends its domain by sweeping generalizations. In science, as elsewhere, he found it possible to sympathize with emotional bias when candidly admitted, but bias masked by the superior airs of the intellect was the object of his scorn and derision. The negations of science — its positivisms, its atheisms, and its determinisms — sprang, he believed, from its institutional bias, and were no part of that modest and fruitful exploration of nature by which it contributed to the sum of human enlightenment. The counterclaims of religion were met in the same spirit. Religion had, in his eyes, no credentials, whether supernatural or intellectual, by which it was entitled to annul the findings of science. The religion which James respected was neither ecclesiastical nor dialectical, but consisted either in the honest expression of human needs and aspirations, or in the sense of power and insight associated with human faith and worship. The appeal of religion, like the appeal of science, is in the last resort an appeal to experience, and in so far as scientific and religious truths are both truths of experience they are consistent and homogeneous.

In other words, the reconciliation of science and religion is to be found in a philosophy of experience. To this philosophy James gave the name of "empiricism," consciously adhering to the school which already bore this name, but realizing that if the credit and good name of this school were to be restored its doctrine must be thoroughly renovated.[2] It would be easy to show that empiricism means many things, and thus to aggravate the confusion which already reigns. It is more difficult to bring to light the parent stem

[2] I am far from contending that James always uses the term "empiricism" in the sense hereinafter expounded. He applies the name to representatives of the traditional British or naturalistic tendency even when they exhibit the very limitations which he is seeking to transcend. In other words, he uses the term historically, and not merely critically.

of this family of meanings. I submit the following proposal: Empiricism is fundamentally the doctrine according to which the truth of knowledge depends in the last analysis on the contingent existence of that which is claimed to be known. One may think ever so clearly and ever so necessarily — that, in itself, proves nothing. There remains the crucial evidence, which is the testimony of eye-witnesses who are themselves in possession of the ultimate evidence, which is the testimony of the "facts" themselves. Thus, for example, I judge that crows are black. According to the empirical theory it suffices, in order that this judgment shall be correct, that a black crow shall present itself. Whether the blackness of crows is logically necessary, or is consonant with moral and æsthetic predispositions, is of secondary consequence: according to empiricism, the appearance of one or more black crows cuts short the argument and definitely settles the matter.

Thus it is characteristic of empiricism to regard existence as in the last analysis a datum. To some extent, and up to a certain point, things give reasons for themselves and can be called "intelligible"; but in the last analysis they are what they are, and refuse to explain *why*. Knowledge leads us up to this brute finality and leaves us there; only faith can carry us beyond. "The bottom of being," says James, "is left logically opaque to us, a *datum* in the strict sense of the word, something which we simply come upon and find, and about which (if we wish to act) we should pause and wonder as little as possible. In this confession lies the lasting truth of empiricism." [8]

Empiricism in the generic sense is the so-called *a posteriori* doctrine of knowledge, according to which existence itself pronounces the last and decisive word. Knowledge is made true by some sort of transaction between the knowing mind and its natural environment, in which the latter possesses absolute and unimpeachable authority. Some empiricists, like James, stress experiment, in which the knowing mind takes the initiative, and makes offers which the environment selects or rejects; others stress psychogenesis, in which the knowing mind plays a passive rôle, and knowledge is a sort of sedimentary deposit. The essential point is that knowledge eventually submits itself to existence. This being the case, knowledge is always vulnerable. The facts which have power to make or

[8] *C.E.R.*, 128.

unmake it are beyond its control. Hence "the empiricist allows for a possible correction in the future"; while "the rationalist makes his system a closed system. [He] translates the world into [his] system, and then sits down on it and refuses to be dislodged."

According to empiricism, then, knowledge is attested by the existence or occurrence of its object. But if knowledge is to be so tested, this existence or occurrence must somehow be registered in the knowing mind; it must intersect or touch the plane of consciousness; it must *give evidence of itself,* or *make itself evident.* To know is to find and accept existence; or feel and acknowledge its thrust. If this is to occur there must be an accessibility of existence to knowing mind, or an exposure of knowing mind to existence. It is implied that the knowing mind is a natural mind — that is, a mind which is itself on the same plane of existence and history with the objects which enter into commerce with it. The human faculty which best answers this description and supplies this need is sense perception.

It is customary to define empiricism in terms of sense perception. A preference for this faculty is perhaps the most reliable symptom of modern empiricism, but it is not the root of the matter. There is a reason for the preference. Empiricists stress sense perception because of what they assume regarding it, namely, that in this character the mind is most closely conformed to the existential course of events. The senses are supposed to be ports of entry, through which the mind receives cargoes from abroad; or antennæ, by which the contour and behavior of the environment are "encountered" by the exploratory organism.[4] It is when so construed, whether correctly or incorrectly, that sense perception is adopted as a norm of empiricism.

While empiricism in the broad sense may be defined as the *a posteriori* theory of existential knowledge, with James this theory is further qualified by his insistence that in arriving at such knowledge the knowing mind itself *initiates* the ideas to which this *a posteriori* test is applied. When thus qualified, the fundamental tenet of empiricism may appropriately be named the *experimental* theory of existential knowledge. As the doctrine is further unfolded it embraces two further tenets, namely, the *voluntaristic* or fideistic theory of belief, and the *experiential* or intuitive theory of reality.

[4] *Principles,* II, 7.

Our summary of James's empiricism will follow this threefold division: experimentalism, voluntarism, experientialism.

The experimental theory of knowledge is the theory that knowing initiates ideas of existence which it submits to existence, and which existence accepts or rejects. Mind proposes, environment disposes. The voluntaristic theory of belief is the theory that believing is an act of will, which exceeds the limits of experimental verification, and must, in so far as this is the case, proceed on moral grounds. The experiential theory of reality is the theory that existence shines in its own light, or reveals its native quality in certain peculiarly authentic modes of immediate apprehension, such as perception.

James's experimentalist leanings, reflecting an early Darwinian influence, appear in his vigorous attacks on the view that mind is a passive receptivity to the external order. On the contrary, he says, mind is inventive and interested. It displays, furthermore, an inherent and presumably hereditary bias which determines what sorts of hypothesis it shall try. While the mind's judgments or cognitive projects no doubt reflect its antecedent experiences as well as its inborn traits, the important experiences, so far as cognition is concerned, are those which come *after,* and which decide the issue of truth or falsity. Every cognitive project is on trial, and bound to submit itself to fresh findings of fact, no matter what other credentials it may possess. This includes the judgments of science, common sense, religion, and metaphysics. A philosophy is called "empiricism" when "it is contented to regard its most assured conclusions concerning matters of fact as hypotheses liable to modification in the course of future experience." [5] In the elaboration of its hypotheses, the mind employs concepts or general ideas, and these it can, if it so desires, compare among themselves, as in mathematics; but concepts are both in their meaning and in their use subordinate to the direct perception of fact.

James's voluntarism is so insistent and so characteristic that one is tempted to place it on a plane of equality with his empiricism, and to interpret the movement of his thought as a rivalry and oscillation between the two. There would be a measure of truth in such an interpretation, and I would not for a moment deny that James's voluntarism corresponds to personal qualities which were bound to manifest themselves regardless of any consideration of systematic

[5] *C.E.R.,* 43 ff.; Principles, Ch. XXVIII; *W.B.,* vii.

philosophy. But it is also true that voluntarism is consistent with empiricism, and that the peculiar form of James's voluntarism is determined by a deeper commitment to empiricism.

In the first place, as has been noted, the experimental theory of existential knowledge does not imply that the inquiring mind should play a waiting or merely receptive rôle. The experimentalist assumes the initiative. His empiricism lies in the fact that he accepts a verdict imposed from without through the medium of sensibility; but he submits proposals, and these proposals he first contrives by an act of will. Boldness of hypothesis and theoretical inventiveness pave the way to an ultimate obedience. The answer is given by sense perception, but the fruitfulness of the answer is proportional to the skillful framing of the question. In thus emphasizing the voluntary activity of the knowing mind, James was in close agreement with the evolution of scientific method. In forming and trying hypotheses the mind is not only active, but interested. It tries what it hopes is true. This subjective interest is both unavoidable and legitimate. If the mind wanted nothing, it would try nothing. The hypotheses which have never been tried because they commended themselves to no investigator form no part of knowledge, even though the facts may agree with them.

In the second place, however, James admits that in certain cases the will may be the *sole* arbiter of knowledge. Ideas may be accredited not only by empirical, but by moral evidence. That this doctrine is a supplement and not a corollary to empiricism, I do not deny. But I should like to point out that this supplement is the *complement* — consistent with empiricism, and prescribed by it. It is important not only to recognize that James admits moral evidence, but to ask *when* and *why* he admits it. It is admissible, he thinks, in the *absence* of perceptual proof, or in view of "impediments which arise in the purely theoretic sphere." [6] If it were possible or defensible to limit belief to perceptual proof, no such question would arise. But if, as James contends, the exigencies of life forbid such a policy of intellectual rigorism, — if, as he contends, even those who profess this policy belie it by their own conduct, — then it follows that we must adopt some broader policy. Since it is necessary to believe more than can be empirically proved, then either this extra-empirical belief must be left to proceed blindly, or philosophy must

[6] *C.E.R.*, 135.

provide for it. Rationalistic philosophies provide for it by *a priori* proofs, contending in one way or another that existence is subject to necessities which the pure intellect can trace beyond the narrow confines of experience. The empirical philosopher, having renounced such a remedy, must admit that extra-empirical belief has *no* theoretical proof. There remains only the practical or moral test appropriate to activity in general. There are important fields in which the empirical test is remote or impossible, such as religion; and in these fields the moral test becomes peculiarly important. That even here fact-finding takes precedence of faith is clear from the importance which James attaches to the empirical evidence for God and freedom. Thus James's fideism grows out of his empiricism. It is the sequel to the experimental method, and compensates for the limitations of empirically verifiable knowledge.

The third part of James's empiricism is his "experiential" [7] theory of reality. Experimentalism and voluntarism take account of knowledge by concepts, that is to say, of most of the knowledge that counts as such — the beliefs of everyday life, together with the systematic conclusions of science and philosophy. But such knowledge properly culminates and verifies itself in perceptual experience. Experimentalism and voluntarism deal with the limits of this more authentic knowledge, and the methods by which it is supplemented; while experientialism, on the other hand, deals with the richness of its content. "The deeper features of reality are found only in perceptual experience," [8] by one who knows how to find them there. Empiricism thus tends to an immediatism, in which the real nature of that which exists is identified with the evidence for its existence. *That* gold exists is proved by its sentient occurrence; *what* gold is is revealed in its sentient qualities, such as its yellowness, its specific degree of felt hardness, and its visual or tactual form. This does not mean that existence is limited to actual human perceptions, but that these perceptions may be regarded as samples of what endures in their intermittence and extends beyond their horizon.

James's view of the nature and rôle of ideas is an application of his experientialism. The moment of sense perception is the full

[7] Term proposed by D. Masson (*Recent British Philosophy*, 1865, 37, note) after J. S. Mill, *Westminster Review*, XXVII (1865), 344.
[8] *S.P.P.*, 97, 35, 98, 100.

realization of knowledge as respects both certainty and insight. But this moment is only an occasional phase of the cognitive life. In fact it is man's greatest cognitive achievement that he is able to supplement his narrow and intermittent perceptions, and thus triumph over his own limitations. Now a norm is revealed in its confessed failures, shortcomings, or makeshifts, as truly as in its boasted triumphs. If a man is driven to pessimism by the ubiquity and fatality of pain, it is evident that he deems pleasure to be the only good. If a man is driven to skepticism by the impossibility of perceiving existence, or to agnosticism by the impossibility of perceiving metaphysical reality, or to positivism by the fact that natural science alone is perceptually verified, then it is clear that he deems perception to be the only knowledge. Similarly, a philosophy which declares thought to be a *substitute* for perception — justified in so far as it is equivalent to perception, and employed in default of perception — is unmistakably perceptual in its standard, regardless of the degree to which the use of the substitute is emphasized and elaborated.

When paper money derives its value from the fact that it is exchangeable for gold, then its standard is the gold standard, even though there be little or no gold in circulation. It is characteristic of James's philosophy that he emphasizes the extent to which the cognitive transactions of mankind make use of credit, and there is danger, therefore, of overlooking the standard on which these transactions are based, or the ultimate goods into which their negotiable instruments can be converted. James himself leaves no excuse for such oversight. He explicitly treats thought as a second-best, measured in the degree of its cognitive dignity by the standard of perception. An idea *is* an idea, effectively and not merely nominally, when and in so far as it is convertible, directly or indirectly, actually or hypothetically, into perceptual experience. The merit of thought lies in the fact that it enables man to act as though his perceptions were as wide and as constant as that sphere of existence of which he has only fitful glimpses. He can profit by, and live by the light of, perceptions which he never actually enjoys. Ideas are *working* substitutes, by virtue of which action may be fruitfully juxtaposed to those portions of existence which lie beyond the narrow range of sense perception.

The experiential doctrine of the meaning of ideas brings James's

pragmatism into line with his fundamental empiricism. In the important pragmatistic announcement of 1898 he explicitly declares, as against Charles Peirce, that it is important that thought should have *particular* consequences, rather than that they should be exclusively practical, and that the experiential consequences are prior to the practical: "To attain perfect clearness in our thoughts of an object . . . we need only consider . . . what sensations we are to expect from it, and what reactions we must prepare. . . . The ultimate test for us of what a truth means is indeed the conduct it dictates or inspires. But it inspires that conduct because it first foretells some particular turn to our experience which shall call for just that conduct from us." [9]

Though all ideas derive their qualitative meaning from sense experience, they may be examined for themselves, without being *believed* or expected to occur as actual percipient events. Ideas may be repeated, analyzed, and brought into systematic relations with one another; as in logic and mathematics. James came even to concede that such procedure yields genuine knowledge of an objective realm, but remained to the end a good enough empiricist to disparage it: "To know all this truth," he says, "is a theoretic achievement, indeed, but it is a narrow one; for the relations between conceptual objects as such are only the static ones of bare comparison, as difference or sameness, congruity or contradiction, inclusion or exclusion. Nothing *happens* in the realm of concepts; relations there are 'eternal' only. The theoretic gain fails so far, therefore, to touch even the outer hem of the real world, the world of causal and dynamic relations, of activity and history. To gain insight into all that moving life, Bergson is right in turning us away from conception and towards perception." [10]

In terms of the experiential theory of reality it is possible to understand James's persistent emphasis on concreteness and individuality. Writing to a friend in 1904, he said: "The whole form of movement of your mind is so different from mine — I refer to your extraordinary fondness for putting everything into extreme abstract and schematic shape, while I can't bear to leave the concrete instance — that I have to overcome a certain primary repugnance for your statements." [11] Philosophy, for James, was not an attempt

[9] *C.E.R.*, 411, 412.
[10] *P.U.*, 340.
[11] To H. R. Marshall, Nov. 21, 1904.

to secure universality, coherence, definiteness, or any other such intellectual end, but to *see* the world as it is in all its fullness. He once spoke of the Absolute as sitting for its portrait to Royce, but it was James and not Royce that painted portraits. The philosopher, like the painter, may hope to see with a finer sensibility, a broader sweep, and a deeper sympathy, than the casual observer. Like the painter he strives to "catch," or "get," the world's likeness, and to seize upon its character. And the world which served as James's subject was not a "possible" world, a mere logically qualified being-in-general, but this particular world which extended from his doorstep. He was a contemporary biographer of the universe — of this picturesque and hoary universe, with its scars of battle, and the moles and wrinkles of its homely physiognomy; being attached to it from old acquaintance in spite of its shady record, because blood is thicker than water, and because of a certain pathos and zestfulness with which it was invested.

In proportion as James emphasized the experiential theory of reality he inevitably construed experience not as a mere point of departure for thought, nor as a mere catch-all, but as a process having positive and specific characters. Thus he wrote in 1904: "According to my view, experience as a whole is a process in time, whereby innumerable particular terms lapse and are superseded by others that follow upon them by transitions which, whether disjunctive or conjunctive in content, are themselves experiences, and must in general be accounted at least as real as the terms which they relate." [12]

This experiential doctrine of reality was couched, even in its later statements, in terms of "perception." But if perception was qualified to play so great a rôle, it was because this faculty had long since lost the character which it possessed in the earlier empirical tradition. It had been a leading motive in James's philosophy not only to emphasize perception, but to reinterpret it; and in particular to impute to it a continuity and depth, a synthetic grasp and reach, which differed radically from the notions held by his predecessors. "Every examiner of the sensible life *in concreto,*" says James, "must see that relations of every sort, of time, space, difference, likeness, change, rate, cause, or what not, are just as integral members of the sensational flux as terms are, and that conjunctive relations

[12] *M.T.*, 111.

are just as true members of the flux as disjunctive relations are." [13] James elaborated this general thesis with scrupulous attention to detail. His "nativistic" theory of space provides an immediate experience of that third dimension of depth in which lie the common objects of the external world.[14] His theory of the "specious present" provides an immediate apprehension of the temporal relations of past and future. His interpretation of activity in terms of a unique pattern or train of sensible data provides for causal efficacy.[15] The self's unity and reflexive consciousness is similarly identified with specific sensorial and affective complexes in which the ego as "judging thought" takes its place in the common stream. The traditional chasms which other schools leave unbridged, or which they bridge by elaborate metaphysical constructions, are *filled* by James with a positive, experiential content. Mind and body are differences of external relation and context attaching to identical terms — which terms are therefore in themselves neither mental nor bodily. Thought's reference to its transcendent object is translated into routes from the nearer to the remoter portions of the same field, or into a sense of the direction and destination of such routes. Even the duality between concepts and percepts tends to lose its sharpness, the act of conceiving being a part of the perceptual flux, and its meaning being a "cut" or *selection* from that same field.[16]

Thus by the inclusion of experiences of tendency, meaning, and relatedness, by a recognition of the more elusive fringes, margins, and transitions that escape a coarser sensibility, or a naïve practicality, or an unconsciously artificial analysis [17] — by such inclusion, the field of immediately apprehended particularity becomes a continuum which is qualified to stand as the metaphysical reality. Of this continuum James says that "though one part of our experience may lean upon another part to make it what it is in any one of several aspects in which it may be considered, experience as a whole

[13] *P.U.*, 279–80.

[14] The opposing view, that the third dimension is an idea built up associatively from kinæsthetic and other sensations, is by a misleading accident of terminology commonly called the empiricist or "empiristic" view. E. G. Boring, in his authoritative *History of Experimental Psychology* (1929), employs the less equivocal term "geneticist."

[15] *Cf. P.U.*, 378, 391.

[16] *Cf. S.P.P.*, 48–50.

[17] *Cf.* the essay "On Some Omissions of Introspective Psychology," *Mind*, IX (1884), *passim.*

is self-containing and leans on nothing." [18] In its finite and synthetic concreteness, it escapes the paradoxes which beset abstract infinity. Its overlapping and interpenetration of parts illuminate the mystery of identity and difference.[19] Thus, the world of appearance not only loses those characters of inadequacy which have incited rationalistic metaphysics to its dialectical quest, but proves itself to be a potent solvent of ancient problems.

Reality construed empirically as an experiential continuum has unity both of kind and of connection: it provides an intimate union where dualistic, monistic, and theistic systems have left or created gaps. But it is none the less a plurality — not only because there is a moral interest in thinking it so, but because a world that is "bagged piecemeal" must be taken as divisible. In the last and most metaphysical phase of James's development he stressed this pluralistic interpretation of empiricism — a "revised empiricism," which, he said, *"means the habit of explaining wholes by parts."* Our best, our only knowledge is a knowledge of *this* or *that*. We frame our knowledge of the sum of things after the analogy of its items, and if these are unreliable we are cognitively bankrupt. Reality is not only *known* pluralistically, but is known to *exist* pluralistically. The relations by which the all-inclusive totality holds together are *de facto* or "adventitious," rather than "essential," relations. The universe as a whole is a resultant — the total or composite effect of the parts.[20]

If it is characteristic of the world that its parts should compose and yield its whole, rather than that a prior whole should manifest itself in predetermined parts, then it is subject to change initiated locally, as, for example, in the human will. It is not only a fluid, but a flexible world, in which there is a third alternative to resignation and despair. Not being *essentially* one, it may be praised with discrimination where it is praiseworthy, and worshiped exclusively where it is divine.

This fluid, interpenetrating field of given existence, as James depicts it, embracing the insight of religious mysticism and of Bergsonian intuition, is far removed from the sensationalistic atomism of the discredited empiricists. But it was intended none the less

[18] *E.R.E.*, 193.
[19] *S.P.P.*, Chs. X, XI; *P.U.*, Chs. VI, VII.
[20] *Cf. S.P.P.*, 164–5, 35; *P.U.*, 7–8, 61; *W.B.*, 278.

as a correction and amplification, not as an abandonment, of the older tradition. In his last book, after he has assimilated both mysticism and intuitionism, "perceptual experience" is still the name which he gives to that in which he finds "the deeper features of reality," and of which he says: "Here alone do we acquaint ourselves with continuity, or the immersion of one thing in another, here alone with self, with substance, with qualities, with activity in its various modes, with time, with cause, with change, with novelty, with tendency, and with freedom." [21]

Towards the end of his career, James made repeated allusions to the metaphysics which he was about to write. He was not spared to accomplish his purpose with that completeness and technical rigor for which he hoped. Some will say that he found the difficulties insuperable, but the perpetual freshness and fecundity of his mind up to the year of his death must cast doubt upon such a judgment. Others have carried this project forward, and many of the most characteristic features of the thought of to-day prolong the line of his development. In any case, James saw the dawning realization of that hope which was the deepest and most persistent motive in his philosophizing. "Let empiricism," he said, "once become associated with religion, as hitherto, through some strange misunderstanding, it has been associated with irreligion, and I believe that a new era of religion as well as of philosophy will be ready to begin." [22]

[21] *S.P.P.*, 97.
[22] *P.U.*, 314.

XXVII

GENERAL INFLUENCE OF SCIENCE

WILLIAM JAMES entered the Lawrence Scientific School in the autumn of 1861. This year was the centre of a remarkable constellation of events, all of them tending to sharpen the conflict of science and religion and to make their reconciliation the most urgent problem of philosophy. Two great generalizations heightened the prestige of science and laid the ground for its claims to intellectual hegemony. Darwin's *Origin of Species* appeared in 1859, and at approximately the same time the principle of the conservation of energy, broached two decades earlier, won general acceptance. These were not merely scientific achievements, but appeared to constitute a decisive defeat for religion and for every system of thought that reserved a privileged place for man. Exponents of the principle of natural selection claimed to disprove the supernatural origin of man, while in the name of the conservation of energy he was denied the possession of supernatural capacities such as thought, will, and spirit. The effect was to create a militant tone in science, and on the side of religion a reciprocal spirit of hostility, the more uncompromising because it was felt that the very life of religion was at stake.

From science sprang the philosophy which came to be known as "naturalism," "agnosticism," "positivism," "scepticism," or "materialism." The doctrines of this philosophy came from science; but its temper, instead of being experimental and cautious like that of science, was arrogant and dogmatic. Religion, on the other hand, was loyally befriended by theology, Protestant and Catholic, and by traditional metaphysics of the theistic type. It had also obtained a more disinterested support from two philosophical schools which flourished at the beginning of the century, the Scottish realistic or "common sense" school, and the German idealistic school inspired by Kant and culminating in Hegel. But in 1860 the prestige of both of these schools had reached a low ebb.

The Scottish school, which had attempted to meet the skeptical challenge of Hume at the close of the previous century, had already lost its identity and become blended with Kantianism before the death of Sir William Hamilton in 1856. The leaders of this school, Thomas Reid, Dugald Stewart, and Thomas Brown, professed to save the philosophy of experience, but they seriously compromised it, by accepting "suggestion," "common sense," "primary elements of human reason," or "intuitive beliefs," as the ground of knowledge. They abandoned the strict empirical method of Hume without attaining to the *a priori* method of Kant, and thus fell between two stools. Their followers were eclectics, like Hamilton in Scotland, Victor Cousin in France, and James McCosh in America; all of whom created the impression of gathering here and there whatever agreed with the prepossessions of common sense, morality, and religion, without adhering rigorously to any philosophical principle. They were lacking in both the systematic and the critical spirit; and in spite of their wide popular influence they ceased, after Mill's attack upon Hamilton in 1865, to interest minds of the first rank.

The great idealistic movement, inaugurated by Kant, and embracing Fichte, Schelling, Hegel, and Schleiermacher, was brought to a close by the death of Schopenhauer in 1860. In the country of its origin the influence of the movement rapidly waned. In other countries it had never really taken root. Its influence had been felt, but it had been only very imperfectly understood and assimilated, and had been used to piece out the systems of thinkers reared in another tradition. The most effective popular exponents of idealism had been men of letters, such as Wordsworth, Coleridge, Carlyle, and Emerson, by whom it was blended with kindred philosophies such as Platonism, with the romantic movement in art and letters, and with the general spirit of German culture. Such exponents had little influence upon the development of technical philosophy.

Thus in 1860 European thought was peculiarly defenseless against the powerful invasion of the newly augmented and freshly inspirited forces of science. The early successes of this invasion were rapid and seemingly overwhelming. In Germany Strauss, Feuerbach, and Karl Marx developed materialism from Hegelian premises. Moleschott and Büchner, followed later by Haeckel, boldly proclaimed the new naturalism and received a wide and favor-

able hearing. In France the positivism of Comte had been in the ascendant for some decades, and was being continued and popularized by Taine and Renan. In England Herbert Spencer's "Synthetic Philosophy," announced in 1860, laid claim to the domain of philosophy in the name of evolution; while Darwin's prestige was rapidly increasing, at the same time that his teachings were being generalized and diffused by Huxley and Tyndall.

A philosopher who, like James, was entering on his career in the early '60s was confronted, therefore, with the following alternatives.[1] He could join the army of naturalism; and preach the gospel of positivism, as W. K. Clifford did in England, or the gospel of evolution, as John Fiske did in America. His biological interest and training might have inclined him to take this course had they not been counteracted by his religious interest, and by his critical understanding of the limits of science. His initiation into science had, on the other hand, spoiled him for any easy acceptance of the alternative of religion. Authority, dogma, sentimental piety, transcendentalism, blind optimism, pedantic traditionalism, edifying eclecticism, were all alike impossible for him.

Two choices remained open. Kantian idealism, without credit in its own country, was about to undergo a vigorous revival in France, England, and America. In France, Renouvier began the publication of his *Critique générale* in 1854; and in 1867 Ravaisson published his famous *Rapport,* which inaugurated a powerful idealistic opposition to both positivism and eclecticism. Renouvier became, as we shall see, the greatest single influence upon James's thought; but though Renouvier was a professed adherent of Kant, James prized him for his Kantian heresies rather than for his fidelities. Ravaisson touched him not at all. Hutchinson Stirling's *Secret of Hegel* appeared in England in 1865, while in America William T. Harris began the publication of a translation of Hegel in his *Journal of Speculative Philosophy* in 1868. These pioneers were followed by greater men — by Edward Caird, T. H. Green, and F. H. Bradley in England, by Josiah Royce and G. H. Howison in America. But these philosophers, while they were in some cases James's personal friends, were in all cases his philosophical adversaries. As to Germany, when James turned his attention in that

[1] For James's own recollection of the "crudity," "ignorance," "amateurishness," etc., of the philosophy of "the sixties," *cf. P.U.*, 4 ff.

direction, it was not from the revivals of Kantianism and Hegelianism that he obtained intellectual nourishment, but from Fechner and Lotze — men who, like himself, were trained in science and predisposed to an empirical method in philosophy. The idealistic way was not the way of James. He lived contemporaneously with it, fought many battles with it, almost succumbed, but maintained his independence and ultimately identified himself with another and rival party.

This other party, and last remaining choice, was British empiricism. The tradition of Locke and Hume had been kept alive through the Scottish line, and through the utilitarians and associationists. The scientific movement, and the personal brilliancy of John Stuart Mill, gave it new life and prestige. Nevertheless it was in a parlous state. Mill had saved it from the compromises of the eclectics, but not from that malady of self-destructive skepticism which it had contracted in Hume — which the Scottish philosophers had vainly treated with palatable medicines, but which had been latterly aggravated by the associationists. It was now threatened with an even more fatal danger, that, namely, of being absorbed altogether by the rising tide of naturalism.

With this party of empiricism, in its hour of gravest peril, James threw in his lot. Finding powerful allies in Renouvier abroad and Hodgson at home, he set himself the task of leading empiricism out of Egypt to a promised land where the milk and honey of metaphysics might be enjoyed without disloyalty to its fundamental creed.

These are the currents and eddies of thought amid which James found himself when he began to navigate his own philosophical craft in 1861. Toward the charting of his own course he brought certain well-marked prepossessions, too general to commit him to any definite philosophical doctrine, but undoubtedly eliminating certain alternatives, and affecting the emphasis within those which remained. How far these prepossessions were due to his hereditary cast of mind, to his earliest experiences, and to the condition of his health, I shall not here attempt to judge. In any case they cannot be traced to any philosophical teaching, but predetermined the influences of this kind to which he was susceptible.

Among these prepossessions I count three as unquestionable. The first of these was his moralism. He was not a man to rest content

with any philosophy which disparaged or enervated the will. Perhaps the very fact that he did not engage extensively in the work of the world, but adopted an intellectual career, intensified this tendency. What he could not express in affairs found expression in a dramatization of life in which he cast himself in the rôle of moral champion. His second prepossession was in favor of variety and change, the intellectual counterpart of his restless disposition. It was not likely that a man who was bored by sameness, and who found routine intolerable, should be receptive to philosophical influences of the rationalistic type which emphasized identity and worshiped coherence. Thirdly, even though James abandoned art, he remained a man of artistic sensibility. He had both taste and the creative impulse. Literature and the plastic arts claimed a large part of his attention. He had the novelist's interest in character, the dramatist's interest in life, and the poet's interest in nature. In other words, he was repelled by verbalism, logomachy, and abstractness. No philosophy could ultimately satisfy him that did not embrace an intuition of concrete realities, and exalt feeling and sensation above the intellect.

The earliest external influences which moulded James's thought were the religious experience of his father, the humanistic interests implanted by literature and art, and the scientific training that entered into his early education and early career as a teacher.

From his father's religion, as we have seen, James took the content and rejected the form. It was the spirit and the attitude that won him, rather than the doctrine — his father's piety, and not his father's ideas. He started with religion as a datum and held to it until he might justify it for himself. In literature he found similar data. Goethe, Browning, Wordsworth, Emerson, and Carlyle, all contained a strain of metaphysics allied to the idealistic school of Kant. But James took the poetic or moral insight, and let the metaphysics go. Like his father, they were exemplars of faith, and not oracles of reason. Similarly, all of James's broader cultural interests — not only his wide acquaintance with German, French, and English literature, but his feeling for art and for nature, his profound sympathy for human life in all its manifestations, his keen discriminations of national traits, his multiple and cosmopolitan human contacts, and his absorption in the political events of his time — gave "body" to his thought, and accentuated his distaste for bloodless ab-

stractions as well as for all intellectual negations. Life and reality were for James too warm, too rich and colorful in detail, to be brought easily within the limits of any formal system.

James's religious and cultural sources have already been sufficiently elaborated. The third, or scientific, influence has also been traced so far as concerns the events of his life, but must now be considered as an ingredient of his thought.

That in philosophy James should have chosen the way of empiricism was primarily due to the circumstance that his scientific training was in biology, and to the accident that his teachers in that field were Agassiz, Jeffries Wyman, and Charles Darwin. Biology as James knew it employed observation and experiment. The good scientist had an alert and discerning sense of fact, and fitted theory to fact with as few ideological wrinkles as possible. This does not mean that James thought of science as a mere receptivity to fact. On the contrary, no one has contributed more powerfully than he to the general recognition of the rôle of theoretic invention. But the *purpose* of theoretic invention, as James first saw it, was the economical and useful description of fact. Theories are to be judged primarily not by their logical consistency or æsthetic symmetry, or by any other formal criterion, but by their factual relevance. They are at best a substitute for something better, namely, first-hand observation — which is better both as affording evidence of existence and as revealing its nature. Except during his early studies of chemistry James's scientific experience was in a field in which quantitative methods played an inconsiderable rôle.[2] Beyond this he had a temperamental antipathy to mathematics and formal logic, an antipathy that was in some measure founded on incapacity. In brief, a scientific theory was for James essentially a hypothesis, owing its cognitive merit not to its intrinsic form but to its ulterior verification in terms of perceptual experience. Hence the method of science, as James knew it best, inclined him in the direction of empiricism.

But the content as well as the method of science contributed to James's philosophical development. Biological science was taking the place once held by astronomy, chemistry, or physics — dictating,

[2] In view of the close philosophical agreement between Ernst Mach the physicist, James the biologist and Bergson the mathematician, one must avoid laying too much emphasis on the particular science through which philosophy is approached.

through the conception of evolution, the general outlines of cosmological belief. It was the storm centre in the disputes between science and religion, especially in England and America. Hence it was almost inevitable that a thinking biologist should find himself involved in philosophical disputes — peculiarly inevitable in the case of James, who was already incurably addicted to philosophy.

In 1872–1873, and from 1874 for five consecutive years, James gave a course in Harvard College on "Comparative Anatomy and Physiology." A Harvard graduate who took this course in 1876–1877 tells me that James's weakness for philosophy was so well known that his students could always (sometimes in self-defense!) switch him from the scientific matter in hand and set him to talking on fundamental issues. Similar testimony is contained in a communication to the *Harvard Graduates' Magazine:* "I took Natural History 3 in the college year 1877–1878, then held in some basement room in the museum building. . . . The text books were Mivart's *Anatomy* and Huxley's *Physiology;* these books, by the way, received but little attention in the classroom, for the lecturer could but feel hampered by the tediousness of such class work and launched out, at almost any occasion, into a lecture which took shape gradually in a course on evolution; these lectures were clear and illuminating and, as the lecturer was enthusiastic on the subject, did not fail to kindle a reflection of that enthusiasm in his hearers." [3]

What was the content of these early courses? The notes and examination papers which are extant make it clear that James's tendency was to use comparative anatomy in the first half-year as affording proofs and illustrations of evolution, and physiology in the second half-year as an approach to psychology.[4] The doctrine of evolution which James taught was, of course, Darwin's. He had known Darwin's writings from his days as a student, and in 1868 he had written reviews of Darwin's *Variation of Animals and Plants under Domestication*, in which he praised Darwin as a scientist, and commented on the absence of any law explaining the origin of variations. The influence of Darwin was both early and profound, and its effects crop up in diverse and often unexpected quarters. Darwin, like Jeffries Wyman, was to James a model scientist: it is clear

[3] By "a member of the Class of 1878"; *Harvard Graduates' Magazine,* XXIX (1920), 324.

[4] In the final examination given to his first course (1872–3), three questions out of seven deal with speech, sensation, and will.

that he liked and admired the temper of the man — his scrupulous experimentalism and his modesty. But he also liked and adopted his ideas. James's conception of the *a priori* factors in human knowledge[5] was an application of the Darwinian notion of spontaneous or accidental variation; Darwinian, too, was his tendency to view life as a hazardous experiment, with all of its instrumentalities on trial. James did not follow the Darwinian emphasis on continuity. That nature never makes leaps — *natura non facit saltum* — was no part of his vision of things. On the contrary, he felt the individual to be a locus of abrupt differences. The essence of Darwinism, for James as for Huxley, lay in the idea that whether individual variations are great or slight, they prove and disprove themselves — survive and disappear — as their environment dictates. The individual nominates, the environment elects.[6]

A scientist with a philosophical interest will tend to the philosophical generalization of science. It was inevitable that James in his youth should have been vulnerable to the influence of the naturalistic school, which was engaged with every appearance of success in substituting the findings of science, as well as its methods, for those of the traditional metaphysics. He found the writings of this school ready at hand — in close propinquity to his scientific studies, and speaking the same language. Although he was never wholly converted to them, they deepened his sense of the conflict between science and religion, and there were moments when they temporarily took possession of his mind. As early as 1863, when James was a student at Harvard, he read Büchner's *Kraft und Stoff*, and his notes reveal the extent to which he was convinced by it. Büchner's arguments, and in particular his linking together of matter and force, seemed to establish the self-sufficiency of the physical world. The youthful James thereupon recorded his rejection of the causal argument for God. A First Cause being no more intelligible than a physical cause, it must be rejected "on the logical principle of not multiplying existences." The argument for God as a Final Cause was "a tissue of absurdities." Its principal weakness lay in its attributing to nature the man-made cleavages among individual things, and then invoking an intelligence to overcome their isolation. "Nature only

[5] *Principles*, Ch. XXVIII.

[6] *Life and Letters of T. H. Huxley*, 1903, I, 250, 251, 254. There is an admirable discussion of the matter in F. J. Teggart, *Theory of History*, 1925, Chs. XI, XII.

offers *Thing.* It is the human mind that discriminates *Things.* . . . The division is artificial, — we can cut out an individual of whatever size we please, and can consider the whole Universe as one thing." We have at least as good ground for affirming a universe as for affirming its parts, so that we are never in the position of needing to invoke a purposive God to make a whole out of fragments.

There are hints here of James's own way of escape from naturalism, but it is clear that the traditional theism has from this time no force for James, and that until he shall discover a saving philosophy for himself he must be peculiarly exposed to naturalistic arguments, whether of the more affirmative, materialistic type which prevailed in Germany, or the more negative, "positivistic" type that was found congenial in England. This applies to the whole period of his studies and early illness, down to the crisis of 1870, when the reading of Renouvier gave him the courage to think and believe his way out. It will be recalled that in writing to his father from Berlin in 1867 he said: "I feel myself . . . more and more drifting towards the sensationalism closed in by scepticism — but the scepticism will keep bursting out in the very midst of it, too, from time to time; so that I cannot help thinking I may one day get a glimpse of things through the ontological window. At present it is walled up." [7]

The following letter to Ward reveals the same sense of the force of the naturalistic position and the impossibility of any easy victory for the party of religion. In short, though he could not be satisfied with the naturalistic position, he did not as yet know how it could be overcome. In his readings on religion, such as Vacherot's *La Religion* and Burnouf's articles in the *Revue des deux mondes,* it was this conflict that was uppermost in his mind.

Cambridge, March 1869 [8]

My dear Tom, —

. . . What you say about my letter from Berlin amuses me muchly. I should like to read it myself sometime. I 've entirely forgotten everything I said in it except that the gulls were still flying about the mouth of the Amazon in the sunshine. I remember the sour black

[7] *L.W.J.,* I, 97.

[8] Fragments of this letter have been published, *L.W.J.,* I, 152; and the "letter from Berlin," *ibid.,* I, 127 ff. *Cf.* also the letter to Ritter of Jan. 1869; above, 291.

Berlin afternoon in which I wrote it and that I was chiefly moved to do so by way of working off my own despair. . . .

What you say of Burnouf's articles is interesting, and if your analysis is comprehensible to anyone but yourself, I should well like to see it or a copy of it as it would save me the time of a second reading of the originals. I read 'em all as they appeared and remember their suggestiveness. But there 's a priggish tone about the cuss in his way of talking in the name of *la Science* — as if in *these* matters there was as yet much beside *opinions*. Moreover it struck me in the late articles that there was a certain pedantic silliness in his assumption that no particular religion existing has any right to quarrel with the results of "Science," since these results are the same as the essential features of the primitive Vedic religion from which later religions have derived. This latter fact is no argument. The Vedic doctrine seems to have been both a doctrine of nature and of men's fates, conglomerated or harmonized, and is the germ of the philosophy, science and religion of later times. But in developing, the nature-lore and the individual-fate-lore or religion have become so differentiated as to be antagonistic; and to say they are not really so, because both sprouts of one stem, seems as vain as to say Cain could n't kill Abel because one womb bore them.

I had great movings of my bowels towards thee lately — the distant cynical isolation in which we live with our hearts' best brothers sometimes comes over me with a deep bitterness, and I had a little while ago an experience of life which woke up the spiritual monad within me as has not happened more than once or twice before in my life. "Malgré la vue des misères où nous vivons et qui nous tiennent par la gorge" — there is an inextinguishable spark which will, when we least expect it, flash out, and reveal the existence, at least, of something real — of reason at the bottom of things. I can't tell you how it was now. I 'm swamped in an empirical philosophy — I feel that we are nature through and through, that we are *wholly* conditioned, that not a wiggle of our will happens save as the result of physical laws, and yet notwithstanding we are *en rapport* with reason. How to conceive it? Who knows? I 'm convinced that the defensive tactics of the French "spiritualists," [9] fighting a steady

[9] The reference is perhaps to Ravaisson's *Rapport* ("La Philosophie en France au XIXe Siècle"), which had appeared in 1868, and which James was reading at this time.

retreat before materialism, will never do anything. It is not that we are all nature *but* some point which is reason, but that all is nature *and* all is reason too. We shall see, damn it, we shall see. . . . Your affectionate

W. J.

XXVIII

SPENCER AND COSMOLOGY

THE early, formative period of James's development was the period of the vogue of Spencer. Whatever the estimate put on Spencer's genius or lasting contribution to European thought, he was the appointed vehicle by which the general idea of evolution, together with the genetic and comparative method in science, was implanted in the minds of Englishmen and Americans. He extended this idea through all the branches of human knowledge and diffused it through the reading public. Owing to the fact that James began to read philosophy and to think for himself in the '60s, the writings of Spencer furnished the most important part of his early philosophical pabulum. Then when he began teaching he used Spencer's writings as texts, both because the students of the day were curious to read them, and because to James, approaching philosophy from the side of the biological sciences, it was natural to begin with the conception in which philosophy and biology met — namely, the conception of evolution. There could be no stronger evidence of the essentially original quality of James's mind than its resistance to the Spencerian influence at a time when discipleship was so natural and easy for any philosopher favorably disposed to science.

James tells us that he read Spencer's *First Principles* in his youth "when it was still appearing in numbers." This would be between 1860 and 1862. He was "carried away with enthusiasm by the intellectual perspectives which it seemed to open." He adds that "when a maturer companion, Mr. Charles S. Peirce, attacked it in my presence, I felt spiritually wounded, as by the defacement of a sacred image or picture, though I could not verbally defend it against his criticisms." But he afterwards used it as a textbook, and the total outcome of his dealings with it was "an exceedingly unfavorable verdict." [1] The same thing happened in the case of Spencer's other writings.

[1] *M.S.*, 127–8. James was studying Spencer during the Cambridge winter of 1866–7, when he was also seeing Charles Peirce. Possibly his emancipation from Spencer dates from that year.

By 1892 he was willing to help Peirce "stone Uncle Spencer." He had so far changed his view as to say: " 'He left a Spencer's name to other times, linked with one virtue and a thousand crimes.' The one virtue is his belief in the universality of evolution — the 1000 crimes are his 5000 pages of absolute incompetence to work it out in detail." Though James devoted a great deal of time to the study and exposition of Spencer's works, they soon became source books for the illustration of philosophical error — "almost a museum of blundering reasoning," as he said of the *First Principles*.[2] He rarely found the Spencerian solution of any problem satisfactory. Even on the personal side James's feelings were mixed. He admired Spencer's "heroic" attempt to create a system and carry it through, and he was deeply sympathetic with that strain of English individualism which ennobled the ethical and political part of Spencer's writings and seemed most likely to endure; but fundamentally he was repelled by those qualities in Spencer which led his critics to refer to him as "the 'Arry of philosophy," or as a "philosophical saw-mill." James shared the judgment which condemned Spencer's mind as "so fatally lacking in geniality, humor, picturesqueness, and poetry; and so explicit, so mechanical, so flat in the panorama which it gives to life." [3]

In short, Spencer served James in the rôle of a punching bag, and for many years he kept him in his intellectual gymnasium. Spencer's thinking irritated him and at the same time convinced him that he was competent to form a judgment of his own. He acquired a sense of his own philosophical power through feeling so confidently, and seeing so clearly, that Spencer was wrong. Thus Spencer's part in James's development was the complementary opposite of Renouvier's: the one repelled him and the other attracted him, while both excited him.

In 1876–1877 James offered an undergraduate course (Natural History 2) on "Physiological Psychology," in which Spencer's *Principles of Psychology* was used as a text. This course was transferred to the Department of Philosophy in 1877–1878, and the interest excited by it among undergraduates is reflected in editorials and communications which appeared in the *Harvard Crimson*. One writer with telling sarcasm complains that "after many humble re-

[2] *M.S.*, 128.

[3] *Cf.* "Herbert Spencer Dead," in *N. Y. Evening Post*, Dec. 8, 1903, and *Nation*, LXXVII (1903); also "Herbert Spencer," *Atlantic*, XCIV (1904), and reprinted in *M.S.*

quests for information concerning Spencerian Philosophy," a course has at last been established in which "Darwinianism is to be treated metaphysically, that is to say . . . precisely as Darwin and his followers say it should not be treated!" Lectures by "Mr. Fiske," it is suggested, would have been more to the point. Another and more indulgent commentator says that "Dr. James's course, dealing as it does with Herbert Spencer's principles of psychology and with the latest investigations on the functions of the brain, supplies a want that is felt by every student of philosophy." A correspondent who asks that James's lectures be repeated before the general public remarks: "Ever since Mr. Huxley's visit to this country evolution has been the prominent topic of discussion in scientific circles. So various have been the opinions which we find in the papers from day to day, that a clear explanation of the theory could not fail both to please and to instruct many who have been puzzled by the conflicting opinions they have read." [4]

Although James usually dissented from Spencer's doctrines, the topics considered in the latter's *Principles of Psychology* corresponded closely to the range of James's interests. This work dealt in its opening chapters with the physiology of the nervous system, and treated mind as a function of an evolved organism dealing with a physical environment. Thus James's biological approach to psychology, originating in the order of his studies, was confirmed and adopted as the standpoint of his mature work in this field. Furthermore, Spencer's *Psychology* wandered at will through the domain of philosophy; and this vagrancy perfectly suited the mind of James, who was a natural poacher, with the poacher's characteristic dislike of the gamekeeper. He found Spencer's *Psychology* an excellent text for those philosophical excursions which appear to have annoyed his more positively-minded students. His final examination in the course covered the divers and sundry topics on which he was thinking for himself — the psychology of space and time, reasoning, the substance of mind and its knowability, freedom of the will, realism, idealism, and materialism. The seventeenth and last question was: "Mention all the inconsistencies you may have noticed in the book." James himself noticed many, and helped his students to find them. He was, in fact, "completely disgusted with the eminent philosopher," and found him to be "absolutely worthless in all *fundamental* mat-

[4] *Crimson*, 1876–7, II, 56, 49.

ters of thought." James's lecture notes in this course throw light both on his views of Spencer and on the development of his own empiricism. Thus he comments at length on the rôle of sensation in knowledge, a rôle which he thinks Spencer exaggerates: "The first thing that strikes us in attending to this question, is the small stress we lay upon the present sensation as such, in most of our moments; and the immense importance, relatively to it, of the ideal mass which apperceives it. . . . The particular feelings become guides to constant conclusions, no matter how much they may, regarded merely as feelings, vary *inter se,* and our main attention is given to the conclusions, because our main interests lie with them. All this is matter of perfect familiarity which no one will dispute. It . . . has received almost exclusive attention from one type of philosophic minds which we may call the logical idealists, and of whom Hegel, Green and C. S. Peirce may be taken as types. Such minds point to the fact that as a rule our sensations are merely contributory to our *opinions* about *things.* The *things* are the matter of knowledge, the sensations are overlooked. So true is this that everyone who learns to draw has painfully to discover what his sensations actually are. He never has been accustomed to noticing or caring what they are, so much more has he been concerned with the thing they reveal. . . . There is an inevitable drift in thought, a logical destiny precipitated out of all experience, which takes up every sensation and makes it contributory to its ends. . . . This conclusion to which all sensations, all men, all opinions converge is inevitable, if time and experience enough are given, and is 'the Truth.' . . . I call attention to the fact that Spencer ignores this whole consideration."

Discussion of Spencer's chapter entitled "The Law of Intelligence" brought clearly to light one of the master motives of James's thought. In that and succeeding chapters Spencer proposes to explain the operation of mind as an "adjustment" or "correspondence" of "inner" to "outer" relations. In his own *Principles of Psychology* James commented on the great service rendered to psychology by the Spencerian idea that the mental, like the bodily, life is an "adjustment of inner to outer relations." This idea is sound, he says, in so far as it expresses the fact that "minds inhabit environments which act on them and on which they in turn react." [5] But the idea was also pro-

[5] *Principles,* I, 6. In 1904, speaking of Spencer's *Principles of Psychology,* James said that of its author's systematic treatises it "will rank as the most original,"

foundly false in so far as it suggested that the mind submissively reflects or reëchoes the external world. James's first original philosophical article, entitled "Remarks on Spencer's Definition of Mind As Correspondence," consisted in a forcible and highly elaborate proof of the mind's fecundity, and of the essentially interested and selective rôle which it plays. This article appeared in 1878, and agrees essentially with the lecture notes of 1876–1877. While the later statement is more frankly and confidently teleological, the earlier confines itself more closely to Darwinian premises, and is also more conciliatory toward the traditional empirical position: —

"I now express my belief that we can give no clear scientific description of the facts of psychology . . . without restoring to the inner, at every step, that active originality and spontaneous productivity which Spencer's law so entirely ignores. . . . His law leaves out an immense mass of mental fact. My objection to it is best expressed by saying that in psychology he repeats the defects of Darwin's predecessors. . . . Pre-Darwinians thought only of adaptation. They made organism plastic to its environment. . . . Darwin almost wholly discards this. . . . [He] never means that spontaneous variations are causeless; nor that they are not fatally implied in the environment, since they and it are both parts of the same natural whole. He means to emphasize the truth that the regulator or preserver of the variation, the environment, is a different part from its producer. . . .

"Let me not be understood to undervalue the enormous part which direct adaptation, *i.e.*, the teachings of experience, plays in mental evolution. The environment, meaning the *sensible* facts of our experience, is a vastly more potent agent in mental evolution than in physical. All the individual's acquisitions, properly so-called, come from it — and so, very likely, do many of his inheritances. . . . It is precisely because the action of the environment moulds the mind in so peculiar and distinct a way, that I object to allowing Spencer to say that it moulds it in every way. . . . If we alter the meaning of the word 'environment' so as to make it include the unknown physiological conditions of variation we make it synonymous with

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owing to its revolutionary insistence that "since mind and its environment have evolved together, they must be studied together." This was true despite Spencer's neglect of "mental structure" and "purely inner variations." (*M.S.*, 139–40.)

universal nature, and we then lack a term by which to specify those particular sensible parts of nature the experience of which does produce direct adaptations. In short, we have pulled the blanket 'environment' or 'experience,' which was only long enough to cover our feet, up over our shoulders; but we are no more covered than we were before, and need a new blanket to cover our feet."

The rôle of the individual in history is an application of the same Darwinian principle, and James defended it similarly against the Spencerian champion of environment. The train of thought which found definite expression in 1880 in the article entitled "Great Men, Great Thoughts and the Environment" [6] also had its source in James's classroom use of Spencer in 1876–1877, and is anticipated in his notes. These contain a more explicit recognition than does the later article of the intermediate rôle of the "social organism." The great man is the "spontaneous variation," but it is his *social product,* rather than the man himself, that is selected or rejected by the environment.

The same problem may be approached from the standpoint of knowledge. Is knowledge a creation of the mind, *a priori,* or a receptivity to facts, *a posteriori?* Spencer believed that one of the merits of the evolutionary philosophy lay in its power to reconcile these two views. Knowledge is governed by forms of the mind, which predetermine what it can "conceive," but these forms are themselves the products of experience. James wrote the following statement and letter with the intention (never executed) of sending them to Spencer himself: —

"Kant says: experience is not *possible* save in the mental forms, time, space, substance, etc., with the syntheses therein involved; and that this happens by an absolute necessity of which no account can be given.

"Empiricism says: experience may become *possible* at any moment under other forms, for aught we know to the contrary; but it is not now so *conceivable,* simply because our powers of conception depend on what we have experienced and we have only experienced these forms.

"Spencer mediates by saying with Kant that experience is impossible save in these forms, and with empiricism, that we can give an account of this impossibility. For the power of receiving experience

[6] *Atlantic,* Oct. 1880; reprinted in *W.B.*

is determined in all its particularities by the experiences already received. . . . These forms have gradually arisen from the slow moulding of our nervous systems by the actual order. . . . And if . . . [a] new order were to supervene it would fail to be *cognized* altogether, and so to form any part of our *experience;* that word always seeming to mean a tissue or woven mass, in which what follows is in some way connected with what precedes. Cognition would have to be evolved again almost *ab ovo* from the at first purely *outward* action of the new order of being upon . . . our . . bodily organism."

Cambridge, April 21, 1879

Dear Sir, —

Is it too great a liberty to ask that you cast your eye over the preceding pages, and inform me whether they correctly reproduce your own thought? In teaching your *Principles of Psychology* here I am a good deal puzzled to make clear to my own mind the exact manner in which you conceive of the function of cognition. I think the matter would become plainer to me were you either to adopt or reject the preceding statement. I make the communication in this form out of respect for your valuable time, though it just now occurs to me that to make a philosopher give a categorical *yes* or *no* to an abrupt question may be more unfair to his thought than it is considerate of his time. Believe me, with great respect, truly yours,

Wm. James

Herbert Spencer, Esq.
London

James rejected Spencer's agnosticism in all its forms. Discussing the latter's chapter on "The Assumption of Metaphysicians," he insists that consciousness is always cognitive of *something,* and that its critical processes lead to reconstructions rather than to negations of knowledge: —

"The first dawn of consciousness is, as I contend, cognitive, — is a feeling of something spread out in space and time, and endued with a certain quality. As we go on acquiring further experiences it comes to pass that the same *something* gets different qualities attached to it, and so a conflict arises as to which is the true one under which we should rightly conceive it. . . . But if, at any moment

of this procedure, perplexities seem to multiply rather than diminish, our hope lies, not with Spencer in returning to the minimum of cognition, to the original psychoplasm, not in making it vomit out like an amœba the nutrient contributions of experience which it has just begun to assimilate, not in saying that we can believe no further than that *something* is, and that we can never know it; not in this, but in going on to think still more and more, confident that if things be not radically self-contradictory, more experience and reason will fill the gaps which separate the experiences already in our hands. In a word, the two elements involved in the most rudimentary action of consciousness, the element which says there is something there, and the element which seeks to define what that something is, are alike preserved in all the later evolutions of thought. But the determination of what the something is becomes more and more perfect in proportion as the phenomenon we began with gets more and more embedded in that total mass of phenomena which we call the existing universe. . . .

"But now you will rightly ask how it comes that if conceptions or wide inductions when true determine things more adequately than simple impressions, they nevertheless are more fallible than these impressions. . . . To understand this we must reflect that the perception as such, can never be doubted. Considered as a perception pure and simple it *is* as it appears. Should a concept turn up affirming the *what* of the reality to be such that this perception cannot possibly flow from it, the concept must give way. . . . In fact, one may say that the essential meaning of reality is: that which produces these experiences considered as experiences."

A further irritant to James's thinking was provided by Spencer's treatment of "agnostic realism," in Part VII of the *Psychology*. Spencer takes a realistic view of the *something* which is the *cause* of human perceptions, and an idealistic view of everything else. James argued that such a position claims either too much or too little. Either we know nothing beyond our perceptions, so that the perceptions themselves become the reality; or we must credit the account which our perceptions give us of the *character* of an external world, as well as of its bare existence. In the former case, we must recognize a subjective and an objective aspect of perception; in the latter case, we must recognize a harmony between the inner perception and an outer reality which it somehow "repeats." In either case we

move in the direction of Renouvier, whom James was reading at this time with growing approval.[7]

In the year 1879–1880 James gave a course on "The Philosophy of Evolution" (Philosophy 3) in which he used Spencer's *First Principles* as a text. The book (in the edition of 1877) was read, underscored, and profusely annotated. James seems to have been in a very spirited mood throughout, and frequently records his reaction to the text in such marginal comments as the following: "absurd," "delicious," "trebly asinine," "curse his metaphysics," "the ass," "damned scholastic quibble," "good God!" and so on.

Philosophy 3 was repeated, with Spencer as a text, in 1880–1881, 1883–1884, 1884–1885, 1893–1894, 1894–1895, and 1896–1897. The lecture notes for the course are extant, and appear to date in large part from the year in which it was first given. From these, together with students' notes and the annotated textbook, it is possible to trace an outline of the lectures. James followed poor Spencer relentlessly into every bypath of his thought with a criticism that was the more devastating because of the earnestness with which he sought to do the author full justice. In opening the course he gave his reasons for offering such a course at all. The emphasis on development, progress, and origins was, he said, a novelty in European thought, and a study of evolution was necessary in order to understand the spirit of the age. He then submitted Spencer's famous law: "Evolution is an integration of matter and concomitant dissipation of motion; during which the matter passes from an indefinite, incoherent homogeneity to a definite, coherent heterogeneity; and during which the retained motion undergoes a parallel transformation."[8] "Learn this formula of evolution," said James; "upon this formula is based Mr. Spencer's claim to being the greatest genius of his age." But he proposed the following restatement: "Evolution is a change from a no-howish untalkaboutable all-alikeness to a somehowish and in general talkaboutable not-all-alikeness by continuous sticktogetherations and somethingelseifications."

James examined the proofs and elaborations of Spencer's formula with perpetual irritation checked only by a resolve to squeeze some philosophical juice from even the most desiccated pulp. He was

[7] James here has especially in mind Renouvier's doctrine of *représentations* in the first part of his *Traité de logique générale* (1875).

[8] *First Principles*, 1877, 396.

bound to avoid that manner of polemic which, as he said, "gives us sympathy for the victim rather than for the executioner." [9] Spencer's characteristic weakness in James's eyes was his slovenly thinking, and especially his habit of transposing an idea from its proper context to another in which it held only figuratively, and thus achieving a specious effect of generalization by what was in fact only an ambiguity. Thus when Spencer said that "evolution is a change from . . . the indefinite to the definite . . . and advance from confusion to order — from undetermined arrangement to determined arrangement," [10] what could he mean? "Indeterminateness is a mental state, and the attributes of things [had] better be called by some other name. . . . The original egg is not indefinite; the embryo is simple, but not indefinite. . . . As evolution goes on, the motions become fewer, greater and more similar. . . . A motion cannot be indefinite. It is always what it is."

In support of Spencer's doctrine of "the rhythm of motion," which Lester F. Ward had declared to be "one of the most brilliant examples of strict philosophical thinking which the world has yet produced," [11] James proposes additional examples: "Railroads and horse-cars, cradles and rocking-chairs; Atlantic steamers (liners and tramps), and intermittent fevers, volcanoes and geysers, jig-saws and baby's rattles; people going up and down stairs, fires in grates going out and being lighted again, tooth-brushes and scrubbing-brushes, dishes from table to pantry, etc." A further case of rhythm, supplied by James some years later, is "the Italian woman who gave out a circular stating that she had come to this country to raise funds to enable her to return to Italy." In short, he concluded, "all things are rhythms except what are not rhythms."

Spencer claimed to have explained the complex in terms of the simple, or to have generated heterogeneity out of homogeneity, and this would have been creditable achievement. In point of fact, however, he really *started* with heterogeneities — of more than one sort; and had he not done so, nothing could have happened: "The nebula and ether are a grossly heterogeneous state. He must abandon his homogeneous supposition. . . . So long as you begin with a dyad,

[9] Said apropos of M. Guthrie's "On Mr. Spencer's Formula of Evolution," 1879. James's wide reading on the topic of natural evolution embraced the following authors: W. Wundt, K. Lasswitz, J. B. Stallo, C. Wright, B. Stewart, D. D. Heath, J. C. Maxwell, P. G. Tait, E. Mach, J. Delbœuf, E. Haeckel, E. Iles.

[10] *First Principles*, 1877, 362.

[11] *Dynamic Sociology*, I, 160.

you are in the theistic position. An absolutely homogeneous universe would be absolutely stable. . . . Spencer is forced to fall back on a dualism. . . . [He] goes along with a bicycle and neglects to notice the little wheel. If God is perfection, supreme goodness, how did there ever have to come any imperfection? No one has ever got round this. . . . To construct a world on monistic principles is to make a stick without two ends."

The failure of Spencer's ambitious project suggested reflections on the limitations of philosophy: "Spencer fails to explain everything. . . . No philosophy can explain everything. This is very important in directing our thought. One theory is humble; the other is arrogant. [The lecturer], when a boy, dozed over a book, had a dream, and awoke himself with the words: 'Nous saisissons toute chose par le milieu'; that is, we must make a beginning at some point. . . . There is always a blank, opaque something against which we butt; a kind of craving, unassuageable thirst says: 'I must get round this thing.' . . . This, however, cannot be done, though some philosophers say it can. . . . Spencer and the theist are on the same footing. . . . We must fall back on our own divination of truth. . . . It is a chronic humbug of philosophy to prove everything."

The full thunder of James's polemic against Spencer and the deadliest lightning of his wit were reserved for that hapless philosopher's "Unknowable." He found it to have a dozen vague and mutually inconsistent meanings: "All that Spencer's chapters prove is that self-contradictory nonsense does not exist." The conception only serves "as a shield for the weakness or imperfection of his philosophy." To "ward off the reproach that his philosophy does not explain things," he says: "Everything I don't know is unknowable."

Spencer's idea of the unfathomable mysteriousness of the world has two points of support. There is, as James so often reiterates, an ultimate mystery attaching to fact. Having learned what the universe is, "there still remains the mystery that it is, instead of nothing." But this "may be a vicious question." Perhaps "fact is only known after the fact. . . . I can't get in front of it and say what it shall be. So of the universe — it conditions our intellect but is not conditioned by it." This would be empiricism, and it would not signify a breach between knowledge and being, but would reveal the specific way in which being is known — just as the in-

visibility of sound would not signify that sound was "unknowable," but only that, being known in its own specific auditory way, it would be inappropriate to ask what sound *looks* like.

The other ground for looking beyond knowledge is the fact that so much knowledge as we have does not satisfy our subjective demands. There is nothing intrinsically unknowable in being, or intrinsically futile in knowledge; but human knowledge being always limited in amount, there is always an unknown beyond its confines: —

"Is there then no mystery? Assuredly, plenty. First, the mystery of more truth to be known. . . . No doubt it is the living sense in everyone's breast that this fact has something more in it than is borne in upon his consciousness at any given moment, that he stands simply expectant of what it will bring forth, and passively at its mercy, unable by his thought to foresee its course in other than a tentative sort of way, — no doubt all this is why Spencer's asseverations awaken in the mind of every reader who takes things in an easy hospitable way, an immediate echo of adhesion. But I insist that the reader's postulate is merely that of *more to be known*. . . . Those philosophers and religious mystics, like Pascal, Hamilton and Mansel, who thought that to our understandings there were *contradictions* in the known, and so insisted that there must be a world where our minds would be changed . . . were in a far healthier and more strictly reasonable state of mind. For they did not enthrone self-contradiction in the heart of being, in the essence of knowledge, as Spencer does in saying the only thing that ought to be known is the only thing that can't be known; — they admitted it, but as a stage to be outlived."

It is inevitable and legitimate that man should so conceive the unknown as to satisfy certain needs that are left unsatisfied by the known. As Hodgson says: "Let metaphysic once give us the *What* of this actual world of ours, and science its *How;* — then we shall be in a position to frame with advantage our first legitimate though imperfect solutions of its *Why, Whence, and Whither.*" [12] Spencer's Unknowable, however, serves no such purpose. It is a "derationalizer," gives us "two mysteries instead of one." It is as though a watchmaker should say, "Your watch is relative. Here is an

[12] *Philosophy of Reflection,* 1878, I, 186, marked passages in W.J.'s copy.

absolute one that will not go at all." "Attainable explanations" being relative, Spencer supplies an Unknowable which is "debarred by its definition from being any explanation at all."

For James there could be only one reason for transcending the world of phenomena, namely, to satisfy some theoretical or practical "sentiment of rationality." The affirmation of a transcendent Unknowable seemed to him, therefore, to be both inexcusable and gratuitous: "From the rag-bag of bad arguments which constitute this chapter the only legitimate conclusions which I can draw are that the attributes of Being, whether considered as infinite or finite, are in either case simply *given* and not to be explained *per aliud*. . . . But I cannot see my way from this to going on to affirm that there must be another world. The only reason Spencer would seem to have for doing so would be that the imperfectly rational character of this world forces us to suppose elsewhere one which shall appease our rational cravings. But strange to say the additional one which he sets up is according to him an absolutely irrational, inscrutable, unknowable one. Strange metamorphosis of a postulate of rationalization!"

James's last word on Spencer's evolutionary synthesis was to reject it in the name of religion. Spencer's claim to have provided in the Unknowable a suitable object of religious faith, James utterly denied: "Mere existence commands no reverence whatever, or any other emotion, until its quality is specified. Neither does mere cosmic 'power,' unless it 'make for' something which can claim kinship from our sympathies. . . . As well might you speak of being irreverent to Space or disrespectful of the Equator."

Spencer's philosophy is not *designed* to meet the needs of religion, and gratifies only the "desire for unification." "But," James continued, "unity is but one factor of philosophies. There are other essential factors. Don't despise them, for love of truth itself is one of them. They are postulates all." Despite his claim to the contrary, Spencer's outcome is materialistic — materialistic because of its very negations. It is materialistic to deny the mind a spiritual object which shall "throw the last brick — be the deepest, most eternal thing." At the bottom of the last page of his copy of Spencer's *First Principles,* James penciled the words: "When the whole training of our life is to make us fighters for the higher, why should it be extraordinary or wrong to protest against a phi-

losophy the acceptance of which is acceptance of the defeat of the higher?"

In 1879–1880 James also discussed Spencer's *Data of Ethics,* and wrote a review of it for the *Nation.*[13] In the following year he added this book as a text in Philosophy 3. He liked Spencer's ethics for "the antique spirit of English individualism" [14] which it breathed, and not for the evolutionary doctrine which it professed to prove. The doctrine of survival does not meet the real point because it does not justify any one of the personal and party *ideals* which struggle for survival, or the notion of survival itself, or the state of equilibrium in which the evolutionary process culminates. The moral subject asks the question, "Am I *right* in adhering to this ideal — in causing it to survive by refusing to participate in any equilibrium which does not provide for it?" But the evolutionist does not go beyond the mere tendency to survive: —

"The good of survival, from the moment the instinct of self-preservation is reflected on (as it is by evolutionists), lapses thus from an objective uncriticized good into a fact relative to subjectivity. The deepest truth ceases to be, 'we must survive,' but becomes: 'we feel that we must survive.' If we don't feel so, nothing can coerce us to, except a further ethical proposition: 'to feel so is itself good.' *This* is the proposition the evolutionary ethicist ought to prove, but does n't prove. The natural way of proving it would be to show that what survives has an intrinsic worth, an ideal perfection which makes its survival good. But for evolutionism all worth means mere furtherance of survival . . . *whatever* survives has all its qualities *ipso facto* made good. . . . Spencer's confusion: he avails himself of popular belief in the qualities, says survival's law maintains these qualities, *ergo* survival must be good. The Germans are clearer headed."

The clear-headedness of the Germans appeared in their "curious

[13] *C.E.R.,* 147.

[14] Quoted from a review of Spencer written in later years. James said, "The *Data of Ethics* is unquestionably the most valuable single part of the 'Synthetic Philosophy,' not for the reason that it makes ethics for the first time 'scientific' (although this was probably its chief merit in its author's eyes), but because it gives voice with singular energy to one man's ideals concerning human life. Ideals as manly, as humane, as broadly inclusive, and as forcibly expressed are always a force in the world's destinies. The *Data of Ethics* will therefore continue to be read." (*Nation,* LXXVII [1903], 461.) On the other hand, James elsewhere refers to Spencer's *Factors of Organic Evolution* as "much the solidest thing . . . he has ever written." (*Principles,* II, 687.)

junction of evolutionary materialism with pessimism." Enlightenment for them "consists in 'seeing' round and no longer being duped by the ideal, which we once for all now know as a mere fact of subjectivity." [15] For James life assumes a heroic form only when the moral subject believes in the superiority of his own ideal, not as merely his, but as in some sense absolute or infinite. The real effect of the evolutionary view, when its meaning is fully grasped, is to undermine this belief, and to beget a spirit of moral skepticism [16] — a spirit which is equally repugnant to James whether it takes the form of easy-going tolerance or of pessimistic disillusionment. Readers of *The Will to Believe* will remember the author's allusion to Spencer's "lady-like tea-table elysium," and other "lubberlands." [17] "Pessimism," on the other hand, is "a disease of satisfied epochs and classes." [18]

In 1879 or 1880, after a critical examination of Spencer, James invited his students to "begin work on our own hook, with Spencer's data." Thereupon he expounded his own summary account of the course of natural evolution. Starting with a nebula of "particles flying about and related to each other by attractive and repulsive forces," and assuming "the principles of the conservation of energy and the persistence of force," we must limit ourselves strictly to kinetic terms. "There can be no effects but motions, and no more new motions than there are parts to take them off." The crucial event, so far as life and men are concerned, is the occurrence of "traps," in which a natural motion is held in check by some obstacle, thus creating a state of tension until the obstacle is removed. The burning candle, the hydraulic ram, the crossbow, gunpowder, a pair of bricks leaning against one another — are all traps. In order that anything shall happen there must be both tensions and also releases. Both may be regarded as accidents. But among the various types of trap there is one, represented by the fountain and the burning candle, which tends to replenish itself — that is, the effect of the release is to place new matter in the same state of ten-

[15] The particular German whom James had in mind was F. von Hellwald, whose *Kulturgeschichte in ihrer natürlichen Entwickelung*, 1875, he had just been reading.

[16] W.J. illustrated this point by reading the passage from Gautier's *Mademoiselle de Maupin* cited in W. H. Mallock's *Is Life Worth Living?* (1879, 111 ff.).

[17] *W.B.*, 168. There is a footnote reference on this page to *Essays by a Barrister* (1862, 138, 318), by Sir James Stephen, from whom James borrowed the word "lubberlands" and also, in some measure, his distaste for them.

[18] This passage is reminiscent of Renan; *cf.* above, 265.

sion. Although there is no specific tendency for such "self-renewing traps" to arise, when they *do* arise, they preserve themselves, and so tend in the long run to become plentiful. Spencer's death in 1903 moved James to reaffirm this doctrine. Spencer's clumsy and pretentious "law of evolution" rested on an "orgy of ambiguity." Out of it there emerged a relatively simple idea: —

"First there is solar, and then there is geological evolution, processes accurately describable as integrations in the mechanical sense, namely, as decrease in bulk, or growth in hardness. Then life appears; and after that neither integration of matter nor dissipation of motion plays any part whatever. The result of life, however, is to fill the world more and more with things displaying *organic unity*. By this is meant any arrangement of which one part helps to keep the other parts in existence. Some organic unities are material, — a sea-urchin, for example, a department store, a civil service, or an ecclesiastical organization. Some are mental, as a 'science,' a code of laws, or an educational programme. But whether they be material or mental products, organic unities must *accumulate;* for every old one tends to conserve itself, and if successful new ones arise they also 'come to stay.' . . . This tendency of organic unities to accumulate when once they are formed is absolutely all the truth I can distil from Spencer's unwieldy account of evolution." [19]

Spencer had, furthermore, dealt most superficially with the evolution of consciousness. Had he been a thoroughgoing evolutionist, he would have refused to be satisfied with the view that when the brain reached a certain degree of complication consciousness simply "came and perched there." He would have attempted, as elsewhere, to explain the higher by conjunctions and combinations of the lower; and would thus have inclined, as did Huxley, Clifford, Haeckel, Fechner, and Taine, to regard consciousness and matter as coextensive throughout all levels of complexity.[20] "Spencer seems to be entirely unaware of the importance of explaining consciousness. Where he wants consciousness, he simply says, 'A nascent consciousness arises.' . . . Notice the terms 'incipient' and 'nascent.'

[19] *M.S.*, 135–6.

[20] James referred his students to E. Haeckel's *Psychologie cellulaire*, and to a statement of Huxley's position in the *Spectator* and *Contemporary Review*. James spoke of this doctrine as one which "every evolutionary philosopher must accept," and expressed the belief that it would prevail "for the next thirty years."

Spurious philosophers of evolution seem to think that things, after a fashion, as it were, kind of 'growed.' "

Spencer, and the more consistent evolutionary school as well, failed to meet the essential difficulty, which was to explain how conscious molecules "run together and form a unified consciousness." "If any way could be shown in which molecules of feeling could coalesce, the evolutionary philosophy would be pretty complete." But this was for James a fatal "if," a stumblingblock which stood in his way for twenty-five years.

In the early phase of his doctrine of evolution James was dominated by Darwin. His main concern was to demonstrate the "spontaneous variation" of life and mind. Through this breach in an otherwise mechanical world poured the whole flow of his predilection for subjectivity and freedom. He believed that Spencer had definitively failed in his more pretentious attempt to trace the origins of life and mind. James was here willing, provisionally at least, to fall back on the hypothesis of mechanism. With this earlier Darwinian phase of his thought is to be contrasted the radical evolutionism of his later years, when, aided and abetted by Charles Peirce, he extended the notion of spontaneous variation to the whole of nature, and proclaimed the view that the physical order was itself an effect of progressive selection.

Meanwhile the scope of James's cosmological study and reflection had greatly expanded. After 1885 he did not give Philosophy 3 again until 1893. Although Spencer's *First Principles* was still used as a text, the course had become a comprehensive philosophy of nature, in which the conception of evolution played only a limited rôle. James thought himself unfit to be a teacher because he was no bibliographer. In reorganizing the material of this course, however, he compiled for his students and himself a list of some three hundred titles, on such topics as: Infinity (23 titles), Continuity (5), Life (25), Spontaneous Generation (16), Heredity (12), The Nebula Theory (25), Atoms (20), Matter (9), Force (19), Conservation of Energy (10), Cause (14), Teleology (31), Religion and Science (31), Evolution of Society (15). Other topics considered were Space, Time and Motion, The Evolution of the Mind, The Evolution of Man, Law and Design, Evolution and Morals, Evolution and Religion, Laws of History, Panpsychism. These topics James expounded in detail, giving his students an extremely

valuable summary of the scientific view of the world. He illustrated every generalization profusely with details drawn from the experimental as well as theoretical results of physics, astronomy, chemistry, and biology.

The lecture notes for this phase of Philosophy 3 contain thirty pages of closely reasoned argument on the topic of infinity. He was thinking through his pen on a topic that gave him much difficulty and on which his opinion fluctuated. "Still obscure!" he wrote. "Work at all this next year!" In earlier years he had been disposed to accept Renouvier's amended Kantianism, which relegated infinity to the realm of thought, where it became a capacity for the indefinite repetition of an act, such as counting — a process of which only a part is ever actual, the rest merely possible. As regards space and time he had been in "the fullest sympathy" with Renouvier's view of their finite and "phenomenal" character. But he had never accepted Renouvier's *argument,* that space and time cannot be actually infinite because then it would not be possible to *count* their parts and give a number to them. He was now more disposed than ever to accept a completed or "standing" infinite as free from contradiction. The alleged difficulty arises from confusing two judgments regarding an infinite quantity: the judgment "it is all there," meaning that no part is missing; and the judgment "it is an all, *i.e.,* has the character of a limited totality." There has been a failure to distinguish " 'the whole of it is there,' and 'there is the whole of it'; 'the totality of what is actual,' and 'what is actual is a totality'; 'all the parts exist,' and 'what exists of the parts is an all.' " In other words, the "standing" infinite is quite intelligible if one is careful to judge it distributively, in terms of *each* of its parts. The real difficulty is with the "growing" infinite, and here James still adheres to the finite with Renouvier.[21]

A major topic which drew James into a detailed consideration of the history of physics was that of atomism and the constitution of matter.[22] The positivistic trend of James's teaching is indicated by the following entry in his lecture notes: "Work up the men to

[21] The views here sketched received a fuller development later, and appear without essential change in *S.P.P.,* Chs. X, XI.

[22] Although James frequently resorted to the sources, such as Aristotle, Descartes, Newton, Herschel, Boscovich, Cournot, Clerk Maxwell, Thomson, Boltzmann, and Planck, he depended mainly for the history of physics on Kurd Lasswitz's compendious *Geschichte der Atomistik* (1890), and Ernst Mach's *Die Mechanik in ihrer Entwickelung* (1883), both of which were carefully read and annotated.

the notion, only gradually coming to self-consciousness, of an ideal 'science,' which shall concern itself *only* with compendiously formulating the variations of phenomena functionally connected with each other. For such a science *any* hypothesis, however self-contradictory or unimaginable, is good, provided it offer *conveniences for calculation.*" He cites Lasswitz, Mach, Ostwald, Karl Pearson, Kirchhoff, Wundt, and other contemporary writers on the method of science, against the traditional view of matter.[23] Atoms, the ether, and similar scientific entities are not to be construed as themselves perceptual realities.[24] They are fictions or metaphors whose purpose it is to enable us to *describe* the perceptual realities in terms of "functional variations." They are tools of thought (*Denkmitteln*), the proof of which lies in their satisfying certain theoretical demands such as prediction, elegance, and simplicity.

But though James thus adopted the descriptive and instrumental interpretation of physical concepts, and saw in this interpretation a refutation of the cruder materialisms, he did not rest there. It brought no satisfaction of the metaphysical cravings which he both felt and shamelessly professed. Hence his impulse, which was especially strong at this time, to substitute panpsychism for materialism. He regarded the "mind-stuff" theory, which makes the mental coeval and coexistent with the physical, as the logical sequel to evolutionary naturalism. Panpsychism, which construes all existence as both mental to itself and physical to the external observer, was consistent with the mind-stuff theory and also seemed to satisfy the metaphysical demand for a substance beyond appearances. James did not finally adopt either of these views, but he encouraged his students to consider them and was impressed by their widespread adoption among contemporary thinkers of diverse schools.

The question of "teleology," or the argument for a purpose in nature, also received elaborate treatment in Philosophy 3 during its later phase (1893–1897). The outcome was negative. One cannot argue from "fitness," since "all things fit in *some* way. Eyes with cataract fit light so as to *exclude* it; [the] stomach without gastric juice fits food so as to let it ferment. . . . The world has

[23] Karl Pearson's *Grammar of Science,* 1892; G. Kirchhoff's *Vorlesungen über mathematische Physik,* 1876; W. Wundt's *System der Philosophie,* 1889.

[24] Speaking of energy, says James in his lecture notes, "Make the class feel the essential *Unanschaulichkeit* of these formulas. Make it feel their essential arbitrariness."

a collective unity, and in every collective unity the parts fit so as to produce *some* result." If "the dysteleologies are explained away by the good things they give rise to in the wider context, the teleologies similarly vanish if we make the context wide enough to embrace the thing's destruction." In short, "from the order of the world there is no path to God by coercive reasoning, or even by strong analogy or induction. That we believe in a God . . . is not due to our logic, but to our emotional wants. . . . The world is a datum, a gift to Man. Man stands and asks himself, '*What* is it?' Science says molecules. Religion says God. Both are hypotheses. Science says, 'You can't deduce or explain anything by yours.' Religion says, 'You can't inspire or console by yours.' Which is *worth* most, is, after all, the question. Molecules can do certain things for us. God can do other things. *Which things* are worth most?"

James's cosmological thinking, whatever the line of inquiry, always brought him to the view that a theory is to be justified by its fruits. He found that a theory of nature, like any theory, must inevitably be influenced by human needs and passions. He found that the facts regarding human nature justified this influence by showing that the thinking part of man is designed to be subordinate to his active part. He found that the metaphysical and religious speculations which carried men beyond the limits of natural knowledge were inspired by emotion, and must look for their justification to that source. To these considerations is to be added the further fact that James himself *resolved* to allow his subjectivity to color his judgments. All things conspired, then, to direct his attention to *the motives of philosophizing.*

XXIX

THE MOTIVES OF PHILOSOPHIZING

PHILOSOPHY exists because men are moved to philosophize — what is it, then, that moves them? James's dealings with this question form one of the deepest roots of his thinking. It not only contains the germ of his own voluntaristic and pragmatistic doctrines, but determines his attitude to rival philosophies. His recognition of the emotional and practical grounds of human knowledge, and his acknowledgment of their legitimacy, provide a place for the speculative metaphysics which, on strictly theoretical grounds, his empiricism rejects. Rationalism and transcendentalism satisfy authentic human cravings, but they are cravings of the heart, and not, as their exponents have claimed, of the head.

Early in his life, perhaps as early as 1868, James recorded the following observation: —

"Philosophies owe their being to two impulses in the mind: (1) that after absolute intellectual unity or consistency; (2) that after an object we guarantee for our interests. The first breeds critical and sceptical systems, idealisms, etc., the second religions. For by leaving out our feelings from the present act of philosophizing, and simply looking at them as states, one may reach more or less easily a consistent total conception. But when the feelings are in energy, their peculiarity of positing objects for themselves forces us, or bribes us, as some would say, to define the rest of the universe in a different way from that perfectly intelligible one in which it appeared to us when considered abstractedly. We use the subjective method of explanation. Do we succeed, is the only question. If we do, we are better philosophers, for our synthesis has included an order of facts disregarded by the other set of men — namely, the desire of the heart to be a match for the whole universe and not to shrivel to an infinitesimal accident within it. The way is open to us — we walk it at our risk."

In July 1879, James published in *Mind* an article entitled "The

Sentiment of Rationality," to which he added the statement that this article was "the first chapter of a psychological work on the motives which lead men to philosophize." It was written for the most part in 1877.[1] That the undertaking was philosophical rather than merely psychological in its ultimate bearings appears from the following note: —

" 'The Psychology of Philosophizing' would perhaps be a better title for this essay than the one which it bears. For it arose in the attempt to discover in an analysis of the motives which prompt men to philosophic activity, some facts which might help us to decide between the conflicting claims to authority of the different systems to which that activity gives birth. In the following pages, then, I treat systems of truth as purely subjective creations, invented for the satisfaction of certain æsthetic needs; and I seek by defining the needs to discover what conditions a system must satisfy in order to obtain universal acceptance. If universal acceptance be, as it surely is, the only mark of truth which we possess, then any system certain not to get it, may be deemed false without further ceremony, false at any rate for us, which is as far as we can inquire.

"There is no doubt that a vast deal of the confusion hitherto prevalent in philosophy has been due to the fact that the real motives to an opinion were concealed rather than explicitly avowed — that the reasons ostensibly put forward by a philosopher formed but a small portion of his real premisses." [2]

These motives James divided broadly into two groups, the "theoretic or logical" and the "practical and emotional." Motives of the first group were treated in "The Sentiment of Rationality"; and motives of the second group in two essays published later — "Reflex Action and Theism" (1881), and "Rationality, Activity and Faith." The last had been anticipated in a communication on *"la méthode subjective"* which James had addressed to Renouvier in November 1877, and which was published in 1878 in the latter's *Critique philosophique.* "Rationality, Activity and Faith," although it was written in 1879, did not see the light until 1882.[3] The

[1] *L.W.J.*, I, 203.

[2] The notion of truth here adopted suggests that of C. S. Peirce, *Pop. Science Mo.*, XII (1877–8), 300. For the point made in the second paragraph of this passage James referred to "the masterly remarks of Ch. Renouvier in the *Critique philosophique* for November 29th, 1877."

[3] It was afterwards combined with a part of the original "Sentiment of Rationality" to form the essay which bears that name in *W.B.*

following letter is from Francis J. Child, who had received a copy of the essay the morning after he had seen James's newborn child.[4]

Monday Morning [1882]

Dearest Will, —

(If that locution does not seem to exalt what we are created to humble) I see it all now. I was such a dupe to matter of fact, have travelled so very far from the East, that I did not understand last night: but with the day and the postman comprehension comes to me. A fine mythologer you are: there is nothing in Orient and Occident more subtle than the new baby lying on the bed and watched by young Harry. For the first time Wordsworth's Ode is justified and demonstrated to me. Harry, eye among the blind, reading the eternal deep to his father, sitting in his low chair by the professional desk — "watching!"

Now comes the interpretation of A Trilogy: Rationality, Activity, Faith; Father, Mother, Boy; *Vita Contemplativa, Vita Activa, Fides.*

I shall not be so dull, haply, the next time. It takes a long time for a Saxon to rise above *sus* and *suus,* self and swine. But with such a Buddha as you to foster, a soul may be at last unfolded even under the ribs of this death. Reverently, thy Novice

F. C.

In "The Sentiment of Rationality" (as published in 1879) James contrasted the two theoretic demands, — that for simplicity and unity, and that for clearness and diversity, — and cited Renouvier as one who had reached a satisfactory compromise between them. He then passed on to a much more troublesome problem. "Suppose we have at last a metaphysics in which clearness and unity join friendly hands." [5] There is still a sense of irrationality because the mind may and does ask concerning this relatively clear and unified actuality, Why *this* rather than something else, or rather than anything at all? The actual, however unified and clarified, is still a brute and arbitrary datum. To accept this ultimate irrationality of fact as inescapable is to be a Humean or empiricist in

[4] William James, Jr., born June 17, 1882.
[5] *C.E.R.*, 124.

the traditional sense — a "positivist," "phenomenist," or "nihilist." [6] James did not so accept it. In "Rationality, Activity and Faith" he found a practical motive for going behind actuality to a substantial or ideal system which should afford men a sense of permanence, security, or "definite expectancy." [7] This "transcendentalism" was not justifiable in terms of the motives of unity and clearness — was, in fact, in some measure opposed to them; but it was more congenial to the *active* part of man.

About 1873 James recorded the following reflections suggested by David Masson's classification of philosophers as "empiricists" and "transcendentalists": —

"The leading idea in his mind seems to have been the distinction between 'an experience' considered purely and simply as a fact or state, and the same considered as the outcome of, or conditioned by, certain forms of being, which lie behind it or are *a priori* to it. . . . The teleology of the empiricist, so far as he has one, is not universal — he admits in the cosmos a vast amount of *mere* waste. . . . For the transcendentalist, on the other hand, a reason for everything is sought, and the fact of failure as a whole, if not each particular case of failure, demands at his hands an explanation and a justification. This willingness of the empiricist to let a certain number of things go unaccounted for might be called a defect of seriousness or earnestness on his part as compared with his rival. . . .

"For the empiricist the only order which has any objective existence is the elementary order — the dynamic laws by which elements and their properties are associated.[8] . . . The elements act and react, pursuing blindly each its private law, while the 'thing' floats out incidentally as it were, exerting as such no influence on its factors, and ignored by them. . . . On learning this, the transcendentalist is inclined to say: 'Is the *thing* then not *meant* by nature at all, a gratuitous figment added by us, or, at least, something whose sole existence is its empirical actuality? That a thing should merely be or happen is the all in all of it for the positivist. What more, he says, can one ask, than concrete actuality?' But the transcendental-

[6] The term "nihilism" was borrowed from David Masson's *Recent British Philosophy*. To James the immediate embodiment of this strict and negative empiricism was Chauncey Wright; *cf.* below, Ch. XXXI.

[7] *W.B.*, 79–82.

[8] *Cf.* C. Wright, *Philosophical Discussions*, 71.

ist asks some guarantee of that being, some assurance that it is 'intended' by the universe.[9] . . . He postulates thus a sort of duplication of all existences: (1) their positive actuality; (2) the hold their *idea* has upon the rest of nature; and this 'duplication' seems a tolerably fundamental ingredient in the distinction between empirical and transcendental points of view." [10]

A strict "phenomenist" was bound to reject the idea of "substance," and to identify the thing with the sum of its appearances. This James was not content to do, not only because he believed that the thing was a *selection* of appearances relative to the interest of the knowing mind, but because he recognized a general philosophical demand that the thing should have some sort of significance beyond the multiplicity of bare data: —

"My idea of substance is simply that it means that the present phenomenon is not all — that its existence involves other existence — that in addition to its actuality it has a potentiality when it *is* not, and that such potentiality means that whatever *is* now calls for that phenomenon in its time and place. In other words, it is not an accident, but continuous with all the rest of things — *it is meant.* To be able to say of each phenomenon, this is meant by all that is, would be to achieve the philosophic task and bind all that is into unity. It would, moreover, achieve the moral and religious task. For each phenomenon that confronts us is an occasion for our reaction. We know it by meeting it actively — in the *kennen* sense. If, moreover, in the *wissen* sense we know that it is meant here and now to meet us, we know it all round." [11]

Similarly, "the nihilistic objection that the substance adds nothing to the phenomenon, having no other connotation than that of being substance to *this phenomenon,* does not exactly hit the mark;

[9] *Cf.* the following, from W.J.'s notes on "The Sentiment of Rationality": "You have now an itching on the point of your nose. For me to know that, you say, is a very poor kind of knowledge; but when I know a nebula full of mind-stuff, you say that is a sublime kind of knowledge. Really one is as incomplete as the other. The mere mind-stuff nebula as such, — what is it, what is it worth? It is a fact like the itching. Only when determined as the nebula *destined to produce* that itching in your nose here and now, can it be complete knowledge. Only when the itching itself is felt as the result of the nebula does *it* become complete. And then, no matter which way you start, you get the same whole. Both are stumps, taken apart."

[10] In general the unpublished notes differ from the published articles in their fuller and more sympathetic attention to the motives of non-empirical philosophies.

[11] About 1873; *wissen* differs from *kennen,* as explanation from mere acquaintance.

for the essence of the substantial judgment added by us to our apprehension of the phenomenon is, *'It is meant so!' This being meant* is that which separates 'real' phenomena from figments and fancies. . . . The theoretic insight into the necessity of things is not vouchsafed us, and the empiricists so far are right. But this practical stability constitutes the most important part of the philosophic quest."

Similar motives lead to the affirmation of a "rational order" beyond the series of impressions: —

"To human nature there is something uncanny, *unheimlich,* in the notion of a universe stripped so stark naked, brought down to its fighting weight so to speak. Men have at all times believed in something over and above bare actuality, have allowed to the phenomenon a form of being other than that which immediately impressed the senses. Whether they have called this *other, universalia ante rem,* or noumenon, or substance, or the Unknowable, or idea in the Platonic sense, or whether they have hypostasized its 'possibility' like John Mill, — thoughts of God, meaning, purpose, nature, a rational order like the Stoics, the absolute thought in which the phenomenon forms a moment, of the Hegelians . . . under each and all of these formulations lurks the same mental act, that of insisting that things do not exist, so to speak, only once, but are in a manner duplicated, appointed, called for, recognized, at other places and moments than those of their plenary actuality. . . . Our spontaneous feeling . . . will always posit . . . a recognition of things rather than a cognition of them, a rational order with which the mind communes and upon which actuality settles here and there by a sort of accident, and in settling acquires its specific determinations. . . . Our notion of a future time with its material content forms a sort of matrix *ante rem* into which in its time the *res* fits. . . . Desires, again, and judgments that things would be better thus than so, involve the feeling that apart from their actuality things have a certain coercive hold on being. . . .

"From all these different sources there grows up round about the actually present in consciousness an atmosphere of reference to something more which haunts it. This 'more' may be the margin of otherness in time and space; it may be the truer determination of the instant, whether as the real which is to correct instant expectation, the rectification which is to correct instant perception, the

desirable end which coerces instant feeling, the mere doubt which corrects instant dogmatism, or the reflection 'this is subjective' which corrects instant ontology. The present cannot move unaccompanied by this escort, this ontologic sphere in which it lies embedded, and which prevents us from accepting it *schlechthin* as absolutely given. . . . In other words, the here and now, in addition to being the seat of actual feelings, becomes a sort of locus of intersection of the network of ideal relations arising from association, anticipation, reflection, desire, etc. . . . and the actual feeling which occupies the locus gets to be regarded as a sort of accidental intruder which may or may not remain. Our acceptance of it is infected with an *aliter possibile*. . . .

"Now each of these feeders of the notion of an order other than the actual may be criticized and deprived of validity, but as a whole their massive effect is too great to be overpowered. Even the criticisms of a Hume himself did not lead him further than to *doubt* the existence of a rational order. I for one must confess that if by an effort of abstraction I am able for a moment to conceive of the world in Humean terms — of representation sprouting upon representation by absolute happening, of everything being only once, of evolution with nothing involved, of our mental life, for example, as having come to be with no ideal preëxisting determinant of it — I feel as if the breath was leaving my body." [12]

Thus James consciously rejected positivistic empiricism because it gave him a sense of *Unheimlichkeit* and suffocation. Metaphysical constructions, such as substance, God, or rational order, which extend beyond the surface of experience, did not justify themselves to him by purely theoretic standards, that is by the intellectual demand for unity and the empirical demand for clearness of detail. But instead of rejecting them, he gave them a hearing on the ground that *there are other standards,* emotional and moral, which are relevant to philosophical belief. Writing in 1889 on "The Psychology of Belief," and speaking of the spiritualistic metaphysics, he said, "What is beyond the crude experiences is not an *alternative* to them, but something that *means* them for me here and now. It is safe to say that, if ever such a system is satisfactorily excogitated, mankind

[12] James makes occasional reference in this context to Otto Liebmann, whose *Kant und die Epigonen* (1865) he was reading at this time.

will drop all other systems and cling to that one alone as real." [13] It will be clung to because it best suits our "active powers," but only when "satisfactorily excogitated."

James was not easily satisfied with his own excogitations, but was extremely hospitable and tolerant towards the excogitations of others. He believed that any philosophy which satisfies its adherents must have some good in it, since otherwise it would have no adherents. He was disposed to assume that the many philosophies corresponded to the many motives which may legitimately determine philosophical belief: "The philosopher and the critic are like the eagle and the wren; the critic is a parasite, but he is needed to keep the philosopher straight. . . . No one mind can have the whole truth. Different minds have a *scent* for different kinds of truth, and there is a division of labor."

It is abundantly evident that for James the urgency of philosophical problems arose from the conflict between science and religion; and it is equally evident that, so far as he himself was concerned, the solution must lie in a reconciliation and not a conquest.[14] The hope of their reconciliation lay in exposure of their motives. As regards science, James's position was that of professional candor. He knew science well enough to distinguish it from the cult which used the name: —

"All ages have their intellectual populace. That of our own day prides itself particularly on its love of Science and Facts and its contempt for all metaphysics. Just weaned from the Sunday-school nurture of its early years, with the taste of the catechism still in its mouth, it is perhaps not surprising that its palate should lack discrimination and fail to recognize how much of ontology is contained in the 'Nature,' 'Force,' and 'Necessary Law,' how much mysticism in the 'Awe,' 'Progress,' and 'Loyalty to Truth,' or whatever the other phrases may be with which it sweetens its rather meagre fare of fragmentary physiology and physics." [15]

James's impatience with the authoritarian spirit in science expressed both his regard for the experimental temper of a Wyman or a Darwin, and his zeal in behalf of that cause of religion which scientific authority would presumptuously suppress. It is

[13] *Mind*, XIV, 351.
[14] *Cf.* review of Clifford's *Lectures and Essays* (1879), *C.E.R.*, 140.
[15] *Mind*, IV (1879), 339.

only a tacitly speculative science that can dispute religion. If scientists wish to engage in speculation, by all means let them; but require them to admit it openly and concede the same liberty to their opponents: —

"But now that an age of synthesis seems approaching, scientific men obey the current, cut loose from the old tradition of taking things piecemeal and contentedly ignoring much, and commit themselves to vast theories which, whether true or false, stand at least as much unverified to-day, in the strict scientific sense of the word verification, as any of the theosophies of the past. . . . Heaven forbid that they should not sometimes outstrip the proof, and, no longer sicklied o'er with scruples about crucial experiments and adequate evidence, yield to the pleasure of taking for true what they happen vividly to conceive as possible. Only when this exhilarated, but by no means unhealthy, mood is upon them, let it be distinctly recognized for what it is — the mood of Faith, not Science. And when the partisan herd girds itself up to exercise its right of following its leaders, let it be told beforehand by what route they are to pass, whether over scientific highways and bridges or by balloon. . . .

"By all means let every man who has a stomach for the fray be admitted to the speculative arena. But let it be on an equal footing with all comers, all to wear the speculative colors, no odds given, and no favors shown. And may the critics help fair-play as much as possible by pointing out to the excellent but rather unperceptive public that this wild-eyed champion, who is now seen throwing his hat and cracking his joints, *was* no other than the laborious and accurate physicist, chemist, or physiologist Blank, who, having got tired for a time of the laboratory's confinement, now appears in his new and brilliant rôle of Blank, the Audacious and Ingenious Speculative Philosopher, in which he hopes to outdo even those who are to the manner born." [16]

Nor can science escape a faith of its own by narrowing its claims. For positivistic materialism is a form of self-denial, and can justify itself only to the one who believes in a moral world. Hence a curious self-contradiction: "I will abandon myself to truth, — this leads

[16] "The Mood of Science and the Mood of Faith," *Nation*, XIX (1874), 437. In this context, to dispel a superstitious reverence for science, James referred his students to the chapter on "Natural Supernaturalism" in Carlyle's *Sartor Resartus*.

me to materialism. Materialism, on the other hand, ceases to supply any moral incentive to my heroic devotion to truth. It remains a mere *taste,* which, as its results are unpleasant, I need not follow. Frivolity, or a fool's paradise in superstition, are equally licit to me. On the other hand, if it be a moral world, devotion to truth, however harsh, may be my duty. A pessimistic creed is possibly required of me, or perhaps an optimistic. Both these, as postulating a *serious* reaction towards the world, are opposite to materialism; which allows a frivolous one, and in fact commends it whenever it can serve as an anæsthetic against pain." [17]

James did not read science out of court. Indeed he believed that there was great promise of fruitful philosophizing in the rise of a group of thinkers such as Lotze, Fechner, Helmholtz, Mach, Horwicz, Hodgson, and Lewes, who could be soundly scientific without prejudice to ulterior metaphysical considerations. Such thinkers, understanding and respecting the careful procedure of empirical science, might avoid both the negations of the positivists and the hasty or grandiose speculations of the older philosophy.[18] From them it was reasonable to hope for a sober and modest philosophy that would justify religion, at least in the extremely broad terms in which James was then accustomed to formulate it: —

"Religion in its most abstract expression may be defined as the affirmation that all is *not* vanity. The empiricist can easily sneer at such a formula as being empty through its universality, and ask you to cash it by its concrete filling, — which you may not be able to do, for nothing can well be harder. Yet as a practical fact its meaning is so distinct that when used as a premiss in a life, a whole character may be imparted to the life by it. It, like so many other universal concepts, is a truth of orientation, serving not to define an end, but to determine a direction."

[17] 1869–73.

[18] *Cf., e.g.,* the opening paragraphs of James's review of Wundt, in *North Amer. Rev.,* CXXI (1875).

XXX

WENDELL HOLMES

In writing the Preface of his *Principles of Psychology* in 1890, James recorded his indebtedness to Chauncey Wright and Charles Peirce for "their intellectual companionship in old times." Adding Oliver Wendell Holmes, Jr., there were three of these old-time intellectual companionships which must be taken account of in any discussion of James's early philosophical orientation, and which bear directly on the issue between science and religion. All of these men were, as we have seen, of a relatively rigorous or skeptical turn of mind, and by exposure to their criticism James's germinating metaphysics became a hardier plant.

The intimacy with Holmes began while the latter was in the Harvard Law School (1864–1866). When James was in Brazil in 1865 he longed for Holmes, and after he returned to his medical studies in 1866 he "wrangled" with Holmes by the hour. In the winter of 1866–1867 the two were deep in a continuing metaphysical discussion, echoes of which are preserved in a memorandum on "materialism," addressed by James to Holmes. It contained a defense of optimism against the negations of agnosticism — a defense which he "was groping for the other evening," but "could not say" until Holmes was gone and he was in bed.[1] On April 16, 1867, James sailed from New York on the *Great Eastern* — bound for that long voyage of exile and discovery which has already been recorded. Suffering from mortification that he should be so unreliable in health and so vacillating in will, he had kept his plan a secret even from his family and friends. But on the eve of his departure he must hold a farewell session at the Holmes house on Charles Street: "Dear Wendy boy, — I will go in tomorrow night, and we will evolve cosmos out of chaos for positively the last time."

During all the time of his homesickness and heart-searching in Germany James felt that Holmes and Tom Ward were his "best

[1] *L.W.J.*, I, 60, 76, 80, 82–3, 99.

friends so far." In September 1867, he wrote from Berlin complaining of Holmes's silence, inquiring after the results of his "study of the *vis viva* question, and referring familiarly to their "dilapidated old friend the Cosmos." He received the following reply: —

Boston, Dec. 15, 1867

Dear Bill, —

I shall begin with no apologies for my delay in writing except to tell you that since seeing you I have written three long letters to you at different intervals on *vis viva,* each of which I was compelled to destroy because on reflection it appeared either unsound or incomplete. But I was talking yesterday with Fanny Dixwell and she told me to fire away anyhow — that she thought it would please you to hear from me even without *vis viva.* So here goes. Writing is so unnatural to me that I have never before dared to try it to you unless in connection with a subject. Ah! dear Bill, do me justice. My expressions of esteem are not hollow nor hyperbolical — nor put in to cover my neglect. In spite of my many friends I am almost alone in my thoughts and inner feelings. And whether I ever see you much or not, I think I can never fail to derive a secret comfort and companionship from the thought of you. I believe I shall always respect and love you whether we see much or little of each other. . . .

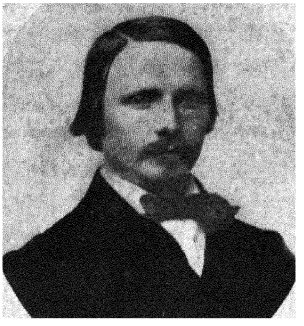
For two or three months I debauched o' nights in philosophy. But now it is law — law — law. My *magnum opus* was reading the *Critique of Pure Reason* and Schulze's *éclaircissement* — which on the whole, though an excellent abridgment, does n't much by way of *éclaircissements.* . . . Assumed that logic exhaustively classifies judgments according to their possible forms, it [Kant's *Critique*] has then implicitly classified concepts in like manner. But all experience to be thought must be thought through concepts. The forms of concepts, then, are inherent in all organised experience as an *a priori* element. Hence it is explained *inter alia* why, given phenomenon *A,* we say it must have had a cause in an antecedent phenomenon. The phenomenon only became thinkable through that form and others. You see how ingenious and audacious was his attempt — yet its fallacy seems obvious when the reasoning by which it was arrived at is grasped.

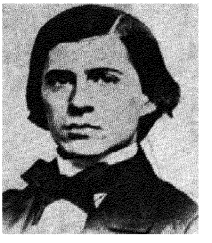
Thus, the logical categories have reference only to the form in

which judgments are expressed. The conceptions of substance, causal relation, etc., belong to the content and are not given in the form. Thus, take the hypothetical judgment, "if *A* then *B*." This form is not coterminous with the causal judgment, as Thomson[2] (reasoning *alio intuitu*) points out; *e.g.*, "if this be poetry, poetry is worthless," is as much hypothetical in form as "if the moon attracts in same line as sun the tides are at their highest." Thomson says the only case of causal relation is when the four terms are all different: "if *A* is *B* then *C* is *D*." But whether even this last is always so may be doubted — *e.g.*, "if I am right then tomorrow will be warm." Again, he and Mansel have both shown — I should think successfully, but I am no logician — that all of these can be reduced to categorical judgments. And then what becomes of a theory based on their fundamental distinctions? But the other objection is, I think, insuperable — that if the concept cause and effect be only a form of thought corresponding to the hypothetical judgment, that judgment ought never to express any but causal relations. . . . It 's puerile stuff enough, I admit, to waste energy on. But it seems necessary to read a good deal of useless stuff, in order to know that it is so and not to depend only on a surmise. At present, I say it 's nothing but law; though, by the by, I am reading Tyndall's book on *Heat* — what a yellow-whiskered, healthy, florid-complected, pleasant English book it is, to be sure. Are n't the foreigners simpler than we? See what one of the great lights of English law says in the preface to a book I 'm reading (he is speaking of Savigny): "I have used great exertions, but without effect, to make myself sufficiently master of the German language to read this work in the original." If a man here had three cents' worth of secondhand knowledge would he confess that he did n't know anything under the sun? Talking of Britons, there have been a lot here of late — one, a Mr. Henry Cowper — brother of the present Earl C., made a decided impression on me. He had the cosmos at heart, it seemed to me, and we hammered at it late into the night several times. . . .

Oh! Bill, my beloved, how have I yearned after thee all this long time. How I have admired those brave, generous and magnanimous traits of which I will not shame thee by speaking. I am the better

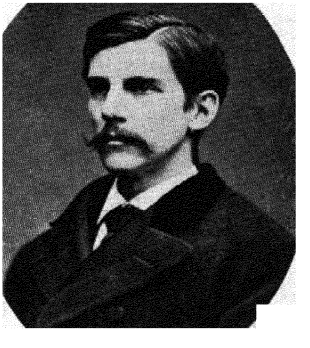
[2] The reference is to William Thomson, Archbishop of York, *An Outline of the Necessary Laws of Thought*, 1849, p. 164.











CHAUNCEY WRIGHT, BETWEEN 1860 AND 1870

CHARLES S. PEIRCE, ABOUT 1859

THOMAS W. WARD, ABOUT 1866

WILLIAM JAMES, ABOUT 1872

O. W. HOLMES, JR., ABOUT 1872

that I have seen thee and known thee, — let that suffice. Since I wrote the last word I have been to see your father. By a rather remarkable coincidence, your last letter referred to Kant and to Schulze's book. It is rather strange, is n't it? It is now evening and the whole day has been yours with the exceptions noted and meals. I expect Gray directly. May this get to you in time to wish you a Happy New Year. By Heaven I do, — *vis viva* must wait. There are stickers I can't answer. But I rather think you found difficulty — at least I did — in the insufficiency of facts. As one is shaping his views he wants to say, Is this experiment so or so? I got more out of Cooke[3] on terms by way of translating mathematics into English than anyone else. But I found my first explanations in great measure *chimæra bombinans in vacuo* when I went into the matter a second time in order to write you. As it is I just see that force is n't destroyed, without having mastered the formulæ. What a passion your father has in writing and talking his religion! Almost he persuadeth me to be a Swedenborgian, but I can't go it so far — will see whether the other scheme busts up first, I think. Good-bye, dear Bill — don't forget me quite. Affectionately yours,

O. W. Holmes

Berlin, Jan. 3, 1868[4]

My dear Wendle, —

Ich weiss nicht was soll es bedeuten, dass ich so traurig bin, tonight. The ghosts of the past all start from their unquiet graves and keep dancing a senseless whirligig around me so that, after trying in vain to read three books, to sleep, or to think, I clutch the pen and ink and resolve to work off the fit by a few lines to one of the most obtrusive ghosts of all — namely the tall and lank one of Charles Street. Good golly! how I would prefer to have about twenty-four hours' talk with you up in that whitely lit-up room — without the sun rising or the firmament revolving so as to put the gas out, without sleep, food, clothing or shelter except your whiskey bottle, of which, or the like of which, I have not partaken since I have been in these longitudes! I should like to have you opposite me in any mood, whether the facetiously excursive, the metaphys-

[3] Josiah Parsons Cooke, whose books on physics and chemistry were current at this time.

[4] Reprinted with omissions from *L.W.J.*, I, 124–7.

ically discursive, the personally confidential, or the jadedly *cursive* and argumentative — so that the oyster-shells which enclose my being might slowly turn open on their rigid hinges under the radiation, and the critter within loll out his dried-up gills into the circumfused ichor of life, till they grew so fat as not to know themselves again. I feel as if a talk with you of any kind could not fail to set me on my legs again for three weeks at least. I have been chewing on two or three dried-up old cuds of ideas I brought from America with me, till they have disappeared, and the nudity of the Kosmos has got beyond anything I have as yet experienced. . . .

I don't know how it is I am able to take so little interest in reading this winter. I marked out a number of books when I first came here, to finish. What with their heaviness and the damnable slowness with which the Dutch still goes, they weigh on me like a haystack. I loathe the thought of them; and yet they have poisoned my slave of a conscience so that I can't enjoy anything else. I have reached an age when practical work of some kind clamors to be done — and I must still wait!

There! Having worked off that pent-up gall of six weeks' accumulation I feel more genial. I wish I could have some news of you — now that the postage is lowered to such a ridiculous figure (and no letter is double) there remains no *shadow* of an excuse for not writing — but, still, I don't expect anything from you. I suppose you are sinking ever deeper into the sloughs of the law — yet I ween the Eternal Mystery still from time to time gives her goad another turn in the raw she once established between your ribs. Don't let it heal over yet. When I get home let 's establish a philosophical society to have regular meetings and discuss none but the very tallest and broadest questions — to be composed of none but the very topmost cream of Boston manhood. It will give each one a chance to air his own opinion in a grammatical form, and to sneer and chuckle when he goes home at what damned fools all the other members are — and may grow into something very important after a sufficient number of years. . . .

I 'll now pull up. I don't know whether you take it as a compliment that I should only write to you when in the dismalest of dumps — perhaps you ought to — you, the one emergent peak, to which I cling when all the rest of the world has sunk beneath the wave. Believe me, my Wendly boy, what poor possibility of friendship in the

crazy frame of W.J. meanders about thy neighborhood. Good-bye! Keep the same bold front as ever to the Common Enemy — and don't forget your ally,

W. J.

P.S. . . . Jan. 4. [Written on the outside of the envelope] By a strange coincidence, after writing this last night, I received yours this morning. Not to sacrifice the postage stamps which are already on the envelope (Economical W!) I don't reopen it. But I will write you again soon. Meanwhile, bless your heart! thank you! *Vide* Shakespeare: Sonnet XXIX.

Boston, April 19, 1868

Dear Bill, —

The icy teeth have melted out of the air and winter has snapped at us for the last time. Now are the waters beneath my window of a deeper and more significant blue than heretofore. Now do the fields burn with green fire — the evanescent hint of I know not what hidden longing of the earth. Now all the bushes burgeon with wooly buds and the elm trees have put on bridal veils of hazy brown. Now to the chorus of the frogs answers the chorus of the birds in antiphony of morning and evening. Now couples, walking round Boston Common Sundays after sunset, draw near to each other in the dark spaces between the gas lights and think themselves unseen. Now are the roads around Cambridge filled with collegians with new hats and sticks and shining schoolboy faces. Now the young man seeks the maiden nothing loath to be pursued. Spring is here, Bill, and I turn to thee, — not with more affection than during the long grind of the winter, but desiring if it may be to say a word to thee once more.

Since I wrote in December I have worked at nothing but the law. Philosophy has hibernated in torpid slumber, and I have lain "sluttishly soaking and gurgling in the devil's pickle," as Carlyle says. It has been necessary, — if a man chooses a profession he cannot forever content himself in picking out the plums with fastidious dilettantism and give the rest of the loaf to the poor, but must eat his way manfully through crust and crumb — soft, unpleasant, inner parts which, within one, swell, causing discomfort in the bowels. Such has been my cowardice that I have been almost glad that you were n't here, lest you should be disgusted to find me inaccessible to ideas and

impressions of more spiritual significance but alien to my studies. Think not, however, that I distrust the long enduring of your patience. I know that you would be the last of all to turn away from one in whom you discerned the possibility of friendship because his vigils were at a different shrine, knowing it was the same Divinity he worshipped. And the winter has been a success, I think, both for the simple discipline of the work and because I now go on with an ever increasing conviction that law as well as any other series of facts in this world may be approached in the interests of science and may be studied, yes and practised, with the preservation of one's ideals. I should even say that they grew robust under the regimen, — more than that I do not ask. To finish the search of mankind, to discover the *ne plus ultra* which is the demand of ingenuous youth, one finds is not allotted to an individual. To reconcile oneself to life — to dimly apprehend that this dream disturbing the sleep of the cosm is not the result of a dyspepsy, but is well — to suspect some of the divine harmonies, though you cannot note them like a score of music — these things, methinks, furnish vanishing points which give a kind of perspective to the chaos of events. Perhaps I am fortunate in what I have often made a reproach to myself.

Harry never lets up on his high aims, — somehow it connects itself with the absence of humor in him which himself avows. *I do.* There are not infrequent times when a bottle of wine, a good dinner, a girl of some trivial sort can fill the hour for me. So for longer spaces, work, — of which only at the beginning and the end do I perceive the philosophic *nexus,* and while performing forget the Great Task Master's Eye. This makes life easier though perhaps it does not deserve approval.

Let me give another example of "if *A* is *B,* then *C* is *D*" (in my last letter) which does not denote a causal connection — the one I gave was open to objection as standing on peculiar grounds. Take all judgments of universal or assumed universal concomitants: "If the barometer falls suddenly, there will be a gale"; "If the sun shines in Boston, the stars are out in China." In these, etc., there is no causal connection between protasis and apodosis, although *by going outside of the judgment* to an induction we may say with more or less confidence that where two facts are always found together, if one is not the cause of the other then they are both (probably) referable to a common cause. . . . Is it not clear

that . . . the relation of the *if* and the *then* to a common cause is not in any way given in the form of the judgment, and that said *if* and *then* don't stand to each other in the relation of cause and effect? . . .

Dear old Bill, I have n't said anything about your illness to you — there is nothing, perhaps, which particularly belongs to me to say. But for God's sake don't lose that courage with which you have faced "the common enemy" (as you well have it). Would that I could give back the spirits which you have given to me so often. At all events doubt not of my love.

Let me not be sad, — at least for this letter. There is a new fire in the earth and sky. I, who through the long winter have felt the wrinkles deepening in my face and a stoop settling in my back — I, who have said to myself that my life henceforth must and should be given only to severe thought, and have said to youth, *"procul esto,"* — I feel the mighty quickening of the spring.

The larches have sprouted.

I saw a butterfly today just loosed from the bondage of winter, and a bee toiling in sticky buds half opened.

O! passionate breezes! O! rejoicing hills! How swells the soft full chorus — for this earth which slept has awakened, and the air is tremulous with multiplied joyous sound.

Sing, sparrow — kissing with thy feet the topmost tassels of the pines.

Cease not thy too much sound, O! robin. Squirrels grind thy scissors in the woods. Creak, blackbirds. Croak, frogs. Caw, high-flying crows, who have seen the breaking of the ice in northern rivers and the seaward moving booms.

A keen, slender, stridulous vibration — almost too fine for the hearing, weaving in and out, and in the pauses of the music dividing the silence like a knife — pierces my heart with an ecstasy I cannot utter. Ah! what is it? Did I ever hear it? Is it a voice within, answering to the others, but different from them — and like a singing flame not ceasing with that which made it vocal?

Dear Bill, to whom should I vent this madness but to you? Goodbye. You know my sentiments — I will not repeat them. Affectionately yours,

O. W. Holmes

Apr. 25. It is snowing again. S' help me.

Dresden, May 15, 1868

My dear Wendell, —

Your unexpected letter has just burst into my existence like a meteor into the sphere of a planet, and here I go for an answer while the heat developed by the impact is at its highest. I have got so accustomed to thinking of you as not a writing animal that such an event rather dislocates my mind from its habitual "sag" in contemplating the world. I have of late been repeatedly on the point of writing to you but have paused ere slipping o'er the brink. It is easy to write people whom you have been steadily writing to, for one letter seems to continue the previous ones. But to fire off a letter point blank at a man once in six months has an arbitrary savor. There are so many things of about equal importance for you to tell him that there is no reason for you to begin with any particular one and leave off the rest. Consequently you don't begin at all. However, heaven reward you for this inspired effusion and help you to another some time. It runs through the whole circle of human energy, Shelley, Kant, Goethe, Walt Whitman, all being fused in the unity of your fiery personality. Were I only in the vein, O! friend, I would answer in the same high strain, but today I grovel in prose. That you firmly embrace like a *Bothriocephalus latus* the very bowels of the law and grapple them to your soul with hooks of steel, is good. That the miasmas thence arising do not forever hide the blue Jove above, is better. I am firmly convinced that by going straight in almost any direction you can get out of the woods in which the young mind grows up, for I have an idea that the process usually consists of a more or less forcible reduction of the other elements of the chaos to a harmony with the terms of the one on which one has taken his particular stand. I think I might have fought it out on the line of practical medicine quite well. Your image of the ideals being vanishing points which give a kind of perspective to the chaos of events, tickleth that organ within me whose function it is to dally with the ineffable. I shall not fail to remember it, and if I stay long enough in Germany to make the acquaintance of ary a philosopher, I shall get it off as my own, you bet!

Your letter last winter I got and acknowledged on the cover of one I had just written you. Your criticism of Kant seems perfectly sound to me. I hoped to have got at him before now but have been interfered with. I have read only his *Prolegomena* and his little

Anthropology (a marvellous, biting little work), and Cousin's exposé of him (and of himself at the same time, darn him and the likes of him! — he is a mere politician). I hope soon to begin with the *Kritik*, for which I feel myself now quite prepared. And I reserve any half-ripe remarks I may have made on Kant till after that is done. I think a good five hours' talk with you would probably do me more good than almost any other experience I can conceive of. I have not had any contact out of books with any soul possessed of *reason* since I left home, except, perhaps, Grimm — and I did not, owing to the linguistic wall between us, succeed in putting myself into communication with him. And in personal contact, Wendell, lies a deep dark power. I say "reason," but I have no idea what the thing is. I have slipped so gradually out of sight of it in people that I did not know any particular thing was gone, till the day before yesterday I made the acquaintance of a young female from New York who is here in the house, and suddenly noticed that an old long-forgotten element was present (I mean in her way of accepting the world). It has been a beneficent discovery, and the suddenness and quasi-definiteness of it almost shatters one's empirical philosophy. But probably it, too, may be resolved into other more vulgar elements.

The fact is, my dear boy, that I feel more as if you were my ally against what you call "the common enemy" than anyone I know. As I am writing a grave statement of facts and not an effusion of friendliness, I may say that Tom Ward seems to me to have as great an intuition of the length and breadth of the enemy (which is the place in which most people fail), and perhaps a greater animal passion in his feeling about it, but poor Tom is so deficient in power of orderly thought that intercourse with him hardly ever bears fruit. With Harry and my Dad I have a perfect sympathy "personally," but Harry's orbit and mine coincide but part way, and Father's and mine hardly at all, except in a general feeling of philanthropy in which we both indulge. I have no idea that the particular point of view from which we spy the fiendish enemy has *per se* any merit over that of lots of other men. Such an opinion we recognize in other people as "conceit." But merely because it is common to both of us, I have an esteem for you which is *tout particulier*, and value intercourse with you. You have a far more logical and orderly mode of thinking than I (I stand between you and T. Ward), and whenever we

have been together I have somehow been conscious of a reaction against the ascendancy of this over my ruder processes — a reaction caused by some subtle deviltry of egotism and jealousy, whose causes are untraceable by myself, but through whose agency I put myself involuntarily into a position of self-defense, as if you threatened to overrun my territory and injure my own proprietorship. I don't know whether you ever noticed any such thing, — it is hard to define the subtleness of it. *Some* of it may have been caused by the feeling of a too "cosmo-centric" consciousness in you. But most of it was pure meanness. I *guess* that were we to meet now I should be less troubled with it. I have grown into the belief that friendship (including the highest half of that which between the two sexes is united under the single name of love) is about the highest joy of earth, and that a man's rank in the general scale is well indicated by his capacity for it. So much established, I will try in a few brief strokes to define my present condition to you. If asked the question which all men who pretend to know themselves ought to be able to answer, but which few probably could offhand, — "What reason can you give for continuing to live? What ground allege why the thread of your days should not be snapped *now?*"

May 18th. Wendell of my entrails! At the momentous point where the last sheet ends I was interrupted by the buxom maid calling to tea and through various causes have not got back till now. As I sit by the open window waiting for my breakfast and look out on the line of *Droschkes* drawn up on the side of the Dohna Platz, and see the coachmen, red-faced, red-collared, and blue-coated, with varnished hats, sitting in a variety of indolent attitudes upon their boxes, one of them looking in upon me and probably wondering what the devil I am, — when I see the big sky with a monstrous white cloud battening and bulging up from behind the houses into the blue, with a uniform copper film drawn over cloud and blue, which makes one anticipate a soaking day — when I see the houses opposite with their balconies and windows filled with flowers and greenery — Ha! on the topmost balcony of one stands a maiden, black-jacketed, red-petticoated, fair and slim under the striped awning, leaning her elbow on the rail and her peach-like chin upon her rosy finger tips! Of whom thinkest thou, maiden, up there aloft? Here, *here!* beats that human heart for which in the drunkenness of the morning hour thy being vaguely longs, and tremulously, but reck-

lessly and wickedly, posits elsewhere, over those distant housetops which thou regardest. Out of another window hangs the form, seen from behind and centre of gravity downwards, of an intrepid servant girl, washing the window. Blue frocked is she, and like a spider fast holding to his thread, or one that gathers samphires on dizzy promontory, she braves the danger of a fall. Against the lamp-post leans the *Dienstman* or *commissionaire,* cross-legged and with tin-badged cap, smoking his cheap morning cigar. Far over the *Platz* toils the big country wagon with high-collared horses, and the still pavement rings with the shuffling feet of broad-backed wenches carrying baskets, and of short-necked, wide-faced men. The day has in fact begun, and when I see all this and think that at the same moment thou art probably in a dead sleep whirled round through the black night with rocks and trees and monuments like an inanimate thing, when I think all this, I feel — *how?* — I give it up myself! After this interruption, which on the ground of local color and my half-awake condition you will excuse, I return to the former subject. But here's the breakfast! Excuse me! Man eats in Germany a very light breakfast, chocolate and dry bread, so it won't take me long.

'T is done, and a more genial glow than ever fills my system. Having read over what I wrote the day before yesterday I feel tempted not to send it, for I cannot help thinking it does not represent with perfect sincerity the state of the case. Still, if I do not write to you now, it may postpone itself a good while, and I let it go for the general spirit which animates it rather than for the particular propositions it contains. The point which seems to me unwarranted was my assumption of any special battle I was fighting against the powers of darkness, and of your being allied with me therein as the ground of my esteem for you. The truth is painfully evident to me that I am but little interested in any particular battle or movement of progress, and the ground of my friendship for you is more a sort of physical relish for your wit and wisdom, and passive enjoyment of the entertainment they afford, than anything else. Much would I give for a constructive passion of some kind. As it is, I am in great measure in the hands of Chance. Your metaphysical industry and the artistic satisfaction you take in the exercise of it, gives you an immeasurable advantage. In the past year if I have learned little else, I have at least learned a good deal that I previously did not suspect about the limits of my own mind. They are not

exhilarating. I will not annoy you by going into the details, but they all conspire to give my thoughts a vague emptiness wherever feeling is, and to drive feeling out wherever the thought becomes good for anything. Bah! My answer to the question I asked at the end of sheet two would be vague indeed; it would vary between the allegation of a dogged desire to assert myself at certain times, and the undermined hope of making *some* nick, however minute, in the pile which humanity is fashioning, at others. Of course I would beg for a *temporary* respite from the inevitable shears, for different reasons at different times. If a *particular* and passionate reason for wishing to live for four hours longer were *always* forthcoming, I should think myself a very remarkable man, and be quite satisfied. But in the intervals of absence of such a reason, I could wish that my general grounds are more defined than they are.[5] . . .

I am tending strongly to an empiristic view of life. I don't know how far it will carry me, or what rocks insoluble by it will block my future path. Already I see an ontological cloud of absolute idealism waiting for me far off on the horizon, but I have no passion for the fray. I shall continue to apply empirical principles to my experiences as I go on and see how much they fit. One thing makes me uneasy. *If* the end of all is to be that we must take our sensations as simply given or as preserved by natural selection for us, and interpret this rich and delicate overgrowth of ideas, moral, artistic, religious and social, as a mere mask, a tissue spun in happy hours by creative individuals and adopted by other men in the interests of their sensations, — how long is it going to be well for us not to "let on" all we know to the public? How long are we to indulge the "people" in their theological and other vagaries so long as such vagaries seem to us more beneficial on the whole than otherwise? How long are we to wear that uncomfortable "air of suppression" which has been complained of in Mr. Mill? Can any men be trusted to dole out from moment to moment just that measure of a doctrine which is consistent with utility? I know that the brightest jewel in the crown of Utilitarianism is that every notion hatched by the human mind receives justice and tolerance at its hands. But I know that no mind can trace the far ramifications of an idea in the mind of the public; and that any idea is at a disadvantage which cannot enlist in its favor the thirst for conquest, the love of absoluteness,

[5] The paragraph omitted here will be found above, 275.

that have helped to found religions; and which cannot open a *definite* channel for human sympathies and affections to flow in. It seems exceedingly improbable that any new *religious* genius should arise in these days to open a fresh highway for the masses who have outgrown the old beliefs. Now ought not we (supposing we becomed indurated sensationalists) to begin to smite the old, hip and thigh, and get, if possible, a little enthusiasm associated with our doctrines? If God is dead or at least irrelevant, ditto everything pertaining to the "Beyond." If happiness is our Good, ought we not to try to foment a passionate and bold will to attain that happiness among the multitudes? Can we not conduct off upon our purposes from the old moralities and theologies a beam which will invest us with some of the proud absoluteness which made them so venerable, by preaching the doctrine that Man is his own Providence, and every individual a real God to his race, greater or less in proportion to his gifts and the way he uses them? The sentiment of philanthropy is now so firmly established and apparently its permanence so guaranteed by its beneficent nature, that it would be bold to say it could not take its place as an ultimate motive for human action. I feel no *confidence* (even apart from my doubts as to the theoretical finality of "sensationalism") that society is as yet ripe for it as a popular philosophy and religion combined, but as I said above, no one can measure the effects of an idea, or distribute exactly the shares which different ideas have in our present social order. And certainly there is something disheartening in the position of an esoteric philosopher. The conscientious prudence which would wish to educate mankind gradually instead of throwing out the line, and letting it educate itself, may be both presumptuous and timid. Do you take? I only throw out these as doubts, and would like to know whether you have been troubled by any similar ones on the matter of policy. The breath of my nostrils is doubt, and that is what makes me so the slave of chance. . . .

I have been reading lately in Teplitz in Schiller and Goethe. The possession of those two men's lives and works by a people gives them a great advantage over neighboring nations. Goethe at last has shot into distinct individual shape for me, which is a great relief, and an enormous figure he is. . . . I am sensible to your expression of sympathy with my stove-in condition of back. I shall *endeavor* (by jerks) to keep the upper lip rigid even if the vertebral

column yields. An account of a man in a western settlement which I heard from a traveler on the ship coming over has afforded me much satisfaction ever since, and served as a good example. The traveler stopped at a grocery store to get some whiskey, and alarmed at the woebegone appearance of the storekeeper, asked him what was the matter. "Do you see that man sitting in the back shop?" said the other. "He 's the sheriff, and has attached all my goods." He then went on to tell his other misfortunes, ending with the story of his wife having run away the day before with another man, but presently wiped his eyes, and with a smile of sweet recollection said: "I don't know, though, as I have any right to complain — I 've done pretty well on the whole since I came to this settlement." Comment is needless.

There, my dear boy, I hope you have not begun to thank your stars I don't write oftener, since I write at such length. I wanted to give you a report of my mental condition, I have done so more or less, and trust you will respect the affection and confidence which dictated it. I 'd rather my father should not see it. Use your own judgment about showing it to Harry. I leave here in a month or so for Heidelberg. Get my address from Harry whenever you write. And for God's sake do so again before too long. I got a letter in Teplitz from Miss Fanny Dixwell which was a great godsend. Please remember me to all your family, and believe me thy friend

WM. JAMES

As is intimated in this letter, James's affection for Holmes was not untroubled. He felt a certain constraint in his presence, which was perhaps due at bottom to a difference of emotional "wave-length." James would let himself go, and then recoil when he felt that the circuit was not completed. He was more impulsive, headlong, self-forgetful — Holmes more firmly resolute and self-contained, as well as more ironical. James was sometimes led by this experience to attribute a certain hardness and self-seeking to Holmes. The latter is said to have remarked of another of his friends, "I 'm afraid Brandeis has the crusading spirit. He talks like one of those upward-and-onward fellows." [6] So did James, and he never wholly relished the air of flippancy or dry cynicism with which Holmes masked his own service of mankind. After James's return from

[6] S. Bent, *Justice Oliver Wendell Holmes*, 1932, 281.

Europe Holmes continued to be a familiar intimate of the James household. "W. Holmes rings the bell as usual at eight and one-half o'clock on Saturday evenings, and we are all falling into our old ways," wrote the elder Mrs. James to her son Henry. But James was constantly baffled by him — found him "composed of at least two and a half distinct human beings." That there was something about Holmes's very adherence to his chosen task which was appalling to the other members of the James family, as well as to William, will be seen in this paragraph from a letter written to Henry James by his mother in 1873: "Wendell Holmes dined with us a few days ago. His whole life, soul and body, is utterly absorbed in his *last* work upon his Kent. He carries about his manuscript in his green bag and never loses sight of it for a moment. He started to go to Will's room to wash his hands, but came back for his bag, and when we went to dinner, Will said, 'Don't you want to take your bag with you?' He said, 'Yes, I always do so at home.' His pallid face, and this fearful grip upon his work, makes him a melancholy sight."

As time went on there was a weakening of the philosophical bond that united the two men. Already, as early as 1868, James had felt that their divergent specialization had seriously diminished their community of interest. He had remarked to Ward that "the mystery of the *Total* is a rather empty platform to be the only one to meet a man on." And even within the field of this common interest there was a profound difference which was bound to widen with the years. James and Holmes had been drawn together chiefly through their common negations and defiances, and through their participation in the common problems of youthful emancipation. When James recovered from his weakness he recovered from his doubts; sensationalism and utilitarianism, as is clearly to be seen in all of his momentary avowals of them, were never more than a counsel of desperation. As he grew more constructive and speculative, as his beliefs multiplied, he traveled farther and farther from that crossroads where he and Holmes had met. The latter never lost his philosophical interest, and when James became a writer of books Holmes read them and sent his comment. But he could rarely agree in any point of doctrine. The two men were divided, morally and metaphysically. Their deepest and most durable bond was that "physical relish" for one another's "wit and wisdom" to which James had alluded in his youthful confession.

XXXI

CHAUNCEY WRIGHT

Of Chauncey Wright, James said, "His best work has been done in conversation." He was a recognized master in the circle of his Cambridge friends, owing not to constructive achievement, but rather to a sheer "power of analytic intellect pure and simple." [1] When, in 1865, James was suffering from intellectual as well as domestic nostalgia in Brazil, he wrote, "Would I might hear Chauncey Wright philosophize for one evening." During the decade that followed, until his death in 1875, Wright was an intimate friend of the James family and held many a Socratic session with both father and son. To William he was a redoubtable champion whom to overthrow in argument was peculiarly sweet: as when in 1872 he wrote triumphantly to his aunt and sister in Europe of "the great Chauncey Wright who now (as to his system of the universe) lies in my arms as harmless as a babe." Henry James has recorded a memorial image, touching with characteristic delicacy on the aspect of tragic futility which Wright's life and death presented to his friends: —

"Chauncey Wright sits for me in his customary corner of the deep library sofa and his strange conflictingly conscious light blue eyes, appealing across the years from under the splendid arch of his fair head, one of the handsomest for representation of amplitude of thought that it was possible to see, seems to say to me with a softness more aimed at the heart than any alarm or any challenge: 'But what then are you going to do for me?' I find myself simply ache, I fear, as almost the only answer to this — beyond his figuring for me as the most wasted and doomed, the biggest at once and the

[1] *W.J.*, "Chauncey Wright," in *C.E.R.*, 20, 21. Wright's literary remains were edited and published by C. E. Norton in 1877 under the title of *Philosophical Discussions*. A volume of his letters (including correspondence with Darwin) was edited and published by James Bradley Thayer in 1878, under the title of *Letters of Chauncey* Wright. Wright was favorably known in England, especially in the Darwinian circle. For comments by Leslie Stephen *cf.* F. W. Maitland, *Life and Letters of Leslie Stephen*, 1906, 300.

gentlest, of the great intending and unproducing (in anything like the just degree) bachelors of philosophy, bachelors of attitude and of life." [2]

As regards the relations of Wright to William James, there was, in the first place, a pervasive and lingering influence, both of thought and of expression. James's remarks were often introduced by the words, "as Chauncey Wright used to say." Wright, like Peirce, had that boldness of ideas which always attracted James, and it was often combined with a happy turn of phrase. James felt him to be a master in the field of scientific thought and tended to accept him as an authoritative exponent of scientific aims and methods. To some extent, like Jeffries Wyman, he represented the ideal scientific temper — restrained, impersonal, and scrupulous. He represented personally and forcefully the contemporary tendency of scientific thinking to assume an experimental and descriptive rather than a metaphysical form. Science, according to this view, is an inductive discovery of the relations of phenomenal happenings reduced so far as possible to their elements.[3] James accepted this version of science: "The physical order of nature, taken simply as science knows it, cannot be held to reveal any one harmonious spiritual intent"; it is not a divine order, a "divinely aimed at and established thing," but is "mere *weather,* as Chauncey Wright called it, doing and undoing without end." [4]

The agreement went beyond this. Wright adhered firmly to the "experiential philosophy," and unquestionably confirmed the like tendency in James. Wright's notion that the orderly relations and groupings of things do not require any explanation, since they involve nothing surprising or unnatural, is closely allied to James's notion that the connections of things are given with the things themselves.[5] Both Wright and James were prepared to accept a strain of irreducible fatality in existence, a something which it is hopeless and meaningless further to question; both, in short, were empiricists. Wright's essay on the "Evolution of Self-Consciousness," published in 1873, contributed to James's view of the genesis and biological rôle of thought, as set forth in his essay on "Brute and Human In-

[2] *N.S.B.*, 282–3.
[3] *Cf.* C. Wright, *Philosophical Discussions,* 1877, 71, 244–50.
[4] *W.B.*, 52. Wright's notion of "cosmical weather" can be found in *Philosophical Discussions,* 10, 23.
[5] *Cf. C.E.R.*, 23–4.

tellect" in 1878, and afterwards incorporated in the chapter on "Reasoning" in the *Principles of Psychology*. It is impossible to read the "Evolution of Self-Consciousness" without being constantly reminded of James. One finds the notion of "skipped intermediaries" in trains of association; the notion that experience is neither physical nor mental, but "neutral"; and a characteristic emphasis on the process of thought, with reference to intention, signs, and language.[6] Finally we have James's testimony that he did not come to utilitarianism "unaided," but was influenced by Chauncey Wright; whose antireligious teaching, however, he "reacted against."[7] Through Wright James apparently owed to Mill that better understanding of "utility" which frees it from ill-repute, and conceives it as including "the highest motives in which an individual's happiness can consist."[8]

But when all this has been said it remains none the less true that Wright was to James a philosophical adversary. The reason, of course, lay in his "antireligious teaching," and his rejection of the rights of metaphysics. To William James as well as to his father, Wright was the arch-exponent of positivism, with all of its negative implications. There is evidence that in the years 1868–1870 James gave a provisional adherence to this school. He continued to think of Wright as a paragon of that intellectual parsimony which confines itself to the description of phenomena. "Never in a human head was contemplation more separated from desire." Many years later he recalled him as his "tough-minded old friend Chauncey Wright, the great Harvard empiricist of my youth," who used to say that "behind the bare phenomenal facts . . . there is *nothing*."[9] But before 1875 James had already assigned positivists to the class of those who, unconscious of the subjective interests (in economy of thought) by which they were themselves actuated, refused to acknowledge the differing but analogous preferences of others. He attributed Wright's intellectual parsimoniousness to "a defect in the active or impulsive part of his mental nature,"[10] and designed his own study of the "motives which lead men to philosophize" as a proof that positivism was both narrow and arbitrary.[11]

[6] *Principles*, II, 359, 646; Wright, *op. cit.*, 210, 215, 234.
[7] *Monist*, XIX (1909), 156.
[8] Wright, *op. cit.*, 418.
[9] *C.E.R.*, 23; *Pragm.*, 263.
[10] *C.E.R.*, 24.
[11] Wright recognized the importance of the question of "motive," but thought

In 1875 Wright wrote for the New York *Nation* a caustic review of "McCosh on Tyndall," [12] in which he imputed the *odium theologicum* to McCosh, and argued the scientific method against vague speculative and emotional bias. The following note indicates James's belief that the positivist's denial of metaphysics would never satisfy religion, which demands a positive assurance regarding the moral nature of ultimate causes. It was entitled "Religious Guarantee": —

"[There are] four desiderata, to gratify which philosophies are formed: (1) an explanation of things by their cause; (2) a rule for the will; (3) a warrant for that rule; (4) consistency in thought. Early systems undertook more or less to satisfy all these motives by the same formula, and Christian and 'natural' theology in its 'God' did so emphatically.

"Now it is possible to pursue each impulse separately, and to gratify each by a conclusion which will not gratify the rest. In a rough way materialism or 'scientificism' gratifies no. (1); idealism, no. (4); various moral faiths, no. (2); for no. (3) we seem to have to combine (2) with (1). By 'warrant' I mean not only theoretic grounds of authority for the rule, but that kind of practical 'authority' which translates itself by power to enforce, or to punish transgression, to recognize faithfulness, to guarantee ultimately the triumph of the right order. This amounts to postulating some sort of identity between right and might. Now the might lies in the realm of cause. A thing is at the mercy of its cause, — a product subsists by virtue of its factors. If the factors are lower than the product, the high end has no guarantee other than what the low means contain. Hence, the sense of insecurity for one's dearest interests which is felt when the property of efficient causality is denied to the realm of ends and allotted wholly to that of blind means.

"Hence, the rage of McCosh against Tyndall. Hence, Wright's inability to assuage that rage by merely saying that the low phenomena announced as determining conditions of the higher ones are not . . . in a strict sense explanatory of them. What does Mc-

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it possible to be governed by a disciplined "rational scientific curiosity" which should act "independently of other motives." His views were published in 1865, and strongly suggest the form, though not the solution, of James's problem. *Cf. Philosophical Discussions*, 49, 51, 52, 76.

[12] James McCosh, *Ideas in Nature Overlooked by Dr. Tyndall*, 1875. Wright's review is reprinted in *Philosophical Discussions*, 375.

Cosh care for *explanation?* His quest is practical. He insists on having something which will answer for the welfare of his interests in the highest sense. The modes of being most powerful to shape his will, shall also have power to shape the universe. Tyndall denies this power to these modes. That is the ground of complaint, — and when Wright proceeds to deny that in a strict sense he places [this power] in his atoms, it is no more comfort to McCosh than it would be after you had taken from him his gold and given him greenbacks, to assure him that 'in a strict sense' greenbacks are not money. He simply wants his gold."

For James positivism was not only unresponsive to men's religious hopes, it was repugnant to common sense and contrary to metaphysics; and in pointing this out he made it quite evident that his sympathies were with "common sense and metaphysics." Positivism, as rigorously interpreted by Wright, reduces the world to an assemblage of particular phenomena having no ulterior connections — ideal, substantial, or dynamic. Viewed in this aspect, positivism is a sort of philosophical "nihilism," affirming that beyond the particular phenomena there is "nothing." Such a doctrine, common to Wright and the "associationist" school, is both logically and psychologically untenable.

The anti-nihilistic position of James was grounded in experience itself. The nihilists, who profess to be peculiarly worshipful of facts, neglect the most palpable of all facts, namely, the *continuity* of conscious life. This is one of the master keys to the understanding of James's thought. It is a dominant feature of his last metaphysics, and it reveals itself unmistakably in the following unpublished manuscript of the early '70s; a manuscript possessing peculiar interest because it was handed to Wright himself, and returned crossed with the latter's penciled comments. These comments prove that the two men held similar views regarding actual experience, and that their difference was in some measure an imputed difference: arising on the one hand from Wright's *profession* of positivism, and on the other hand from James's avowed *sympathy* with the rationalistic or transcendental school. The manuscript was perhaps read before the "Metaphysical Club," where Wright and James, together with Peirce and others, were wont to meet.[18]

[18] Wright's notes are printed below, Appendix III.

AGAINST NIHILISM [14]

My complaint against Wright's nihilism after all amounts to this: that he denies this to be a universe, and makes it out a "nulliverse." The assertion that we must admit no kind of existence but plenary existence, and that therefore things only exist once, so to speak — chance to be, *de facto,* not *de jure* — contradicts the vague but deep notion of common sense that in each thing, beside its happening to exist as a matter of fact now, there is another kind of being which we may call ideal, and describe by many sayings, as that the thing has a *meaning,* serves a purpose, is a cause, or an end, was intended or predestined, has a "nature" by virtue of which it is as it is, etc.

Now all these attributions connote that the thing operates, or is in some way effective or recognized, where it does not actually and plenarily exist. The criterion of "reality-effectiveness" here joins hands with common sense. As Peirce's criterion, breadth of relation, only admits as real such elements as enter into *the system* — so that the reality of each thing is measured by a standard extrinsic to its actual existence — so *here,* dynamic connection with other existences becomes the test of substantial reality; or, in other words, a thing only has being at all as it enters in some way into the being of other things, or constitutes part of a universe or organism. In other words, as to their *being,* things are continuous, and so far as this is what people mean when they affirm a substance, substance must be held to exist.

Generally . . . I suppose more is meant than this — something, namely, like an other and a primordial *thing* on a plane behind that of the phenomena, and numerically additional to them. All I mean is [the] unity which comes from the phenomena being continuous with each other. Whether we may add this unit to the sum of phenomenal units, I cannot tell. But Renouvier's denial of substance does not seem to me to touch what I affirm so long as he continues to maintain that the "laws" are as real as the phenomena which they unite. The British school say that the laws are nil — *nominis umbra.*

Common people use the larger categories under which things and events are conceived, to explain them, account for them. He [Wright] says the categories merely result from the way things group themselves, are names of modes of grouping, void of positive significance in themselves. . . . He thinks that there is no *nature*

[14] This manuscript cannot be dated precisely. It seems probable that it was written between James's return from Europe in March 1874, and Chauncey Wright's death in Sept. 1875; or it may have been written just before James's departure for Europe in Oct. 1873. It clearly belongs to the period in which James was working out the ideas which appeared in "The Sentiment of Rationality" and kindred essays.

in things. We say that things behave so and so because of their nature or properties, he that they behave so each time afresh, as it were. *If* (haply) as before, we say there is a common nature; if otherwise, that there is no common nature. But the nature is *a posteriori* to the happening, a mere synthetic mark we class it . . . by, not *a priori* and determinant of it, as in the popular view.

The law of association: "States that have been associated will be reproduced in company," is taken by the vulgar to mean, "States will be so reproduced *because* they have been associated." He means no such thing: their having been associated is at most a token to us to expect them again together; but their coming together again is not *due* to their once having done so, but *toto coelo* an absolute and independent fact. . . .

When we rub one body, we get heat; another, friction. When we strike one, a clear note; another, a dull one. One, receiving a certain blow, moves slow; another, being lighter, fast, etc. In other words, the transmutations of force are determined in quality, time, amount, etc., by the "nature" of the substances and the form of their arrangement . . . in the popular view. He thinks that the change is but the boundary division, a mere geometrical point, between the distinct phenomena. And so far from the particularity of the change being due to the preëxisting quality or "nature" of the substance, what we call the nature of the substance is utterly constituted of the particulars of the change. They existing, it exists, or is posited by us. Were they different we should posit another substance. To assign as cause for the change a substantial nature which the change only when made gives us, is to reason in a circle. . . .

He denies that there is any universe. To most men, even those who should admit that the universe was a mere system or multitude of representations, the fact that the representations come together, and seem to combine and influence each other, leads to the belief in some common ground on which they stand in order to do so. If each representation is totally independent, how does it ever come into collision with any other, how can it be synthetized with another? Space and time, at least . . . they have in common. And although these are not dynamic or substantial bonds of union, yet they in some sense unite the heterogeneous into a universe. . . .

Nihilism denies continuity. Of the two elements of a change it says one does not exist *at all* till the other has ceased *entirely*. Common sense which lets one thing run into another and exist potentially or in substance where its antecedent is, allows continuity.

I have been in the habit of indicating the difference between Wright's nominalistic nihilism, and common sense and metaphysics, by saying that the latter admitted a duplication of the phenomenon which the former excluded, and by symbolizing this duplication by

the formula . . . *"it is meant."* [15] Thus the truth of a perception or conception depends on its *objectivity* — this is equivalent to "it is meant that we should *so* perceive or conceive, not otherwise." The goodness or rightness of a state or act can be described by saying they are meant to be, the rationality of a set of thoughts points to something which means them. Now the rudiment of this duplicating element . . . seems to be found in the peculiarity of certain representations to have coerciveness. We must think them, they are discriminated from the rest; they attract our attention either by a charm which they possess for us (interest), or by a sort of physical cogency (pain), or by a logical propriety which keeps suggesting them although we may try to banish them. The upshot is that we feel peculiarly towards them. As mere moments of our feeling they are exactly like moments belonging to the other set, — but as moments having this quality [15] they acquire a different character over and above their intrinsic character as feeling. . . . They stand in a peculiar relation to our general capacity for feeling, a relation difficult analytically to express, but which as familiarly felt is the clearest and simplest of our elementary representations — the relation of reality, which implies not only that we feel so and so, but that we *should* feel so, that we are meant to feel so, that there *is* something outside of the feeling itself as an instant conscious existence.[15]

Substance metaphysically considered denotes nothing more than this: *"it is meant,"* a *plus ultra* the phenomenon. What this *plus* may be is left undecided: it may be a noumenal world, it may only be the other phenomena with which the present real one is related, — it may, in a word, denote merely the *continuity* of the real world. In any case, it is unrecognized by nihilism, which maintains that the instant phenomenon is a separate nature absolutely sufficient to itself,[15] and that the peculiarity of coerciveness . . . should be considered merely as one intrinsic mark, *in*cident to its being, enveloped by it, not transcending its actuality.

That is the elementary point of divergence. Can anything about a representation be said not to fall within its mere actual quality in consciousness? Has its subjectivity an objectivity? Has it an objective being which has relations with other beings either of a conscious kind (other representations) or of a non-conscious kind (things, reality, what is *meant*). Of course if we can say they are objective to it, it becomes objective to them, and can be determined by them, and we may recognize it not only in its actuality and intrinsicality, but in objective relation as so determined. . . .

If the category of substance only denotes that the phenomenon refers outside of itself to *something* else (other phenomena, it

[15] *Cf.* Critical notes by Chauncey Wright, below, Appendix III.

may be . . .), and is legitimate, therefore, so far as it does not pretend to double the phenomenon with an ontological backing, but only to assert continuity for it; why, then its legitimacy is tested in the same way in which we test the legitimacy of any *hypothesis.* An hypothesis is vain, metaphysical, mythological which simply repeats the phenomenon under a different name — *virtus dormitiva,* vital force, etc.; legitimate, if it . . . brings the phenomenon into *continuity with something else.* . . . To dispute whether Hamlet is mad is ludicrous, if we only mean to say these acts in the play are mad. We know the acts, and to label them mad does not add to our knowledge, unless it enable us to say that their actor would be likely to do certain other acts not in the play and specified as *characteristic* of madmen.

It was inevitable that Wright's critical mind should have found little good in James's excesses of faith and speculation, as inevitable as it was that James's sympathetic and mobile mind should have had its moments of applauding Wright. There was, moreover, enough difference of age to create an attitude of deference in James, and in Wright an impulse to parental admonition. Before James had found himself in philosophy, and acquired an intellectual armor for his impulses and convictions, Wright had passed from the scene. As yet James had published no sustained argument, but only declarations of a sort peculiarly vulnerable to the weapons which Wright carried. Thus in July 1875, in reviewing a recent work of Wundt, he had paid his respects to the positivistic branch of empiricism, as follows: —

"The *a posteriori* school, with its anxiety to prove the mind a *product, coûte que coûte,* keeps pointing to mere 'experience' as its source. But it never defines what experience is. *My* experience is only what I agree to attend to. Pure sensation is the vague, a semi-chaos, for the *whole* mass of impressions falling on any individual are chaotic, and become orderly only by selective attention and recognition. These acts postulate *interests* on the part of the subject, — interests which, as ends or purposes set by his emotional constitution, keep interfering with the pure flow of impressions and their association, and causing the vast majority of mere sensations to be ignored. It is amusing to see how Spencer shrinks from explicit recognition of this law, even when he is forced to take it into his hand, so to speak. Mr. Bain, in principle, admits it, but does not work it out. The only English-writing empiricist who

has come near to making any use of it is Mr. Chauncey Wright, in his article on the 'Evolution of Self-Consciousness.' " [16]

In 1874, as we have already seen, James had attacked the metaphysical claims of science, and had formulated the view, which he learned later to defend, that truth is to be had only by *venturing* to believe. This was followed in 1875 by another and bolder statement: —

"Our author's [Tait's] belief in the 'betterness' of that 'other' world which he constructs for us demands from him at the end of his mechanical gyrations, be they never so ingenious and rarefied, the same simple act of teleologic trust, the same faith that the end will crown the work, with which the most narrow-minded old woman so quickly envelopes her briefly-recited cosmogony. We for our part not only hold that such an act of trust is licit, but we think, furthermore, that any one *to whom it makes a practical difference* (whether of motive to action or of mental peace) is in duty bound to make it. If 'scientific' scruples withhold him from making it, this proves his intellect to have been simply sicklied o'er and paralyzed by scientific pursuits. In the physical realm the 'subjective method' of finding truth may be the root of all evil. But the affirmation that this physical world has *also* a moral meaning and a moral plan is one that no argument drawn from purely physical truth can either establish or impugn. It is nevertheless an affirmation which either is or is not true, and which if true may, from the very nature of the case, be intended to command from us only that inward, free, or moral assent, or rather consent, in which the subjective method consists." [17]

Wright's reactions to these articles and his contemporary impressions of James are fortunately preserved in letters written to Grace Norton: —

Cambridge, July 12, 1875

When Dr. William James gets back from his journeys I shall have two bones to pick with him. One we have — that is, you and I have — talked about and happily agree upon, namely, his

[16] Review of Wundt's *Grundzüge der physiologischen Psychologie,* in *North Amer. Rev.,* CXXI (1875), 199. For Wright's views here cited, *cf.* his *Philosophical Discussions,* 1877, 210 ff.

[17] From a review of P. G. Tait's *Unseen Universe,* in the *Nation,* XX (1875), 367.

doctrine in the *Nation* about the duty of belief. The other is in a book-notice by him, in the *North American Review,* of Wundt's physio-psychology. In a paragraph in which he distinguishes and compliments me among the "empiricists," he has so badly misapprehended what the experience philosophy in general holds and teaches, that the compliment to me goes for nothing in mitigation of my resentment. . . .

Cambridge, July 18, 1875

I quite agree with you about the merits of Dr. James's article as a whole; but it would not do for me to criticize it to him on the grounds you mention. I dare say my good opinion of him relates rather to possibilities in his development, which my intercourse with him has made prominent, than to the merits of anything he has done or does. "Boyish" is a well-chosen word to express both our common judgment of his present, and mine in particular, of his future; for I imagine that by laboring with him I shall get him into better shape by and by. One remains a boy longer in philosophy than in any other direction; though this has its drawbacks, since manners, even in philosophy — modes of thought and feeling, even about the most abstract subjects — are early fixed, and the danger of a late maturing in philosophical opinions is that such heterogeneous combinations — such deformities — as dogmatic scepticism come to pass. You see that my interest in him is like that of the preacher in the sinner. He has been for some time — in consequence of my preaching, he professes — in a rebellious mood towards the views I argue for; and he has written many private essays or notes on the subject; and very unwisely committed himself to expressions of his animosity in published writings. All war is for the sake of peace, you know; and he wants to reconcile, or to have somebody else reconcile, views that are in conflict in his mind; and because men like Lewes pretend to do this he admires them, — very uncritically, I think. Lewes in my opinion is a very shallow thinker, who is making capital out of a strong general desire to have the two philosophies reconciled. I have carried out my purpose of giving Dr. James the two lectures I had in store for him. I found him just returned home on Wednesday evening. His father remarked in the course of talk, that he had not found any typographical errors in William's article (an author's *bête noire*).

I said that I had read it with interest and had not noticed any *typographical* errors. The emphasis attracted the youth's attention, and made him demand an explanation, which was my premeditated discourse. He referred to the compliment to me. "Made at the expense of my friends," I rejoined. He fought vigorously, not to say manfully; but confessed to having written under irritation.

On Friday evening I saw him again and introduced the subject of the "duty of belief" as advocated by him in the *Nation*. He retracted the word "duty." All that he meant to say was that it is foolish not to believe, or try to believe, if one is the happier for believing. But even so he seemed to me to be more epicurean (though he hates the sect) than even the utilitarians would allow to be wise. He is by temperament opposed to what is conventionally known as epicurean, and mistaking pleasure to be only the passive pleasure of life, he misunderstands what this philosophy really teaches. To him the perfection of moral action and belief is in heroic conditions of life; and a creed adapted to these, however rare they may be in fact, is to him the true creed, covering the whole range of life, prescribing a rule for the extremes of human action; whereas he thinks an epicurean could, according to his philosophy, do nothing better *in extremis* than commit suicide. And so I had to argue over again to him the irrationality of suicide on epicurean principles; the necessary illusion of it as an end, or a means to any end; in short, to prove to him that the suicide is sane only on heroic principles, which as being responsible for such insanities had to provide imaginary motives against it. He quite agrees that evidence is all that enforces the obligation of belief, and that it does this only in virtue of its own force as evidence. Belief is only a matter of choice, and therefore of moral duty, so far as attending to evidence is a volitional act; and he agreed that attention to all accessible evidence was the only duty involved in belief. On the other hand, I allowed that he was not the only sinner who misuses the word "duty," which ought to mean only the principles of conduct, and what follows from them, which recommend themselves to all rational beings (or at least to all adult, rational, *human* beings). And further, I allowed that unproved beliefs, unfounded in evidence, were not only allowable, but were sometimes even *fit, becoming or appropriate to* states of feeling or types of character, which are deserving of approval,

or even of honor. This fitness does not, however, amount to an obligation of duty. So far we are agreed, and he retracts.

You see from this illustration what the character of my interest in him is. He rather attracts me by the Jamesian traits; crude and extravagant as are many of his opinions, and more especially his language. Perhaps the attraction is at bottom the opportunities afforded by such a temperament to display the greater effectiveness of a more even one; and is thus another proof of my conceitedness.[18]

[18] These letters have been quoted with omissions, and without James's name, in James B. Thayer's *Letters of Chauncey Wright*, 1878, 338–43. For James's somewhat faintly favorable opinion of Lewes, *cf.* below, 592.

XXXII

CHARLES PEIRCE

THE influence of Holmes was moral and personal — a glow and afterglow of adolescent comradeship; Wright's influence was mainly that of a challenge and an irritant, felt in the initial phase of James's thinking. Charles S. Peirce exerted both of these influences, with immeasurably more beside. He was only three years older than James, but had already graduated from Harvard College in 1859, while James was engaged in his preliminary educational experiments abroad. When James first encountered the "smart," but "pretty independent and violent" son of Professor Peirce, they were fellow students of chemistry in the Lawrence Scientific School. But Peirce was receiving a degree *summa cum laude,* while James was still at the beginning of his intellectual attainment. In addition to being a more seasoned scientist, Peirce manifested signs of genius. For although he was still unknown to the wider philosophical public in America when James introduced him in 1898 as the originator of pragmatism, his originality and promise of greatness had always been recognized by those who were closely associated with him.[1]

After the Jameses moved to Cambridge in 1866, Peirce was admitted to the family circle and became warmly attached to the elder James, whose *Secret of Swedenborg* he reviewed with sympathy and indulgence.[2] In 1893 he quoted from "Henry James, the Swedenborgian," a "sublime" sentence on creative love, "which discloses for the problem of evil its everlasting solution."[3] And four years later, writing to William from his retirement at Milford,

[1] *C.E.R.,* 410. In 1879 G. Stanley Hall wrote of Peirce's series of papers, in the *Popular Science Mo.,* that it "promises to be one of the most important of American contributions to philosophy." ("Philosophy in the United States," *Mind,* IV, 102.)

[2] *North Amer. Rev.,* CX (1870).

[3] *Monist,* III, 177. At the same time he indulgently reproaches the writer for not filling his pages with things like this, "as he was easily able to do, instead of scolding at his reader and at people generally."

he said, "I am all alone in the house here and have spent some of the quiet hours over *Substance and Shadow* and in recalling your father. My experiences of the last few years have been calculated to bring Swedenborg home to me very often."

During the late '60s James heard Peirce's Lowell Lectures on the philosophy of science, read his "very acute and original psychologico-metaphysical articles" in the *Journal of Speculative Philosophy,* and talked over both lectures and articles with him in private. James's attitude was one of puzzled and intermittent admiration. In 1866, even when he "could not understand a word," he "enjoyed the sensation of listening." In 1868 he did not get "a great deal out of him"; while in that same year Peirce's earliest published articles, despite their being "so crabbedly expressed," "interested" him "strangely." Of the University Lectures of 1869 he said: "They are suggestive, though as a whole incomprehensible to me, and conversation with him hardly clears it up"; but of later lectures in the same year he said that they "were admirable in matter, manner and clearness of statement." Despite such fluctuations, which were as characteristic of James as they were indicative of Peirce, his esteem grew steadily, and he was already in these early years concerned that Peirce's livelihood and professional standing should be commensurate with his genius.[4]

In the early '70s James and Peirce, together with Wright, were fellow members of a small group formed for the purpose of philosophical discussion. Peirce himself has described it as follows: —

"It was in the earliest seventies that a knot of us young men in Old Cambridge, calling ourselves, half-ironically, half-defiantly, 'The Metaphysical Club,' — for agnosticism was then riding its high horse, and was frowning superbly upon all metaphysics, — used to meet, sometimes in my study, sometimes in that of William James. It may be that some of our old-time confederates would to-day not care to have such wild-oats-sowings made public, though there was nothing but boiled oats, milk, and sugar in the mess. Mr. Justice Holmes, however, will not, I believe, take it ill that we are proud to remember his membership; nor will Joseph Warner, Esq. Nicholas St. John Green was one of the most interested fellows, a skillful lawyer and a learned one, a disciple of Jeremy

[4] *L.W.J.*, I, 149.

Bentham. . . . Chauncey Wright, something of a philosophical celebrity in those days, was never absent from our meetings. I was about to call him our corypheus; but he will better be described as our boxing-master whom we, — I particularly, — used to face to be severely pummelled. He had abandoned a former attachment to Hamiltonianism to take up with the doctrines of Mill, to which and to its cognate agnosticism he was trying to weld the really incongruous ideas of Darwin. John Fiske and, more rarely, Francis Ellingwood Abbot, were sometimes present, lending their countenances to the spirit of our endeavours, while holding aloof from any assent to their success. Wright, James, and I were men of science, rather scrutinizing the doctrines of the metaphysicians on their scientific side than regarding them as very momentous spiritually. The type of our thought was decidedly British. I, alone of our number, had come upon the threshing-floor of philosophy through the doorway of Kant, and even my ideas were acquiring the English accent." [5]

In a letter to Mrs. Ladd Franklin written late in 1904 or early in 1905, a letter in which he says that Wright's was "a mind about on the level of J. S. Mill," [6] Peirce again speaks of this same club: "It seldom if ever had more than half a dozen present. Wright was the strongest member and probably I was the next. Nicholas St. John Green was a marvelously strong intelligence. Then there were Frank Abbot, William James, and others. It was there that the name and doctrine of pragmatism saw the light." [7]

In 1905, to supply T. S. Perry with an "anecdote" for a biography of John Fiske, James said, "When Chauncey Wright, Chas. Peirce, St. John Green, Warner and I appointed an evening to discuss the

[5] From a paper (*circa* 1906) published for the first time in Vol. V, §12, of the *Collected Papers of C. S. Peirce* (1934). Another passage is cited below, II, 407. Joseph B. Warner, Harvard '69, a Boston lawyer and lifelong friend of the James family, died in 1923. Green graduated from the Harvard Law School in 1853. He was present at Chauncey Wright's deathbed and survived him only one year. F. E. Abbot (1836–1903), a classmate of Peirce, was for one year (1887–8) an instructor of philosophy at Harvard, but spent most of his life as a private scholar and writer in that subject.

[6] This is a doubtful compliment. Wright is elsewhere "that acute but shallow fellow" whom James "looked up to" too much. The only expression of Wright's opinion of Peirce which is on record is contained in the former's notes on the latter's review of Berkeley. These notes, which appeared in the *Nation*, XIII (1871), praise Peirce's erudition, and mildly defend skepticism and positivism against his criticism.

[7] This letter has been published in the *Jour. of Philos., Psych. and Sc. Methods*, XIII (1916), 718–20. Peirce here dates the club "in the sixties."

Cosmic Philosophy, just out, J. F. went to sleep under our noses." Since *Cosmic Philosophy* came out in the fall of 1874, this fixes the date of at least one gathering of the members of the "Metaphysical Club." [8]

When Peirce went to Paris he fell in, as we have seen, with Henry James. There were echoes of this strange fellowship in the letters which both parties addressed to Cambridge. Peirce called upon Henry in November of that year and "took him up very vigorously." William, hearing of the encounter, advised his brother to treat so "thorny and spinous a bedfellow" by the fabled "nettle receipt," and remarked that Peirce was after all a "genius." In December Henry was impressed by Peirce's "beautiful clothes," but found his sympathy "economical rather than intellectual." A month later the intimacy still continued: "The only man I see here familiarly is C. Peirce, with whom I generally dine a couple of times a week. He is a very good fellow — when he is not in ill-humour; then he is intolerable. But, as William says, he is a man of genius, and in such, in the long run, one always finds one's account. He is leading here a life of insupportable loneliness and sterility — but of much material luxury, as he seems to have plenty of money. He sees, literally, not a soul but myself and his secretary."

Peirce's more favorable impressions of Henry James appear in the following: —

Paris, Nov. 21, 1875

My dear Willie, —

Your letter led me to look up your brother whose presence here is a great thing for me as I am lonely and excessively depressed.

Your notice of Wright is good.[9] As to his being *obscure* and all that, he was as well known as a philosopher need desire. It is only when a philosopher has something very elementary to say that he seeks the great public or the great public him. . . . I wish I was in Cambridge for one thing. I should like to have some talks about Wright and about his ideas and see if we could n't get up a

[8] *L.W.J.*, II, 233. James could not well have belonged to such a club before 1869 and he was in Europe from Oct. 1873 to March 1874. Wright died in Sept. 1875, and Peirce went abroad about the same time. James tells us that he heard Peirce enunciate "pragmatism" in the early '70s (*C.E.R.*, 410). In the year 1872–3 James seems (perhaps because of his new teaching burden) not to have seen anything of Peirce (*cf. L.W.J.*, I, 168–9). It is probable, then, that this "Metaphysical Club" was most active in the years 1870–2, and that it was continued until late 1874 or shortly after, when it was superseded by another club (*cf.* below, 712–3).

[9] Referring to James's note in the *Nation*, XXI (1875), reprinted in *C.E.R.*

memorial of him. His memory deserves it for he did a great deal for every one of us. I don't speak of the philosophical *canaille*, but I mean you, Frank Abbot, and myself. Other of his friends, Gurney, Norton, Peter Leslie, Asa Gray, etc.,[10] would be wanted to do the personal and other relations. But what I am thinking of (I don't *purpose* anything) is to give some résumé of his ideas and of the history of his thought.

Your brother is looking pretty well, but looks a little serious. He is a fine fellow. I have always thought I should admire him if I knew him better, and now I shall find out. Yours affectionately

C. S. PEIRCE

Paris, Dec. 16, 1875

My dear Willie, —

I hear from my father that you have written a beautiful letter to the President of the Baltimore University proposing me for the chair of logic and I am asked if I would accept. It is a question impossible to answer in my present state of information. I don't know what the conditions are. . . .

I see your brother very frequently. He is a splendid fellow. I admire him greatly and have only discovered two faults in him. One is that his digestion is n't quite that of an ostrich and the other is that he is n't as fond of turning over questions as I am, but likes to settle them and have done with them. A manly trait too, but not a philosophic one. He is looking better than when he first came, and Paris is the place for him; Paris and he are adapted to one another. Please remember me with great respect and love to your father. Yours very affectionately

C. S. PEIRCE

The following letter closes this early period of familiar intimacy. It reveals the interior of that apparition which Henry James in Paris had contemplated from without: —

Brevoort House, New York, May 1, 1877

My dear Willie, —

. . . I am in process of moving and was forced to come here for the night. Imagine my disgust at seeing in the *Herald* this morning

[10] J. Peter Lesley was at this time professor of geology and mining at the University of Pennsylvania. He had become a friend of Wright's while formerly pastor of the Congregational Church in Milton.

that Prof. C. S. Peirce of Harvard College is sojourning at the Brevoort. Particularly as I am rather ashamed of my partiality for the Brevoort. But I have always come here for many years; I am known to every waiter etc., and find myself at home. It is frequented by a class of people very *comme il faut* but not in my line. I insensibly put on a sort of swagger here which I hope I have nowhere else, and which is designed to say: "You are a very good fellow in your way; who you are I don't know and I don't care, but I, you know, am Mr. Peirce, distinguished for my varied scientific acquirements, but above all for my extreme modesty in which respect I challenge the world." I notice that if one goes into the niceties, scarcely any one is totally without swagger, and in those few the dryness is disagreeable. Required: an essay on good taste in swaggering.

You don't say how your father and the rest of them are — I had lately a letter from H. James, Jr. Your loving

C. S. P.

Peirce not only occupied an important place, perhaps the first place, in the history of pragmatism, but greatly influenced James's ultimate metaphysics — as will appear in due time. The personal and temperamental differences between the two men are flagrant. James was instinctively, as well as by breeding and experience, adapted to social intercourse, and, despite his neurasthenic tendencies and intellectual preoccupations, was a man of the world. Peirce was ill at ease, of uncertain temper, and found it increasingly difficult, as life went on, to associate with his fellow men. James was slow to take offense and always gave other people the benefit of the doubt, while Peirce was touchy and prone to suspicion; the one being almost excessively modest and appreciative of others, while the other tended to arrogance.

There were intellectual as well as moral differences. Peirce, both by aptitude and by training, was an exponent of exact science, where a man might be sure of his ground, and where inaccuracy was the deadliest of sins; whereas James was at home in literature, psychology, and metaphysics, where accuracy is likely to be pretentious or pedantic, and where sympathy, insight, fertility, and delicacy of feeling may richly compensate for its absence. It is commonly said that James did not understand Peirce. James him-

self said so, and Peirce agreed. It seems to be generally assumed that Peirce understood James. But it is to be noted that James rarely claimed to understand anybody, whereas it was characteristic of Peirce to feel that he understood everybody — only too well. The difference is so striking that it is well to discount the word of both on this matter, and at the same time to bear in mind that the sense of understanding or misunderstanding a doctrine reflects the degree of a man's expectation. James usually expected a good deal, and it was a long time before he could feel confident that his failure to see the light was due to the fact that there was none. With Peirce this was a natural and easy assumption. To this it must be added that James most eagerly desired to be understood, while Peirce was sometimes playfully or maliciously obscure.

At the same time it must be recognized that James was comparatively defective in that formal or symbolic mode of statement [11] which Peirce, as a trained mathematician and logician, regarded as the acme of clearness. Towards the close of his life, and after James was already gone, Peirce wrote down his opinions of his old friend at some length — a spontaneous soliloquizing over old times, with a characteristic blending of emotion and analysis. He was reflecting on the famous men of his day who had come to talk with him about Zeno's paradox of "Achilles and the Tortoise," and whom he had vainly endeavored to set right. He reviews his arguments with a wantonness of erudition and a technical virtuosity that arouse one's sympathy with his poor interlocutors, who had unhappily lacked that "mind adequately trained in mathematics and in logic" to which "this ridiculous little catch presents no difficulty at all." Those who find infinity "inconceivable" are sometimes guilty of setting up their own "accidental impossibility of conceiving as a permanent and essential one, before which all other men ought to crook the knee": —

"No man could be closer to the antipode of their model than America's and the world's highest respected and closest beloved philosophic soul, William James. Nobody has a better right to testify to the morality of his attitude toward his own thoughts than

[11] In the famous essay "How to Make Our Ideas Clear," *Pop. Sc. Mo.*, XII (1877–8), Peirce distinguished three grades of clearness: familiarity, analytical definition, and an apprehension of the object's "practical bearings." He said later that "the third grade is the most important of all and a good example of it is William James who is phenomenally weak in the second grade, yet ever so high above most men in the third."

I, who knew and loved him for forty-nine or fifty years. But owing to his almost unexampled incapacity for mathematical thought, combined with intense hatred for logic, — probably for its pedantry, its insistence on minute exactitude, the *gêne* of its barbarous formulations, etc., rendered him an easy victim to Zeno and the Achilles; and he had, I fear, a right to be offended at the contemptuous language that I thought it my duty to use when talking of this paradox to the young men; though if he did feel offended, he never showed it to me. . . .

"I am not, at present, prepared to believe, as William James did, that he was, permanently and as a finality, incapable of conceiving that Achilles could traverse an infinite succession of points, so long as he [Achilles] certainly would have no notion that there were any such points there. (There were doubtless a lot of pebbles and grains of sand along his path, judging from the little I saw, in passing in a braganza over a road in Phthiotis in the night. Now I do not think that if each pebble were broken into a million pieces the difficulty of getting over the road would necessarily have been increased; and I don't see why it should, if one of those millions, — or all of them, — had been multiplied into an infinity.) After studying William James on the intellectual side for half a century, — for I was not acquainted with him as a boy, — I must testify that I believe him to be, and always to have been during my acquaintance with him about as perfect a lover of truth as it is possible for a man to be; and I do not believe there is any definite limit to man's capacity for loving the truth. . . .

"In speaking . . . of William James as I do I am saying the most that I could of any man's intellectual morality; and with him this was but one of a whole diadem of virtues. Though it is entirely out of place in this connexion, and I must beg the reader's pardon for so wandering from the point under consideration, I really lack the self-command to repress my reflexions when I have once set down his name. Though his lectures were delightful, they not at all exhibited the man at his best. It was his unstudied common behaviour that did so by the perfection of his manners, in their perfect freedom from expressing flattery or anything else false or inappropriate to the occasion. He did not express himself very easily, because rhetoric was his antipathy and logic an inconvenience to him. One always felt that the pencil, not the pen, was the lever

with which he ought to have moved the world; and yet no! it was not the externals of things but their souls he could have pictured.

"His comprehension of men to the very core was most wonderful. Who, for example, could be of a nature so different from his as I. He so concrete, so living; I a mere table of contents, so abstract, a very snarl of twine. Yet in all my life I found scarce any soul that seemed to comprehend, — naturally, my concepts, but the mainspring of my life, better than he did. He was even greater in practice than in theory of psychology." [12]

That in their early contact James was more influenced by Peirce than Peirce by James is, I think, undeniable. He was the "maturer companion," who first delivered the young student of science from the spell of Spencer. James, who never took a day's journey in the realms of thought without *meeting* somebody, and who recorded such encounters, has jotted down many of Peirce's sayings from days as early as 1862. Their mutual influence, like their mutual understanding, was largely an inevitable effect of their differences of temperament. Peirce was a more self-sufficient thinker, James a man who nourished his mind by intercourse and by the momentary half-acceptance of a multitude of ideas in which his quick sympathy found something of value. James's mind was both more hospitable and more prodigal, and while his destination was no less fixed than was Peirce's, he arrived at it by more devious routes and halted more frequently on the way.

Postponing consideration of the major doctrinal affiliations of the two men, there were three respects in which James was receptive to the influence of Peirce in the '60s and '70s. In the first place, he relished Peirce's boldness of thought and intellectual irreverence — his shameless way of disregarding the philosophical dogmas and commonplaces. To James originality was always irresistibly fascinating. Then, as we have seen, Peirce fed and confirmed James's dissatisfaction with the sensationalistic outcome of empiricism. Whatever the stress which the empiricist places upon presentations to sense, he must not ignore the connections of things, the *a priori* element in judgment, and the transcendence of the object of knowledge. Peirce, who despised sensation, never let James overlook these considerations; and the latter's empiricism is distinguished

[12] From "A Sketch of Logical Criticism." *Collected Papers of C. S. Peirce*, Vol. VI.

by its provision for them.[18] Finally, Peirce, like James, was interested in the nature of doubt and belief. Peirce's articles of 1868 dealt with doubt, and his articles of 1878 with belief. The following early note by James was probably suggested by his reading of the first: —

"Peirce's definition of doubt would seem to cover all emotional dissatisfaction and disquiet. Hence the common absolute use of the terms 'believer' and 'sceptic,' would seem justified. The believer is one who thinks what satisfies his higher appetites; the sceptic the man who leaves them still without an object and uneasy."

Nothing could be more opposed to Peirce's doctrine of a belief predestined by fact and social agreement than James's allowance for emotional preference, but it is significant that as early as 1868 both Peirce and James, the one for theoretical and the other primarily for personal and religious reasons, were both interested in the same problem; and were equally ready, for the sake of solving it, to disregard the boundary between philosophy and psychology. It was largely on account of this emphasis that James found Peirce not only "strangely interesting," but also relevant.

[18] The best proof of Peirce's influence on this point is to be found in the passage printed above, 477, a passage that strikingly resembles parts of Peirce's review of Berkeley in 1871 (*North Amer. Rev.*, CXIII).

XXXIII

INFLUENCE OF THE BRITISH SCHOOL

It was natural that James as a scientist with a philosophical bent should have read Darwin, Spencer, and others of the "naturalistic school." It was inevitable that he should have been stimulated and guided by his teachers, such as Agassiz, and by his youthful companions, such as Holmes, Wright, and Peirce. None of these influences, however, defines James's place in the general stream of modern thought. He belongs unquestionably to the British empirical school founded by Locke, and from an early age his mind was nourished by a direct and thorough study of its leading representatives. In 1898, looking back upon his origins, as well as forward to the new "pragmatic" philosophy which he was about to inaugurate, James made the following proclamation of allegiance: —

"I am happy to say that it is the English-speaking philosophers who first introduced the custom of interpreting the meaning of conceptions by asking what difference they make for life. . . . The great English way of investigating a conception is to ask yourself right off, 'What is it *known as?* In what facts does it result? What is its *cash-value,* in terms of particular experience? and what special difference would come into the world according as it were true or false?' Thus does Locke treat the conception of personal identity. . . . So Berkeley with his 'matter.' . . . Hume does the same thing with causation. . . . Stewart and Brown, James Mill, John Mill, and Bain, have followed more or less consistently the same method; and Shadworth Hodgson has used it almost as explicitly as Mr. Peirce. . . . Hume can be corrected and built out, and his beliefs enriched, by using Humean principles exclusively, and without making any use of the circuitous and ponderous artificialities of Kant. . . . Hume had no English successors of adequate ability to complete him and correct his negations; so it happened, as a matter of fact, that the building out of critical philosophy

has mainly been left to thinkers who were under the influence of Kant. . . . I sincerely believe that the English spirit in philosophy is intellectually, as well as practically and morally, on the saner, sounder, and truer path." [1]

James, in short, agreed with the common and unfavorable verdict upon Hume. But those who had insisted most strenuously on Hume's failure had believed that its cause lay in his rigorous adherence to the principle of empiricism. Thus it fell out, according to James, that the needed corrections were administered by the alien school of Kant, which applied a remedy that was worse than the disease. James conceived it to be his rôle in philosophy to save empiricism through greater fidelity to its own tradition and standards, the fault of its later proponents lying not in the excess but in the timidity of their partisanship. In other words, he believed it possible to find within empiricism itself a remedy for those skeptical, positivistic, and associationist negations which thinkers of opposing schools were fond of citing as evidence of hopeless insolvency, and as justifying the heroic measures of relief which they severally proposed. James thus advocated a new empiricism as an alternative to the great rival school of idealism. Nor is there any doubt that, through the efforts of James and others, the British school has obtained a new lease of life. It has acquired new assets, entered into new and reputable partnerships, and reëstablished its credit. Using the expression "classic British empiricism" to signify the consecutive thought of Locke, Berkeley, Hume, and Mill, I shall attempt to answer two questions: *first,* what was the classic British empiricism which James accepted and sought to extend; *second,* at what points did he believe this empiricism to have been untrue to its own insight, and to require amendment at the hands of its friends?

The teachings which commended the British school to James may readily be subsumed under the two principles which have already been employed for the general exposition of empiricism: the "experimental" doctrine, that the events of sense perception offer the only proof of existence; and the "experiential" doctrine, that the nature or essence of what exists, and the meaning of anything whose existence is debatable, are composed of terms of sense perception. Both are germinating doctrines, conceived by Locke, but reaching their full growth only in Hume and Mill.

[1] *C.E.R.*, 434–6.

James seems to have read Locke's *Conduct of the Understanding* as early as 1863, noting that it "will consist of meaningless words or of platitudes" for "young men to whom experience is beginning to impart a little wisdom. Locke's aphorisms, the fruit of experience, can only be understood through experience, when, of course, they come too late to be of much assistance." But James's esteem for Locke grew with the years. He referred to "the good Locke," and his "dear old book." He liked him personally as "a typical Englishman, with resolute common sense, hating misty ideas, of genial temper"; and he eventually came to regard him with that respect which the adherent of a school must feel for its founder. For it was Locke who, asking whence the mind has "all the materials of reason and knowledge," said definitively: "To this I answer, in one word, 'From experience': in that all our knowledge is founded, and from that it ultimately derives itself." [2]

James's personal copy of the *Essay Concerning Human Understanding* [3] came into his hands in September 1876, and is marked and annotated from cover to cover. His first thorough study of Locke may therefore be dated as falling between this date and the year 1883, in which he inaugurated "Philosophy 5" — a course on "English Philosophy."

In Locke the experimental knowledge of existence is by no means explicit. The central idea of Locke is that ideas are of two sorts: "simple," or "original," which arise in the mind through "sensation" or through "reflective" awareness of the mind's activities; and "complex," which are mind-made combinations of the simple ideas. Knowledge (as what may be true or false) is not constituted by the mere presence of ideas in the mind, but arises only when ideas are referred, or taken as "conformable," to something beyond themselves.[4] It is of two sorts, according as ideas are referred to one another, or to "real existence." Knowledge of the former sort depends on the permanent identity of ideas, and the power of the mind both to form and to recognize them. Their relations are as permanent as they are, and once true are always true. This holds of general, or abstract, ideas as well as of particular ideas, and accounts for the universality of logical and mathematical knowledge.

[2] *Essay Concerning Human Understanding,* Bk. II, Ch. I, §2.
[3] Thirty-first edition, 1853.
[4] *Ibid,* Bk. II, Ch. 32.

To this doctrine James fully subscribed.[5] But for Locke this sort of knowledge throws no light on what really exists. The mere presence of an idea, or the mere discerning that one idea resembles or differs from another, proves nothing as to whether things are or are not as the ideas represent them. For things owe no allegiance to ideas: it is the ideas that must conform to things, if they are to provide existential knowledge.

It is knowledge of the second sort, or of "real existence," with which our experimentalist theory is concerned. How is such knowledge tested? Locke does not adhere resolutely to the experimentalist test — he recognizes an intuitive knowledge of our own, and a demonstrative knowledge of God's existence. But these arguments may be regarded as relics of Cartesian and conservative tradition. Locke's own characteristic test is that which is applied to the knowledge of "other things," and is revealed both in its successes and in its acknowledged failures. Such knowledge is best provided by the simple ideas, because these are not of our own conceiving, but are produced in us by existence itself. They are "real ideas," as distinguished from "fictions and contrivances of the mind";[6] and as real ideas they report their existential causes to the mind that receives them.

It is true that, strictly speaking, perception does not reveal the nature of real existence, but only its "power" to produce certain ideas in us. I say "strictly speaking," for Locke does say that the ideas of "solidity, extension, figure, motion or rest, and number" (the so-called "primary qualities") are resemblances of real qualities, which "do really exist in the bodies themselves."[7] Here is a difficulty, which Locke's successors promptly pointed out; for resemblance seems to imply a comparison between ideas and something else, and Locke has said that "the mind . . . hath no other immediate object but its own ideas."[8] Waiving, however, this more dubious claim of perception to duplicate the qualities of an external world, there can

[5] W.J.'s chapter on "Conception" in the *Principles* is founded on the doctrine, and James there commends to his readers the study of Locke's *Essay*. Bk. II, Ch. 11, §3. For his later tendency to adopt a realistic interpretation of abstract ideas, *cf. P.U.*, 339–40; but he still refers to Locke. The impression which this doctrine made upon him as he read the *Essay* is proved by the marginal cross-references by which he gathered the doctrine from all parts of the text; but he felt doubt as to its consistency with Locke's polemic against innate ideas.

[6] *Cf. op. cit.*, Bk. IV, Ch. IX, §2; Ch. VII, §9.

[7] *Op. cit.*, Bk. II, Ch. VIII, §§9–19.

[8] *Op. cit.*, Bk. IV, Ch. I, §1.

be no doubt of Locke's crediting perception with the cognitive revelation of a *something* external, having powers that are manifested both in the perception that it directly induces and in the further perceptions which register its effects upon other things. There can be no doubt that Locke accepts the principle that existence makes itself known by its action upon the knowing mind.

James was not greatly impressed by this doctrine of existential knowledge. Locke's notion that in such knowledge "the mind is wholly confined to the operation of things upon it" was ominously suggestive of the Spencerian theory of the correspondence of inner to outer relations. James was quite alive to the difficulty of supposing that perception can somehow *immediately* reveal a cause other than itself, or permit judgments of similarity and dissimilarity between itself and such a transcendent cause. But he was, on the other hand, attracted by two associated features of Locke's theory of existential knowledge.

In the first place, he noted Locke's insistent particularism, as when the latter said: "Universality belongs not to things themselves, which are all of them particular in their existence, even those words and ideas which in their signification are general. When therefore we quit particulars, the generals that rest are only creatures of our own making, their general nature being nothing but the capacity they are put into by the understanding of signifying or representing many particulars." [9]

James was never (in spite of Peirce's strictures) a thoroughgoing nominalist. He pointed out that Locke, in so far as he recognized the power of the mind to frame general ideas, was a conceptualist rather than a nominalist. He himself went further than Locke in his emphasis on general ideas, and even approached the "realistic" position, as when in a later period he spoke of concepts as "realities of a new order." [10] But with Locke's view of the *priority* and *preëminence* of particulars he heartily agreed. "In particulars our knowledge begins, and so spreads itself by degrees to generals." All knowledge is "grounded on experience." All ideas are known "by their native evidence," and the evidence attaching to particular ideas (perceptions) is more original and no less certain than that attaching to general ideas. Perception, in short, affords a surer proof of

[9] *Op. cit.*, Bk. III, Ch. III, §11.
[10] *P.U.*, 339–43.

existence because of being *concrete* and *given,* as distinguished from the abstract and mind-made generalizations of thought. This doctrine James drew together from various passages of the *Essay,* and labeled "empiricism." [11]

The second point, which James noted with even more evident approval, is "the relative or *teleological* character of the notion of essence," meaning the "nominal" and not the "real" essence as Locke distinguished these. The mind may *choose* what it shall regard as the essence of an individual, that is to say, under what aspect or abstract idea the individual shall be considered. What shall determine this choice? Locke's answer was not clear, but James was quick to detect hints of what in the margin he noted as "practicalism." Locke speaks of "ease," of "quickness of despatch," of "shortening the way to knowledge." [12] Tests such as these refer in the last analysis to actual experience. " 'Terminates,' " said James, "is an important word in Locke. Practical experience is a certain particular sensation in a particular place and time. . . . Sensation ought to be the *terminus a quo* and *ad quem* of all philosophy." [13] In the *Principles* we find James quoting from Locke the doctrine that remains "eternally true" — the doctrine, namely, that "though there be a great number of considerations wherein things may be compared one with another, and so a multitude of relations; yet they all *terminate in,* and are concerned about, those simple ideas either of sensation or reflection, which I think to be the whole materials of all our knowledge." And he sympathized also with Locke's view that practice cannot wait for theory, suggesting the following as a "motto for practicalism": "He that will not eat till he has demonstration that it will nourish him, he that will not stir till he infallibly knows the business he goes about will succeed, will have little else to do but sit still and perish." [14]

Turning to the experiential doctrine of essence and meaning, we find that James singled out for special approval Locke's transfer of the question of personal identity from the debatable ground of substance to the evident ground of conscious selfhood. "We must," says Locke, "consider what 'person' stands for." Personal identity *is* that identity of which we are conscious, or "that same conscious-

[11] W.J.'s copy of Locke's *Essay,* 456, 458–9, 463–5, 490.
[12] *Ibid.,* 276, 296, 300.
[13] *Ibid.,* 200, 213, 276, 300.
[14] *Principles,* II, 6; and *cf.* I, 479–80. Locke, *ibid.,* 499.

ness that makes a man be himself to himself." Whether there be a "same identical substance . . . matters not at all." [15] The entire chapter on "The Consciousness of Self" in James's *Principles of Psychology* is an application of this method. The reference to Locke is, however, more explicit in an obscure article on "Person and Personality" published in 1895: —

"In Locke's *Essay Concerning Human Understanding* the great revolution towards empiricism begins. Personality is now explained as a result, and not assumed as a principle. . . . Locke believes, indeed, in souls as substances and in their identity; but the mere ontological self-identity of such a soul would, he says, make no *personal* identity unless a recollecting consciousness were joined thereto. 'Consciousness' is what makes a *person,* when it remembers past experiences, as having been also its own. . . . The importance of Locke's doctrine lay in this, that he eliminated 'substantial' identity as transcendental and unimportant, and made of 'personal' identity (the only practically important sort) a directly verifiable empirical phenomenon. Where not actually experienced, it *is* not. . . ." [16]

James's serious study of Berkeley and Hume began, like that of Locke, about 1875, and culminated in 1883–1884 in the course on "English Philosophy." The experimentalist theory of existential knowledge is preserved in Berkeley, though it assumes a less prominent place owing to the author's greater emphasis on intuitive self-knowledge and the demonstrative knowledge of God. In Berkeley, as in Locke, knowledge of the physical world is provided by sense perception, which lacks that "dependence on my will" which is characteristic of the states of imagination. In other words, Berkeley, like Locke, credits perception with a sense of alien origin, of thrust from without, to which the mind passively submits. To account for this he made use of the hypothesis of God, as Locke had made use of the hypothesis of material substances. But as regards this experimental principle that existence is proved *a posteriori,* and that being particular it is revealed primarily in perception, James had nothing to learn from Berkeley that Locke had not already taught him.

[15] *Op. cit.,* Bk. II, Ch. XXVII, §§9, 10. *Cf.* the chapter in W.J.'s copy.

[16] *Johnson's Universal Cyclopædia,* 1895, VI, 538–40. *Cf.* also the passage in *Pragm.,* 90: "Locke, and later Hume, applied a . . . pragmatic criticism to the notion of *spiritual substance.* I will only mention Locke's treatment of our 'personal identity.' He immediately reduces this notion to its pragmatic value in terms of experience."

It was as an exponent of the experiential view of reality that Berkeley made his strongest appeal to James. In reducing matter to sense perception, Berkeley argued that matter has no other *meaning;* or that, taken in any other sense, it would be all the same whether it existed or did not exist. In a passage marked with a triple "N.B." in James's copy of the *Principles of Human Knowledge,* Berkeley said: "In short, if there were external (that is, unperceived) bodies, it is impossible we should ever come to know it; and if there were not, we might have the very same reasons to think there were that we have now." Matter is rejected, in other words, because it is *useless,* where usefulness is taken to mean the power to account for phenomena; "To explain the phenomena, is all one as to shew why, upon such and such occasions, we are affected with such and such ideas. But how Matter should operate on a Spirit, or produce any idea in it, is what no philosopher will pretend to explain; it is therefore evident there can be no use of Matter in natural philosophy." [17]

In later years, when he had begun to use the term "pragmatism," this doctrine was a favorite illustration: "Berkeley's criticism of 'matter' was . . . absolutely pragmatistic. Matter is known as our sensations of color, figure, hardness and the like. They are the cash face value of the term. The difference matter makes to us by truly being is that we then get such sensations; by not being, is that we lack them. These sensations . . . are its sole meaning. Berkeley does n't deny matter, then; he simply tells us what it consists of. It is a true name for just so much in the way of sensations." [18]

Hume is credited, even by his severest critics, with being a scrupulous adherent of the experimentalist theory of knowledge. This is his merit according to his friends, and the secret of his failure, according to his enemies. Existence cannot be proved logically. The existence or nonexistence of anything is equally conceivable, without contradiction. "Whatever *is* may *not be.*" Whether anything does or does not exist is therefore a question of fact, not of necessity; and can be proved only by experience, or by "reasoning from experience." Experience itself gives us knowledge of the particular ideas which are present to the mind, while to reason from experience is to infer

[17] Ed. by C. P. Krauth, 1874, 204, 222.
[18] *Pragm.,* 89–90. He used the same illustration in order to introduce pragmatism in his course, Philos. 3, in 1902–3.

effects from causes or causes from effects. But causality, in turn, is not a necessary, but a merely factual, relation. Reasoning from this relation relies wholly on the fact that particular ideas or impressions are repeatedly given together or in sequence, so as to beget expectations of recurrence.[19]

The key to James's relations with Hume is to be found in the fact that he studied him in the edition by Green and Grose;[20] and approached the text of the *Treatise* by way of Green's famous "Introduction," in which Hume was charged with a failure to provide for *relations*. He accepted Hume's emphasis on the particular items of experience, but agreed with Green's opinion that there could be no knowledge of existence unless these items were woven into a connected system. Hume became his great exemplar of "the tendency to enthrone mere juxtaposition as lord of all and to make of the universe what has well been styled a 'nulliverse.' "[21] The failure of Hume's experimentalism to provide a knowledge of existence was due, James thought, to the poverty of his experientialism. He was correct in insisting on the *terms* of experience, and in identifying these with the "lively" ideas or sensations; but he was blind to *connections* which are just as unmistakably given as the terms.

Nevertheless Hume advanced the experiential conquest by submitting spiritual substance, power, and cause to the same drastic treatment that material substance had received at the hands of Berkeley. James was not, as we shall see, satisfied with the account which Hume gave of these matters, but he credited him with having undertaken the task on empiricist principles. He asked of all of these alleged entities what immediate evidence they could give of themselves, with the intention of reducing their meaning to that evidence: "Locke, compromiser that he was, passively tolerated the belief in a substantial soul behind our consciousness. But his successor Hume, and most empirical psychologists after him, have denied the soul, save as the name for verifiable cohesions in our inner life. They redescend into the stream of experience with it, and cash it into so much small-change value in the way of 'ideas' and their peculiar connections with each other. As I said of Berke-

[19] *Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*, Sect. XII, Part III.

[20] *Treatise of Human Nature*, etc., by David Hume, edited by T. H. Green and T. H. Grose, 1874.

[21] *C.E.R.*, 100. The "nihilism" in which Chauncey Wright exhibits the essence of Humism is another name for the same thing; *cf.* above, 525–8.

ley's matter, the soul is good or 'true' for just *so much,* but no more." [22]

James, like most philosophers, admired the boldness and integrity of Hume's analysis. "With all its oversights, omissions and incongruities, Hume's doctrine is a masterly thing." And James felt a peculiar tenderness for Hume on account of the weapons which the latter provided against monism and determinism. He concluded his course on English philosophy with the words: "The Humean philosophy is useful as a protest against the Hegelian spirit. It ought to combine itself with free will, as none of the absolute philosophies can."

When James published his *Pragmatism* in 1907, he dedicated it "To the memory of John Stuart Mill, from whom I first learned the pragmatic openness of mind, and whom my fancy likes to picture as our leader were he alive to-day." James regarded Mill as the last in the line of legitimate succession — the most recent heir to the empirical throne. But while he admired him for his personal and moral qualities and was attached to him by a sort of dynastic loyalism, he rarely agreed with him in points of doctrine.

James was introduced to Mill's philosophy in his youth. The elder James had read Mill extensively and had made his personal acquaintance at the house of Carlyle. In the earliest notebook which has been preserved, William speaks of having read Buckle's essay on Mill, and was inspired by the author's "noble enthusiasm for truth." [23] In 1868 he wrote from Dresden in terms which indicated that he looked to Mill as the prophet of a secular gospel — proclaiming "terrestrial harmony" as the *summum bonum* and most appealing alternative to supernaturalism or a theistic metaphysics. In 1869 he reviewed Mill's "Subjection of Women," finding it "strangely startling and suggestive," and a "most weighty little production"; but he shrank from Mill's equalitarian and Platonic view of marriage, as contrary to custom and to human nature. The American idea of marriage *does* imply, he thought, "some feeling of dependence on the woman's side." [24]

[22] *Pragm.*, 92.

[23] The essay is presumably H. T. Buckle, "Mill on Liberty," *Fraser's Magazine,* LIX (1859).

[24] *North Amer. Rev.*, CIX (1869), 556; and W.J. to H. P. Bowditch, Aug. 12, 1869, parts omitted from *L.W.J.*

During the late '60s and early '70s the issue between idealism and realism, in its earlier or pre-Kantian form, agitated James almost continuously, and he took Mill as the arch-exponent of an idealism whose conclusions he accepted but whose proofs he rejected. In the '70s James read and criticized Mill's *Logic* and *Examination of Sir William Hamilton's Philosophy,* noting his "inconsistencies," comparing him with Jevons and other exponents of induction, and discussing the application of his "Psychological Method" to that question of space which was at this time claiming much of James's attention. In 1881–1882 the latter gave a course entitled "Contemporary Philosophy" in which he used Mill's *Logic* as a text, his dissatisfaction with Mill in particular being aggravated by his distaste for logic in general. He regarded Mill's philosophy as the culmination of that nihilistic tendency in empiricism which sprang from its neglect of unifying relations. And, like Hume, Mill failed to avail himself of the only advantage which this nihilism could have afforded him — the affirmation, namely, "of free will, which is most harmonious with his conception of the world as made of chopped-up, juxtaposed representations, with no bond of any sort between them. Certain representations might well be admitted [as] following without fixed law in this system. Indeed he lays stress on the essential uncertainty of future representations."

Some of these criticisms of Mill's empiricism will require a fuller consideration. Here it is in order to indicate that James did regard Mill as an empiricist, and so as broadly of his own philosophical party. This holds of both doctrines. Mill's notorious reduction of existence to "permanent possibilities of sensation" is proof of his scrupulous, if misguided, adherence to the experimentalist theory of existential knowledge. James found Mill's sensationalism defective at two points. Even if one were to limit the knowledge of existence to sensations, this would not prove that only sensations are known to exist. Sensation presents something other than itself — namely, its object. In the second place, reasoning from sensation cannot be identified with the bare expectations begotten by sensory contiguity and succession. It depends on the mind's capacity to conceive things in this way or that — to recognize identities, and frame hypotheses. But admitting that Mill, like Hume, failed to make the correct analysis of perceptual knowledge, nevertheless his intentions were honorable. His aim was to accept the verdict

of experience as the final authority in matters of existence, and he allowed no paradox to deter him from fidelity to this principle.

The same holds true of Mill's adherence to the experiential theory of reality and meaning: "Matter," he had said, "may be defined, as a Permanent Possibility of Sensation. If I am asked whether I believe in matter, I ask whether the questioner accepts this definition of it. If he does, I believe in matter: and so do all Berkeleyans. In any other sense than this, I do not. But I affirm with confidence, that this conception of Matter includes the whole meaning attached to it by the common world, apart from philosophical, and sometimes from theological, theories." [25] In holding to this doctrine, Mill was radically empirical, like Hume. But as he equaled or even exceeded Hume in the degree of his doctrinal zeal, he exceeded him also in the degree to which he succumbed to that atomistic associationism which was empiricism's family malady. And since Mill had added little to the analysis of Berkeley and Hume, James usually thought of him as exemplifying the malady rather than the doctrine.

In short, James owed little to Mill on fundamental points of doctrine, though he felt a personal sympathy with him as an empiricist unafflicted with the closed mind of the positivists. This sympathy was still closer in the ethical and religious field, where the two men were united by a common individualistic code and a common impulse to positive and hopeful belief.[26]

[25] *Examination of Sir William Hamilton's Philosophy*, 1865, 243.

[26] James, like Mill, was suspicious of every negation. Thus when, in 1879–80, he went over Spencer's *First Principles* with his class, and took up item by item the agnostic argument of Mansel discussed in Ch. III, he constantly appealed to Mill against Mansel.

XXXIV

JAMES'S REFORM OF BRITISH EXPERIMENTALISM

BROADLY speaking, James allied himself with the classic empirical tradition originating in Locke, and represented in his own day by John Mill. But he was as critical as he was friendly. Viewed under one aspect, the course of British thought from Locke to Mill appeared to him as a progressive revelation of the principle of empiricism and an extension of its application: a transition, in other words, from good to better. From other angles, however, it was a transition from bad to worse: a progressive obscuring of the empiricist principle, and a contraction of its application. Thus "the good Locke" was one who had not yet seen the full force of his own ideas, and might, therefore, be spoken of with a slightly patronizing accent; but he was at the same time comparatively vigorous and sound — one whose pristine purity had saved him from the later excesses of nominalism, associationism, and positivism. James believed that the hope of empiricism's salvation lay in a confession of sin. Hence no modern philosopher has been more alive to the faults and failures of traditional empiricism than he who felt most confident that empiricism was to be the reigning philosophy of the future. In tracing the origins and guiding ideas of James's internal reform, I shall continue to follow the division of empiricism that has so far proved useful; but shall vary the language in which it has been expressed as may be necessary to bring to light the underlying questions at issue.

Starting with the experimentalist view of existential knowledge, and assuming that we can learn of existence only from experience, the question is, *How* shall we learn from experience? James's answer is that we shall learn actively and not passively. The traditional school, in regarding knowledge as a mere deposit in the mind, or cumulative effect of the reception of impressions from

without, has not only falsified the character of mind, which *is* essentially active and selective; but has been guilty of a procedure which is dogmatic in its assumptions, and skeptical in its conclusions. It has assumed an external causal order which it is incapable of justifying. Viewed under this aspect, the course of empiricism after Locke is one of progressive decline ending with bankruptcy in Hume and Mill.

Locke himself is unmistakably guilty of this fundamental error. He speaks of things as "operating" on the mind, and of perception as an "inlet." The understanding is like "a closet wholly shut from light, with only some little opening left to let in external visible resemblances or ideas of things without." [1] Such passages were marked by James as "the tendency of the British school"; or as "Spencerism," suggesting that writer's "correspondence of relations." In his lectures James said: "Locke is bound up in the notion that things send in ideas from without . . . the tendency of the British school is to make the mind passive. Locke is not on the whole a fatalist." James saw that Locke presupposed not only general "powers" acting on the mind, but *physical* powers. These are corpuscular in nature, and they produce ideas in us by acting on our nerves. When Locke speaks of "things operating on the mind in a natural way — " of "certain powers in things, fitted and ordained by God to produce such sensations in us," of the "various ways wherein . . . objects do affect" the senses, and so forth — [2] he means to refer to the facts of psychophysics: namely, the stimulation of neural receptors by physical agents such as light and heat. Thus Locke's philosophy of ideas presupposes as their condition and source a physical world already complete. He does not place himself in the position of one who has *only* ideas to start with; or, when he does, his philosophy runs much less smoothly.

This (at first, largely unconscious) assumption of a physical world as underlying and conditioning the activities of mind eventually dominated the empirical school. It brought about a change from the comparatively metaphysical and religious philosophies of Locke and Berkeley to the positivism of Hume and Mill, and to the scientific naturalism with which this positivism was allied. James's complaint of latter-day empiricism on this score pervades the vol-

[1] *Essay*, 1853, 96; *cf.* also 63, 86, 267, 434.
[2] *Essay*, 1853, 268–9, 434.

ume of essays entitled *The Will to Believe,* and is explicitly formulated in the preface to that volume. He there speaks of "the halfway empiricism that is current under the name of positivism or agnosticism or scientific naturalism," meaning that it fails to apply to the scientific view of the world the fundamental empiricist maxim of regarding the "most assured conclusions concerning matters of fact as hypotheses liable to modification in the course of future experience." [3] In other words, he accuses empiricism of unconsciously presupposing or dogmatically affirming the naturalistic world order. The seed of the error is in Locke's picture of the mind as a room whose original darkness is dispelled by successive or simultaneous jets of light that enter from outside through the "windows" of the senses.

It is sometimes supposed that James escaped naturalism by abandoning empiricism. The fact is that he looked to empiricism itself as a means of escape. The doctrine of the passivity of the mind was to James a profound falsification of the facts, contradicted by his own most intimate experience. His receptivity was extraordinary, and his mind was abundantly nourished from without both by fact and by ideas. But when he read he read with pencil in hand poised to record the outpouring of his mind. Nothing ever happened *to* him that did not evoke a play of thought and imagination *from* him. He was speculative, ruminative, and constructive, perpetually seeking and never finding a belief in which his uneasy mind could come to a rest. While his experimental training and his distrust of formal reasoning impelled him to look to experience for the last answer to every question, it is inconceivable that he should have adopted the course of patient waiting. His abundantly fertile mind was forever leading the way and preparing alternatives from which experience should choose — and verification always lagged behind hypothesis.

He believed, furthermore, that in taking the initiative the mind expressed its own bias — its hereditary or inborn structure and its subjective interests. He felt that those who professed a scrupulously self-effacing adherence to "fact" and the "necessities" of logic were lacking in candor or in self-understanding.[4] Empiricism

[3] *W.B.*, viii, vii.

[4] *Cf., e.g.,* the essay on "Absolutism and Empiricism," originally published in 1884, and reprinted in *E.R.E.*

will avoid an ultimate subjectivism by being aware that a provisional subjectivism is inevitable, and by appealing all subjective proposals to the test of experience.

The famous last chapter of the *Principles of Psychology* records James's most vigorous revolt against that submissive empiricism according to which the knowing mind merely receives its content from abroad and stores it in the order in which it is received. Knowledge of this sort reveals "empirical truths," and it is important that it should have been recognized and emphasized; but as a reformer of empiricism James was here concerned to argue that the receptivity of the mind is its least characteristic quality. He massed and drove home the great volume of evidence which magnifies the mind's originality and spontaneity. In so doing he was both expressing the characteristics of his own mind, and recording the results of his own observations. He had found a support in Renouvier, and confirmation in Hodgson, Sigwart, and Lotze. Spencer was as always his appalling example of the opposite.

It has been pointed out by Dr. Dickinson S. Miller[5] that as regards the knowledge of existence the essential difference between James and his predecessors of the British school may be expressed in terms of the temporal reference of ideas and beliefs. The classic empiricists had emphasized the reference to the past, whereas James, in keeping with the spirit of experimentalism, emphasized the reference to the future. Locke, Berkeley, Hume, and Mill had said, in effect, that the most important thing about an idea is that it should have sprung from experience, and their inquiries were therefore genetic. An idea was cognitively justified by its ancestry and past history. For James, on the other hand, ideas are cognitively justified by their achievements and prospects.

Experience is authoritative in both cases, but whereas according to the traditional view experience *has* spoken, according to James experience has yet to speak, and its response will be proportional to the boldness and happy inspiration with which it is interrogated. The truly empirical mind is not the mind which yields to habit or passively accepts its own history as a revelation of existence, but the mind which imagines curious possibilities and gives nature every chance to reveal itself in unfamiliar ways.

The *logical* inadequacy of the empirical tradition is similarly

[5] "Professor James on Philosophic Method," *Philos. Rev.*, VIII (1899).

due to a neglect of the activity of the mind. Locke had recognized the power of the mind to "create" and "invent" general ideas, and to know them intuitively, but knowledge of this sort assumed a comparatively slight importance in his system because he divorced it from knowledge of existence.[6] Locke's more nominalistic successors attempted to deny general ideas altogether. For James this power of the mind is its chief faculty of experimental reasoning. The mind can form ideas, know what it means by them, hold on to their identity, and apprehend their relations. With these ideal essences at command it can then attack the question of existence.

For reasoning about any particular existence consists, first, in subsuming it under a general idea, and then in using this general idea as a bridge to connect the first with other particular existences. The beginning of all experimental reasoning, then, is to ask of any particular existence, *How* shall I conceive it? Conceiving it in one way may yield no result, while conceiving it in another way may lead to the discovery of significant linkages. Such fruitful modes of conception contribute the so-called "middle terms" of syllogistic reasoning.[7] A particular existence may be conceived in many ways, and does not of itself dictate which way shall be chosen. It is the genius of reason, as it is the genius of life itself, by a sort of happy improvisation to frame structures which will endure. The invention of reason is like that unconscious and obscure resourcefulness of nature from which emerge the individual claimants that prove fit to survive.

This is the doctrine of reasoning whose psychological aspects James elaborated in 1878 under the title "Brute and Human Intellect."[8] For the logical bearings of the doctrine he felt a special obligation to Taine. In 1877–1878 he used Taine's *On Intelligence* as a textbook in his undergraduate course on psychology. But some years before he had reviewed the book for the *Nation*. This

[6] *Essay*, 1853, 65. *Cf.* James, *Principles*, II, 661, 664–5.

[7] Here, as so often happens, Locke is on the right track: "A quickness in the mind to find out these ideas . . . and to apply them right is, I suppose, that which is called 'sagacity.'" [*Essay*, 1853, 391.] But Locke neglected the application to existential knowledge.

[8] *Jour. of Specul. Philos.* Most of this essay was reprinted, in the enlarged and modified chapters of the *Principles* devoted to "Reasoning" and "Discrimination." The author cites James Martineau in support of his theory, and, on particular points, Bain and Chauncey Wright. Martineau had reviewed Bain (in *Essays*, 1866), and had argued that experience is given integrally, instead of bit by bit, the problem of thought being to *dis*integrate, *dis*sociate. Spencer, as usual, is James's favorite example of error.

review, written in 1872, applauds Taine's recognition of abstract ideas, but points out the latter's failure consistently to adhere to the canon of *usefulness,* by which the legitimacy of abstract ideas is tested: —

"Every *real* abstraction is an extract (to use his happy terminology) from a multitude of particular things or events which may differ as to their other details. The British school says the things are 'similar' as to this character, but Taine affirms the common character to be literally the *'same'* in all, thus giving it a sort of ontologic status, a real existence differing from that of individuals and events only in possessing superior stability and permanence. The beauty and value of these abstract characters, or generalized extracts, is that they are fertile, for they contain wrapped up in them — sometimes obvious, sometimes latent, and to be discovered only by a keen analytic eye — further properties, other abstractions. . . . The class of abstractions to which he is not thus indulgent differs from the former chiefly in its infecundity. It is that of *substances,* such as matter, the ego, the faculties of the mind, and what may be called the dynamic entities, as power, necessity, cause, force, etc. Here his nominalism stands firm. . . . His best and deepest reason for rejecting [this] class of abstractions is that they really explain nothing. . . . We find M. Taine constantly forgetting this point of view. . . . But with all its shortcomings the book is a valuable one. The early chapters contain the clearest and best account of the psychology of cognition with which we are acquainted." [9]

In the essay on "The Sentiment of Rationality," as published in 1879, James attacked the nominalistic basis of Mill's *Logic,* insisting that the author was thus prevented from arriving at any constructive solution of the problem of causal necessity. The connections of nature are arbitrary, according to Mill. They become familiar, and when strange mysteries are assimilated to more familiar ones we call it "explanation"; but there is no more understanding of the connection in the one case than in the other. Against this view James argues that the art of scientific explanation consists in skillfully detecting and utilizing the characters in respect of which phenomena are identical: "Thus then the connections of things become strictly rational only when, by successive substitutions

[9] *Nation,* XV, 139.

of essences for things, and higher for lower essences, we succeed in reaching a point of view from which we can view the things as one." [10]

James's peculiar attitude to Mill as to one who builded better than he knew — whose insight was contrary to his professions and betrayed by his inconsistencies — appears very clearly in the former's marginal commentary on the *Logic*.[11] Mill saw the importance of analysis, and that the selection of significant elements for emphasis must be shrewdly governed by some purpose. Though he denied any necessity, or "belonging" together, among things, he implicitly accepted such connections in distinguishing *"unconditional"* from merely "invariable" sequences. He was prevented, by his nominalistic affiliation, from recognizing the importance of concepts, but was constantly assuming them. He was, like Hume and Wright, to be classified as a representative of "nihilism"; but having the merits of concreteness and candor in his dealing with particular examples, he was forever testifying to truths which lay beyond the bounds of his own doctrinal premises.

Similarly instructive is the marginal comment on Mill's chapter "Of Definition." The *teleological* character of definition (and of description as well) is tacitly implied, but Mill's failure to recognize it explicitly confuses his whole discussion. James summarizes his own view as follows: "Any serviceable diagnostic mark is a good and true definition of the *denotation* of the name. Of its *connotation,* either *all* the attributes, or all from which the others can be inferred, or the important ones for the occasion upon which the name is used, are true definitions. There is no *essential* definition of a name, not even of the name of a circle, for from any of its properties the rest might be inferred. Of *things* there is no *true* definition but an exhaustive account. All others are abstractions. Any abstract account may be essential from the point of view of a given purpose; any accidental, from that of another. [There is] no metaphysical difference, therefore, between definition and description." [12]

In the year 1881–1882, as already noted, James used Mill's *Logic*

[10] *C.E.R.*, 108. The references to Alexander Bain make it clear that James was substantially indebted to him; *cf.* below, 592–3, II, 55–6.

[11] Mill's *Logic,* edition of 1872, inscribed as follows: "Taught: 1881–2; 1886–7."

[12] Mill, *op. cit.*, I, 151–2; *cf.* 158. Here Locke is better, with his doctrine of "nominal essence."

as a textbook. He found the subject of logic tedious, and wandered from it to the more inviting fields of metaphysics. A member of this course speaks of James's evident boredom, and suggests that the following passage may have been a description of his feelings: "I know a person . . . who will poke the fire, set chairs straight, pick dust-specks from the floor, arrange his table, snatch up his newspaper, take down any book which catches his eye, trim his nails, waste the morning *anyhow,* in short, and all without premeditation, — simply because the only thing he *ought* to attend to is the preparation of a noonday lesson in formal logic which he detests. Anything but *that!*" [18] Whatever his temperamental antipathies, James attacked Mill vigorously, as notes of 1881 and 1882 testify. Mill has made several "blunders." First, he was mistaken in supposing that his four methods (agreement, difference, concomitant variation, and residues) are useful for "making guesses"; they are useful only in "testing" them. Second, he put too much emphasis on causality — the "laws of nature," such as "definite proportions, specific heat or Kepler's ellipses," are "ill described in causal language." "Mill's third mistake" was to suppose that his four methods were superior to other methods such as "analogy, simple enumeration, hypothesis, etc." But Mill's chief blunder was a theory of induction corrupted by associationism and nominalism. He was to be credited with seeing that a knowledge of the order of nature must be the result of a methodical procedure, and not a mere by-product of the impact of experience upon a receptive mind. The mind must devise and employ *criteria,* by which, as Mill expressed it, *unconditioned* sequence is to be distinguished from the mere succession and coexistence of percepts; and Mill sought to provide such criteria in his "four methods." But his procedure was fundamentally unsound because of its emphasis on the uniform collocation of particulars: —

"Couplings of particular concretes are inconstant and unimportant. The important couplings are those of general terms. . . . [If] A and B belong together, a single case of their coupling lets us perceive it to be a uniform law. . . . The *synthesis* of general characters is a necessity, if we are to get anything more than a

[18] *Principles,* I, 421. The passage may have referred to this course, though it is probable that it referred to the more elementary Philos. 2, which included logic from 1885 to 1890. Both courses were given at noon.

sand-heap world. . . . Induction = reduction to a concept from which *de*duction will be possible. . . . The living moment in the whole process is the moment of classing, subsuming, saying *what*, picking out characters . . . relatively to a purpose. . . . Nature is a continuum from which we carve as we please, and in carving always rethink some eternal thought. The full plethora is God's way of thinking. The characters of the individual are the only ones *realized*. The rest are abstractions. . . . Mill's position is half-way. [He] blows hot and cold; holds a half and half doctrine; admits real kinds whilst discarding their only ground, the essence or 'form.' "

There is in James's experimental theory of knowledge a curious blend of two opposing motives of profligacy and frugality. The mind is encouraged to imagine and speculate freely, its merit like that of Darwin's organic world, being its fecundity. But such profligacy can be tolerated only because in the end experience, wielding the razor of Occam, is to prune away every irrelevance and superfluity. A bold riot of thinking, qualified by a shrewd or inspired faculty for happy hits, and controlled by a scrupulous acceptance of experience's verdict — that is James's recipe. The wider the range of alternatives from which experience may choose, the richer the truth which experience will yield. For experience can only answer questions, and the more varied and intelligent the questions the more illuminating will be the answers.

XXXV

JAMES'S REFORM OF BRITISH EXPERIENTIALISM

We have found that the traditional empiricism broke down, according to James, because of the false view that the mind is merely a passive repository of experience. Knowledge of existence, he contends, arises from what the mind does and not from what happens to it. But the traditional empiricism is at fault with respect to the *content*, as well as the method of empirical knowledge; and here, curiously enough, the empiricists, although professing to magnify the rôle of experience, had shown surprisingly little confidence in its adequacy.

The crux of the matter lies in the fact that all knowledge of existence claims to go beyond the immediate moment of experience. It affirms some sort of outlying *order* of existence, constituting nature or the world. The recognition of this had been, in James's eyes, the chief merit of transcendentalism and rationalism, but as time went on he came to have more confidence in the resourcefulness of empiricism. If empiricism is to meet this test it is necessary that the order of existence shall itself be experienced. An empiricism which reduces experience to items, no one of which can ever be an experience of the very order in which they occur, is a confession of failure. Nor will it suffice to experience relations as merely so many more items. Terms must be experienced in their very acts or states of relatedness. And such, James believes, is the case.

His peculiar view of the amplitude and connectedness of experience seems to have begun with the application to space. His "nativistic" view of space perception was first published in 1879. Probably as early as 1876 he had criticized Spencer's view that perception of the locality of an object is built up from the successive perception of the positions between the object and the subject. In other words James was already, in the '70s, prepared to credit experience

with an immediate apprehension of spatial relations and directions. But the full implication of this view and its extension to *all* relations were not elaborated by James until 1883. In 1882, *Mind* had contained three articles by T. H. Green entitled "Can There Be a Natural Science of Man?" in which the author attacked empiricism on the old ground that it failed to provide for the *order* of nature. These articles appear to have stimulated the discourse which James presented to the Concord School of Philosophy in the following summer and published in January 1884, under the title, "On Some Omissions of Introspective Psychology." He here referred to the sensationalists and associationists who "end with the philosophical melancholy of a Hume at the conclusion of his treatise, or with Mill's dismal confession of failure at the close of his chapter on the Psychological Theory of Mind." This breakdown of empiricism was due to the fact that "orthodox empirical psychologists . . . record under the name of images, *Vorstellungen*, or ideas, only such representations as have objects that can be brought to the distinct focus of attention and there stably held in view." [1]

In other words, empiricism, which ought, above all philosophies, to apprehend data with a fresh and alert sensibility, had allowed itself to be misled by the common-sense habit of disregarding everything except the substantive foci of practical interest. Needing a knowledge of relations, it had overlooked that which was under its very nose, and through this failure had ended in a shipwreck or suffered the even more mortifying fate of being rescued and brought to port by its traditional rivals. As James came to realize more fully in later years, this failure of "ordinary empiricism" not only vitiated its theory of knowledge, but affected most of the major problems of philosophy — such as the nature of general ideas, causation, the external world, and the unity of the self: "Now, ordinary empiricism, in spite of the fact that conjunctive and disjunctive relations present themselves as being fully coördinate parts of experience, has always shown a tendency to do away with the connections of things, and to insist most on the disjunctions. Berkeley's nominalism, Hume's statement that whatever things we distinguish are as 'loose and separate' as if they had 'no manner of connection,' James Mill's denial that similars have anything 'really' in common, the resolution of the causal tie into habitual sequence, John Mill's

[1] *Mind*, IX, 3–4, 8–9.

account of both physical things and selves as composed of discontinuous possibilities, and the general pulverization of all experience by association and the mind-dust theory, are examples of what I mean." [2]

The seeds of error were in Locke, but had not yet borne fruit. On most of the particular issues involved Locke was sound, without having realized the full gravity of the difficulties and without having armed his successors against them. Thus he asserted the existence of general ideas, and James had derived aid and comfort from him on this score. But he did not adequately meet the question of the *nature* of general ideas, and so paved the way to Berkeley's nominalistic denial of them.[3]

Berkeley did not "deny absolutely that there are general ideas, but only that there are any *abstract* general ideas. . . . An idea (or 'word') which, considered in itself, is particular becomes general by being made to represent or stand for all other particular ideas of the same sort." [4] Berkeley was thus forced to introduce a non-empirical (presumably physiological or metaphysical) function by which one particular idea "represents" or "stands for" all others "of the same sort"; and failed to account for the fact that when, for example, we mean man generally, and when we mean an individual man in particular, we are perfectly aware of the difference of intent. There is a specific recognizable difference *in the experience at the time,* between "the image plus awareness of the intention to use it particularly" and "the image plus awareness of intention to use it generally." What James did, with surpassing introspective delicacy, was to discover and isolate this "plus." Huxley, Galton, and Taine had spoken of "blended and generic images," and the last had spoken of "tendency." [5] With James the important thing was the experience of tendency, that *awareness by the mind of what it is about to do,* which distinguishes the man who utters a sentence from the man who hears him. In the case of the intention to use an image or word in a general sense, this awareness "tinges" the image,

[2] *E.R.E.*, 42–3.

[3] For Locke's hesitant manner of dealing with the subject, *cf. Essay,* 1853, 458.

[4] *Principles of Human Knowledge,* Introduction, §12. These paragraphs are significantly marked and annotated in James's copy, 1874.

[5] *Cf.* T. H. Huxley, *Hume,* 1879, 92; Francis Galton, *Inquiries into Human Faculty,* 1883, 349; H. Taine, *On Intelligence,* 1871, II, 139. James's personal copy of Taine was the French edition of 1870. This book contains many annotations suggesting the extent of the author's influence in helping James to escape the difficulties of associationism.

or surrounds it like a "halo or penumbra," and so converts it into a general idea.[6]

James charges Berkeley's "new theory of vision" with the same faults as his nominalism. Berkeley had denied an *immediate* visual perception of distance, contending that this perception was *built up* out of sensations of movement, color, and lateral extension. Into the physiological, psychophysical, and introspective questions involved in this controversial issue James went with great thoroughness in his published writings.[7] Suffice it here to point out that his "nativism," his insistence on a "spacial *quale*," — a sensation of "simple vastness" or "teeming muchness," — reflected his recognition of the plenitude of experience, and his adherence to the general Lockean thesis that the mind itself cannot create new qualities. Berkeley was doubly mistaken: first, in separating sense qualities into elements; and then in supposing that one could generate new qualities merely by putting them together. He was a conspicuous, but not a unique sinner in these respects. On the question of space, the "abject incoherency" of the English school generally was "pitiful." They were all "astray, like lost sheep."[8]

While Berkeley's nominalism and "empiricist" theory of space constituted the major part of his offending, these were only symptoms, and by no means the only symptoms, of a fundamentally false position. His incurable taint of solipsism was due to his insistence on the discontinuity of ideas. If my perception is exclusively mine, and yours is exclusively yours, and the two are altogether disconnected, our minds can never meet in a common world; whereas experience construed as continuous provides pathways from this to that and from me to you. Berkeley's very theology is a symptom of the same malady. Because ideas are by their nature disconnected, God has to be introduced as a mortar to hold the world together.

After Berkeley the progress of the malady was accelerated. The mortar supplied by Berkeley's spiritual substance, divine and human, was discarded by his successors and the disintegration was complete. This is James's version of the commonly accepted judgment that Hume's philosophy was a failure and a scandal. His successors

[6] James's favorite word is, of course, "fringe." For his matured statement of this matter, *cf. Principles*, I, 468–80.

[7] *Bg.*, 1879–6, 1887–2; and *Principles*, II, 212 ff.

[8] *Bg.*, 1879–6, 85, 86.

had felt that their first duty was to "answer Hume." The Scotch realists, Reid and Stewart, undertook to do it; Kant undertook to do it in general terms; and T. H. Green, following Kant, undertook to do it with specific and detailed references to the text of Hume. Green agreed with Hume that feelings did not carry their own relations, and insisted that the defect of feeling must be made good by the intervention, *ab extra,* of intellect: what does not combine itself, or *come* combined, has to *be* combined — and the intellect is the faculty to do it. This set the stage for James, who was both insistent on the need of relations, and confident that the feelings *do* carry them. Hence he found in Hume an intolerable "disintegration" of experience,[9] and in Green a false antithesis of "feeling and relation."

Hume's failure was a *self-confessed* failure. The passage to which James calls special attention, in his own copy of Hume's *Treatise,* which betrays the latter's insistence on the "looseness," "separateness," and "disconnection" of the elements of experience, and which breathes his "philosophical melancholy," is as follows: —

"Philosophers begin to be reconcil'd to the principle, *that we have no idea of external substance, distinct from the ideas of particular qualities.* This must pave the way for a like principle with regard to the mind, *that we have no notion of it, distinct from the particular perceptions.* . . . But having thus loosen'd all our particular perceptions, when I proceed to explain the principle of connexion, which binds them together, and makes us attribute to them a real simplicity and identity; I am sensible that my account is very defective. . . . If perceptions are distinct existences, they form a whole only by being connected together. But no connexions among distinct existences are ever discoverable by human understanding. We only *feel* a connexion or determination of the thought, to pass from one object to another. . . . But all my hopes vanish, when I come to explain the principles, that unite our successive perceptions in our thought or consciousness. I cannot discover any theory, which gives me satisfaction on this head.

"In short there are two principles, which I cannot render consistent; nor is it in my power to renounce either of them, *viz. that all*

[9] Although Hume neglected relations, James credits him with properly insisting that relations must have *terms,* and that the terms which all relations ultimately relate are the "lively" ideas or sensations.

our distinct perceptions are distinct existences, and *that the mind never perceives any real connexion among distinct existences.* Did our perceptions either inhere in something simple and individual, or did the mind perceive some real connexion among them, there would be no difficulty in the case. For my part, I must plead the privilege of a sceptic, and confess, that this difficulty is too hard for my understanding." [10]

James's answer consists in rejecting *both* of these principles of which Hume had the power to renounce *neither:* our perceptions are *not* distinct, in the sense of being sharply sundered and mutually exclusive; and their connection is just as much *perceived* as their diversity.[11] A good empiricist would impute to perceptions such relations among them as are experienced, and these experienced relations are not external. The perceptions overlap and lead into one another. "Threads of sameness" run through them, and one may be "cognizant and appropriative" of another. We experience *a-qualified-by-b,* and *b-qualified-by-a,* and pass by a gradual transition from the first experience to the second. In denying this character to experience Hume was indifferent to facts in a manner unbecoming to a professed empiricist, and set the stage for all the absurdities and futilities of the associationism that followed. To escape these it is not necessary to resort to the hypothesis of a pure synthetic "ego," or to any other *hypothesis.* No ego or hypothetical being of this kind could do more than our given experience already does for us. It would be merely a name for what we already experience and therefore, to any scrupulous empiricist, an unjustifiable redundancy.[12]

The fact is that Hume had the remedy among his own stores, for he admitted that we do feel an identity and an easy transition among our ideas. He attributed it to "thought," "imagination," or "association," as an activity somehow distinguishable from the ideas themselves; whereas, argues James, it is all-pervasive and ineradicable. The ideas as given in experience wax and wane, and the waning of the one accompanies the waxing of another. Hume's notion of abrupt distinctness and irrelevance depends on a sunder-

[10] *Treatise of Human Nature,* 1874, Appendix to Bk. I, 559–60.

[11] *Principles,* I, 352. It is to be noted that in quoting the last paragraph of the above passage James omits the opening phrases, thus ignoring Hume's statement that the two principles are not "consistent." (*Cf.* also *C.E.R.,* 100.) It is clear that James regards the two principles as only too consistent.

[12] *Cf. Principles,* I, 352–4.

ing of the activity of the mind from its content. The content is, however, suffused with activity.

The Mills, father and son, followed in Hume's footsteps and reaped the thistle and the whirlwind. The son was divided between filial piety and the discoveries of his own inquiring mind. "Mr. Mill's habitual method of philosophizing," writes James, "was to affirm boldly some general doctrine derived from his father, and then make so many concessions of detail to its enemies as practically to abandon it altogether." It is unnecessary to follow in detail the probings of James's criticism, or the state of his hapless victim. "John Mill's concessions may be regarded as the *definitive bankruptcy of the associationist description* of the consciousness of self," and, in fact, of pretty much every application of associationism. Because of being "hazy" on "feelings of relation," his whole empiricism collapses. Mill's failure, like Hume's, was self-confessed, and "dismal." The question which troubles Mill most deeply is that of the unity of the self. The self is a "series of feelings," and yet is somehow aware of its past and its future. How can this awareness be just one of the feelings in its series? The fact has to be admitted, but it is "inexplicable" and "incomprehensible." [18]

Thus Hume and Mill, by their disregard of the constructive and selective activity of experimental thought, and by their blindness to the connective tissue that lies within the field of perceived existence, were forced to concede the bankruptcy of empiricism and exposed themselves to the Kantian criticism with its invocation of Egos and Absolutes. James, who saw the failure of Hume and Mill as clearly as did Green or any other idealist, proposed to meet the emergency in another way.

In the first place, he abandoned altogether the notion that mind is a *tabula rasa* or tablet of wax, on which impressions from abroad record themselves in the order of their happening. The classic formula for empiricism was *Nihil est in intellectu quod non prius fuerit in sensu.* James rejects empiricism so defined, and recognizes the importance of inborn traits and subjective interests. He would even have accepted Leibnitz's famous retort: *"Nisi intellectus ipse."* He is not on that account a renegade to empiricism, but rather a re-

[18] *Principles,* I, 357; Mill's *Logic,* 1872, I, 75; *Examination of Sir William Hamilton's Philosophy,* 1872, 248, quoted by W.J., *Principles,* I, 357, note.

definer of it. Intellect, according to this new empiricism, *faces* experience, and does not turn its back. Ideas are largely drawn from experience, it is true, but destinations and not origins are the important thing. Where one gets one's idea, whether it be innate or acquired, God-given or man-made, does not matter. The question is whether it is a good idea, and the test of that lies in its relevance to experience. James, in other words, is a normative and not a genetic empiricist. There is nothing in intellect which does not owe its significance, its existential reference, and its truth, to experience.

In the second place, experience itself, instead of being a series of distinct impacts, needing to be combined by some ulterior agency, yields connections as well as terms — journeys as well as stations. General ideas, which are indispensable to any experimental reasoning, are experiences of meaning or multiple reference. Causality and substance, in the sense of *belonging* together rather than merely coming together, are revealed in the confluence by which particulars are united in experience. The other dualities and antitheses — of time, of mind and matter, of subject and object, of identity and difference, all of these being aggravated into fatal maladies by the atomistic sensationalism of Hume and Mill — yield to the same treatment. In the associationist view, the whole system of relations from which the world (even the associationist world) derives its structure falls *between* experiences — and so, on experiential premises, falls *out*. The Kantians thereupon import this system of relations from abroad, or affirm it *a priori*. James finds this system of relations within experience, and given just as immediately and sensibly as the qualities or terms. Experience does not yield qualities and terms *to be* related, but qualities and terms *in* relation.

James does not forget the aspect of uniqueness. A thought or mental state as a whole never recurs. Its very *re*currence would make it different — not only numerically, but qualitatively. This perpetual novelty and irreducible uniqueness is, however, only one side of the picture. The other side is the overlapping and commingling of mental states, their assumption of the dual rôle of subject and object, their reference to one another, their joint reference to a common object, and their being jointly referred to by a common subject. So we must amend our initial statement and say that while mental states do not recur substantively, they do constantly

recur as adjectives. Or, while *a* does not in itself recur, nevertheless, *a* having occurred, *b-qualified-by-a* may also occur. In place of an empirical manyness bound together by a transcendental oneness, James proposes an empirical many-in-oneness. This coming of a *new* which is recognizable as in some sense the *old*, is the most essential of all essences. Experienced existence is *just that*. Such is James's empiricism. As his central insight it inevitably finds expression in his ultimate metaphysics.[14]

[14] *Cf. P.U.*, 326, 358; and Part VI, *passim*.

XXXVI

FROM IDEALISM TO PHENOMENALISM

I HAVE reserved for special consideration a problem which is allied with those which divide empiricists from their opponents, but which *may* divide empiricists from one another. I refer to the question of idealism and realism.

James fought two prolonged battles with idealism. The first of these battles was with Berkeleyan and the second with Kantian idealism. The issue was different in the two cases. Berkeleyan idealism was professedly empirical, and consisted in the doctrine that we learn from experience that all existence is mental. If we agree to accept as existent only what is or can be given immediately in sense perception, then we seem forced to conclude that only perceptions exist, together with the minds which give and receive them. Kantian idealism, on the other hand, argues that the order of nature can be known only provided we suppose it to be the product of a unifying thought. The order of nature is *thought into* it, and there must be an all-ordering mind to do the work. This is the Kantian answer to Hume, that answer which James believed was unnecessary because experience, faithfully discerned, provides its own unities. To this issue, which James fought out with Royce, Howison, and Bradley, we shall return later. It involved for James the all-important question of monism and pluralism.

On the first issue, concerning empirical or Berkeleyan idealism, James was long of a divided mind, and it was only towards the end of his career that he could pronounce unequivocally in favor of realism.[1] James's wrestlings with the question are recorded in many pages of unpublished notes, testifying to his alert sense of the difficulties involved, the exhaustive quality of his analysis, and the slow and tentative approach to his own position.

[1] Thus in 1904 he writes that "it is impossible to subscribe to the idealism of the English school," and that his "affinities" are rather with "natural realism." *E.R.E.*, 76.

As in the case of the issue between science and religion, so here also James's earliest influences seem to have been received from contemporary or recent sources. One of the earliest philosophical books which he studied, and which seems greatly to have influenced his approach to contemporary thought, was a book belonging to his father's library, namely, David Masson's *Recent British Philosophy.*[2] It is written in a sprightly style calculated to attract James, and throws a revealing light on the aspect which the philosophy of the 1860's wore to a man steeped in the British tradition. The author took a view of European philosophical development not unlike that of James himself, and it may well be that he planted the seed in James's mind. He challenged the judgment, affirmed abroad and accepted by Hutchison Stirling in England, that the line of universal thinkers passed from Hume through Kant to Hegel, these three being the "buckets" in which the "historic pabulum" was preserved.[3] To Masson, as to James, it seemed that Hume might find his heirs in Great Britain, and in order to safeguard the principle of apostolic succession he took pains to point out that the line had been preserved through the Scottish school, through the associationists, Hartley, Priestley, and James Mill, and latterly through John Stuart Mill and Spencer. He deplored, also in a manner suggestive of James, the tendency of British thought to move toward extremes, either toward the left of positivism and materialism, or towards the right of Hegelianism. His book was, in effect, a plea for some sort of philosophical centrism that should preserve the British tradition and save it from self-destruction. In James's notes of the time (about 1870) Masson's classifications constantly appear: his use of terms such as "experientialism" and "nihilism"; his recognition of the "psychological difference" that divides an empiricist like Mill from a transcendentalist like Carlyle or Hamilton, over the question of the nature of mind and the source of its ideas; and his recognition of the "cosmological difference" that divides a "natural realist" like Hamilton from a "constructive idealist" like Berkeley and Mill.

Another book which James found in his father's library was Samuel Bailey's *Letters on the Philosophy of the Human Mind.*[4]

[2] London, 1865. It was many years later, in May 1902, that he first met "the now venerable David Masson" in Edinburgh.

[3] *Op. cit.*, 17.

[4] Edition of 1855 (First Series) and 1858 (Second Series). This book, like Masson, appears in James's reading list for 1870. In *P.U.*, 5, he refers to it as "a book of real power."

Bailey, as well as Hamilton and Spencer, represented the view which Masson named "natural realism"; the view, namely, that the physical reality is immediately presented in perception, and that this external perception is prior to the reflective act by which the mind becomes aware of its own states.

In one of the earliest of James's notebooks (1870), thirty pages are devoted to this issue between idealism and realism. James carefully writes out all the arguments pro and con, and is evidently struggling to make up his mind. Taking as his point of departure the realistic views of Bailey, he first builds up the case for subjectivity and relativity. To Bailey's contention that the object is given in perception as distinct from the subject, James replies that while this may be the case, we are justified in overruling the immediate deliverance of consciousness by what we learn from an examination of it in other persons and in repeated instances: "We are [then] looking on the act of perception from the outside, asking ourselves what happens in the act, while Bailey plants himself within it and simply asks himself how it feels." It is like the difference between the man who, looking through yellow lenses, says, "The world is yellow," and the better informed observer who says, "It only looks so to you": —

"This doubly possible mode of considering one act is no more recondite than the double way in which we may either say, 'I feel hunger,' or, 'My body needs food.' Bailey acts as if to define a fact were to repeat it; as if to answer the question, what is a zebra? one must become forthwith a zebra — or at least refuse to say some such thing as 'striped soliped,' but cry continually 'zebra, zebra.' Now a perception, like any other fact in the world, may be subsumed under a generic concept, and so mediately understood, thought of and described. We may ask ourselves not only, '*How* is it when perception is?' but, '*What* is perception?' *i.e.*, what is it a case of. Replying solely to the former question, Bailey says, 'Perception is a subject's becoming aware of an object with its qualities.' And to the latter, the idealist says, 'It is that which happens when in a subject there is produced (by an object) a state of consciousness consisting in . . . becoming aware . . . as above.' But the terms 'object' and 'subject' in the two replies are not congruent, the idealist's 'subject and object' being given by a wide induction, and including under them Bailey's subject and object as particular cases."

The next entry was made on the following day: "When I began to write yesterday . . . I had an idea that a fundamental distinction would have to be made between an act of perception as immediate, and that act as represented; that Bailey stuck to the former, the idealists to the latter, but that the idealists were right, since any proposition about perception must be from the latter point of view. Perhaps I was wrong." During this day James was evidently reflecting on the fact that even if we assume the idealist view that alleged physical objects are only representations, nevertheless as representations they are objects distinct from the mental act that apprehends them. The act of knowledge never knows itself, though it may be known by a later act of the same subject: —

"Be your reflection as agile as it may, you can never make it seize upon its very self, never make the instant act of thinking become the thing thought of, any more than the man in Chamisso's [*Peter Schlemihl*] could overtake his pigtail by rotating. In other words, we never overtake the immediate in thought, the essence of whose form, consequently, is to posit an object distinct from itself. Thus the very form of thought implies a duality. While you think, you think of an object, be it thing or idea, and not of your instant thinking. *This* the idealist must admit, replying that he never meant to make the object outstrip the thought and coalesce with it, so altering the logical form of cognition, but only to modify it materially, making some of its apparently physical ingredients mental. . . .

"Logically analyzed . . . the *act* of knowledge always skips one step forwards and outside of the object of knowledge, which therefore remains an object ever. So far Bailey seems right, and also Spencer; with the salvo reserved for Mill that each act is potentially itself object, *i.e.*, may become object in the next instant. The advantage Mill is able to take of this salvo depends on his having previously, by a wide empirical induction . . . subordinated the qualities of the thing-object to those of the act-object, and proved the former to be merely involved in the latter as an incident of itself. This done, he says: 'We have left us the thought-act for *sole* object.' He ought to continue: 'This logically is as objective as a material world is.' "

There is, however, a serious weakness in Mill's idealism, namely, its powerlessness to prove the existence of other minds, and so to escape solipsism. Other people's sensations are not "possibilities of sensation" to *me*, but only inferences. If inference such as this,

which leads one to affirm what lies beyond the limits of one's experience, is acceptable in the case of other people's sensations, then why is it not equally acceptable in the case of that material cause of sensation which Mill's idealism denied? Assuming that another's mind may be inferred, then according to his own logic Mill was not justified in asserting its independent existence: "He ought only to affirm the inference and to call the mind a permanent possibility of inference." The upshot of this criticism is that the Berkeleyan idealist can escape solipsism only by arguments or assumptions that contradict his idealism.[5]

In the years 1883–1884 and 1884–1885, when, as we have seen, he gave a course on Locke, Berkeley, and Hume, James's lectures and notes were again full of the topic of idealism. The ambiguity which he had so often rehearsed in his notes on Bailey and Masson is now habitually referred to as a case of the "psychological fallacy." A given mind having an object before it, the psychologist thereupon addresses himself to the first object *plus* the first mind; which, thus taken together, form a second object. Supervening reflection may always find a new object of the same type, as when the psychologist thinks of his mind as thinking of his mind, and so on. The fallacy characteristic of psychologists lies in disregarding objects of the first type, and supposing all objects to be of the later, reflective types. It leads to the wholly unwarranted claim that whatever one thinks must be thought of as a thought — "a contemptible argument," says James. It is equally fallacious to argue, as Reid and Hamilton did, that we can only think of the object as "other than the thought." The world can be thought of as thought, as not thought, or without any reference whatsoever to thought. These considerations dispose altogether of the *a priori* argument for idealism or realism, and leave both of them as tenable hypotheses.

James then proceeds to argue for the idealistic *hypothesis* as against materialistic realism. In this argument he is strongly influenced by Lotze, whom he here calls the "deepest philosopher" of the day, and to whose *Microcosmus, Metaphysics* and *Logic* he makes frequent allusion; and by Royce, whose *Religious Aspect of Philosophy* had just appeared, containing the "entirely original" argument from error. The hypothesis of mind enjoys several advantages over the

[5] This is the consideration that drives James to realism in 1904; *cf. E.R.E.*, 76 ff.

hypothesis of matter. In the first place, it provides a positive notion of "being in itself," and so enables us to escape an endless peeling of the "infinite onion" of matter. It provides for a reality beyond the knower, but without the empty negations of the agnostic. It provides for "the reality of relations." These can be real "only in the mental way," and a spiritualistic metaphysics will place the terms and the relations on a par. In particular, this view will give objective standing to moral relations. Some things will be *really better* than others, owing to the purpose of an ideal intelligence.

But monism proved a stumblingblock. James was "staggered" by the difficulty of reconciling such an ideal intelligence with the existence of separate finite minds. Thus in 1885 he wrote to W. M. Salter: "I 've just been lecturing on idealism . . . and found myself unable to come to a conclusion. The truth is, all these preliminaries lead one along very well to *immaterialism.* But when it comes to a *positive* construction of idealism, such questions as how many spirits there are, how the divine spirit sends us our representations if we are separate from him, and how if we are only bits of him we can have separate consciousness at all, and a host of others, start up and baffle *me,* at least, completely."

Evidently as a part of his preparation for Philosophy 5, James wrote out a systematic statement of his views in the following note: —

IDEALISM. 1884

Berkeley and Ferrier[6] . . . wish to prove that the world *per se* can't *exist.* They do it by showing that we can't think it to exist *per se.* Not being able to think it so, of course we have no right to say it is so. The propositions by which they seek to show we can't think it so are true propositions enough in one sense, but not in the sense in which Berkeley and Ferrier use them. The true sense is that *we can't think* the world *per se* except so far as we *do* think it. The sense they smuggle in is that we can't think it except *under the form of* an object of thought, or except as an *idea.* The neatest phrase, perhaps, for expressing the ambiguity is: "The world can't be thought of except *as* thought of." The *as* here may refer to the act of thinking or to the object of the thinking. It may mean, *when* thought of; and be true, but insignificant. Or it may mean, *under the appearance of being thought of;* when it is significant, but false. . . .

[6] J. F. Ferrier, *Institutes of Metaphysic,* 1854. James also refers at this point to Bain, *Senses and the Intellect,* 1867, 375.

The primary or naïve consciousness takes its content as absolutely existent. The content is a world in which the consciousness *aufgeht* or is lost. . . . But consciousness will not remain naïve. Mistakes and disappointed expectations occur, whence the distinction between the thing as it is and our thought of it. . . . Suppose . . . I refuse to assume the veracity of consciousness. Whilst admitting that a world of things and persons, and a world of my own past thoughts, appear to be revealed to my instant thought as other than [itself], suppose I still persist in regarding them as mere illusions; contained, as it were, in the thought's pocket, very much as a vast perspective view may be a mere image breathed on the windowpane in which it appears. This instantaneous solipsism, doubting all reality but that of the punctiform instant, is impregnable. But like an impregnable fort from which no sally can be made, we may if we like, turn our backs upon it with impunity. Let us now do so, and assume with Spencer that . . . a consciousness not self-transcendent in form is inconceivable; let us . . . not only admit this to be an irreversibly true description of the form of all consciousness, but let us believe that this form is veracious. We thus adopt the belief that an independent world exists of whose existence our instant perception is truly cognitive . . . the object, whatever it be, is numerically other than the act by which we know it.

"Whatever it may be!" There 's the rub. For, "what is it?" becomes the next inevitable problem. Experience on experience only can help us to decide. The only thing we committed ourselves to irretrievably at the outset was that something other than what cognizes it, other than the instant subject, is there. But that may be a world of matter, or it may be a world of other spirits, or, again, it may be nothing more than the past or future thoughts of the same single thinking subject; or, again, it may be a quality wholly unknowable. Defined in any of these ways, though some of them seem to make it *materially* subjective, the reality always alike . . . remains logically or *formally* objective to the thinking act. Nevertheless if we call it past or other thoughts — "facts" of thought — we are "idealists." Idealism, in short, is just as consistent as "realism" with the objective form of our cognitive consciousness, and its veracity. The only question is, does that consciousness lead to the one "ism" or the other?

Now, historically two methods of proving idealism have been tried. The first is the deductive method, which taking a single "fact," has sought to show by analyzing it, that from its very *form,* realism could not be true. The "fact" is never *given but in a consciousness.* . . . But this kind of proof meets an adversary in a realism which uses with equal effect the same method.[7] . . . This realism

[7] Hamilton, Bailey, J. Cunningham, etc. Cunningham wrote *A New Theory of Knowing and Known,* 1874.

takes a "thought," just as its rival takes a "fact," and shows that it is always a thought of something other than itself, which something given *in* thought, is always given *as* other. Each school starts thus with the reality believed by the other, and finding that it necessarily refers beyond itself, takes *what it refers to* to be the final reality. One emphasizes, of the total phenomenon, the "in thought," the other emphasizes the "as other," and plainly enough they may chase each other round the charmed circle without either getting tired first. . . . Both must admit the minimal fact to be the full phenomenon — *i.e.*, the-object-given-to-the-subject. But they must go on to see whether the object thus given be itself only more subjectivity, more phenomenality, more experience than the instant; or whether it be something of an entirely different quality from this, something *materially* real, objective.

Thus James's examination of idealism leads him, aided and abetted by Renouvier, to the view that subject and object are on an equal footing, as the two complementary aspects of every "phenomenon." This movement of James's thought is also recorded in another manuscript of the same period: —

PHENOMENALISM [1884?]

Spencer's synthetic construction of subject and object means one of four things:

1. It may mean that these words have no distinctive *quale*, but are merely abbreviative epithets for designating the *marks* by which the subject and object aggregates are massed together and separated from each other. . . . This view may be called classificatory idealism, or rather nihilism. Starting with Hume, it has been most clearly expressed by Bain and Chauncey Wright.

2. Objectivity and subjectivity have a *quale* . . . when the marks have reached a certain complexity. It is a different sort of feeling from that of the marks . . . but when it is once formed seeming to explain them and give them intelligibility. . . . Subjective in its origin, it cannot be held to prove the existence of any thing *ultra mentem*. It is a category. This view is Kantian idealism.

3. [This view] starts from the second; and, finding how naturally, if we *suppose* the objective reality as the source of the marks, all the particulars are explained by the supposition, says the truth of the supposition becomes thus irresistibly probable. . . . This is *hypothetical realism*. It obviously involves a conscious act of faith. *Really*, this is Spencer's view. . . .

4. The synthetic construction of objectivity and subjectivity may mean that even in the most rudimentary sensation there is a dim

duality, a duplex aspect: what one may call an "immanent" side (which constitutes the fact that it *is* actually a sensation), and a transcendent side (which is the reference to something as known through the sensation). The sensation in this view becomes the *form* of knowledge, the reference becomes its *matter* or *content,* and the form and the matter are inseparable. Even the minimum of feeling has them. . . . I myself incline more and more to some such view as this, and I shall now proceed to explain it a little more fully.

I am led to it on the one hand by the utter failure, as it seems to me, of all sensationalists to explain *cognition.* . . . Into what possesses simply, at the outset, its own intrinsic physical existence, so to call it, they pretend to have injected by their manipulations a capacity to tell something about extrinsic existence. . . . And in trying to deduce knowledge from pure sensation it seems to me sensationalists always surreptitiously introduce it ready-made at some step in the process, or else utterly fail to account for it at all. Naked come they into the world, and if honest they ought to go naked out of it. But they always steal the clothes of the noölogists, and there is no doubt it takes some subtlety to strip them when once draped therewith. . . . I go so far as to say I don't see how mere feelings can hatch from their midst even the *idea* of an extrinsic existence unless it lay encapsulated and embedded in them from the first. . . .

Now I say . . . you assume it, you beg it, you do it at your risk. So far I agree with Kant. But I agree with him still further: he said he assumed it for practical reasons. . . . I complain of the Kantian school for this, — that, although right in their willingness to postulate it, they don't begin to postulate it at the right moment. They deny that the simplest sensation contains a transcendency, posits something beyond itself as its matter, which we must simply adopt and submit to. They say this reference is born later . . . and thrown over the sensation . . . by a productive activity of the mind. I deny this because it seems to me artificial. . . . I am utterly ignorant of any *act* of inferring transcendent objectivity, and clothing with it sensations which till then had merely an immanent, intrinsic or simple (as distinguished from dual) existence. All that I ever am conscious of is . . . this: *something* is, and this something has some kind of quality of its own, whether dim or distinct — if dim I inevitably find myself trying, expecting or aspiring to get it more distinct. This "something" is what I call the transcendent aspect of my representation, its matter, what is represented in it. The last and shortest word for it is the "truth." At all times, if conscious at all, my consciousness contemplates a truth. It *points! être en arrêt:* "There!" it says; or at the very minimum . . . "Ha! what?" And the future answers what, but the question posits that *est aliquid veri.* "Truth" and "opinion" are thus the two aspects,

and the reality is the couple, as Bain [8] says, — the object-subject, or better *the phenomenon*. . . .

The immediate instant in consciousness always involves an object other than itself. . . . Thought with something given in it, that is the primordial irreductible datum which we can't escape from — representative and represented, as Renouvier calls them. The dim duality is given from the start; the faintest sensation has it, and need not wait for the mind to come and apply any "category" to it. . . . All is sensation or all is thought, as you please to call it. The tissue of experience or truth is woven of a continuous material. And the only difference I am able to see between different portions of it is the difference between the lesser and partial, and the greater and more complete. What we *call* sensation is its minimum, which confessedly waits to be interpreted for more material, just as a given stitch in an embroidery is ambiguous, — may stand for the neck of a horse or the branch of a tree until the other stitches come in and show it to belong to some part of the figure of a man. We *must* all admit as a fact of observation, and to me it seems *the* fact of psychology, that experience (to call it by the name of the objective aspect) or thought (to call it by the subject aspect, — the two aspects forming the object-subject or *the phenomenon,* which is the complete reality) is continuous, hangs together, won't stay chopped up. . . . We see accordingly, nowadays, a number of writers coming to admit, as the ultimate truth, being with these two logical aspects.[9] . . . Whether it is the ultimate truth remains to be seen. I for one am not contented with the duplicity . . . and look for future simplification.[10] . . .

The gist of all I have said can be summed up in very few sentences: there is no being but what is given by thought other than itself, there is no thought which does not imply being other than itself. Thus, on the one hand, the absolute physical world of the materialist, and . . . on the other, the absolute *cogitationes sunt* of the idealist, are alike denied. This dual aspect exists wherever there is consciousness at all. If you say it is not apparent in the earlier stages . . . I reply that it is quite true, but that this potentiality is the very essence of even the earliest representation. That representation is continuous with what follows it. Sensationalists vainly try to give it atomic independence. Such segmentations are arbitrary. The "sensation" is an abstraction. All that we really

[8] A. Bain, *The Emotions and the Will*, 1875, 561, 574–86.

[9] Hodgson, Renouvier, Bain, Lewes, Taine(?), Grote. [W.J.'s note.]

[10] In a note of the early period, James writes: "I should say the *rudiment* of thought was always of an object, in the logical sense; but, in the material sense, something in which the discrimination of sub- and ob-ject had not yet been affected — a neutral experience, a phenomenon, or, as Hume says, an impression and accretion until, *inter alia,* the notions of inward and outward or subject and object materially considered, had been evolved."

experience is the full body of thought between whose joints there is nowhere room to pass your amputating knife. And it is precisely in not violating this truth that I consider my definition to be superior to the sensation bricks of most authors. . . .

Does perhaps the backbone of the objection to atomic sensationalism lie in the affirmation of continuity, of which the "double aspect" business would only be one illustration. Thus, when I say it is impossible for "truth" to exist unless with the immediate corrective and supplement "as thought," or for "thought" to exist except "of truth," I assert a transcendency in both terms. The being of each postulates, grasps over into, the being of something other. The transcendency here seems to be of a special sort, that between object and subject. But may it not be simply a case of the *general law of transcendency,* that no feeling is complete, but turns for determination to what follows? Determination *as feeling* is historically pretty late to arrive. Before it does arrive, however, a mighty process of general transcendency has been going on.

On phenomenalistic premises reality can no longer be distinguished as that which lies outside the mind. James suggests that "it may mean only the absolutely circular coherence of phenomena." Or, "the illusory phenomenon is the perishing one; the veracious is the enduring one." The same topic is discussed in a note of 1884: "Actual existence belongs to phenomena of both groups [real and false]. But that of the real group is reduplicated by something which corroborates it, which says it *ought* to be . . . is *meant* . . . called for, etc. . . . This means that the system of real representations is not formed as a heap, but that its parts are connected and hang one by each other. False ones get no foothold and drop off. In short, there is a transcendency and continuity in the reals, whilst the false ones have no continuity other than that of time. But is the notion of a system possible except as a *mental* system? Can the 'call' for a particular real at a particular instant by the other reals be conceived otherwise than as a demand by the *mind* entertaining the other reals? . . . Those who must answer this question negatively are forced to the notion of an Over-thought behind the phenomenal real, the nature of which is to force these phenomena upon us." [11]

This last proposal James called "rational objective idealism," or "theistic idealism," as distinguished from "solipsistic" and "plural

[11] "Idealism. 1884"; cited above, 578.

subjective" idealism. It suggests not only Berkeley's conception of a God communicating his designs to man through sensible perception, but also Royce's Absolute, which was beginning at this time to loom portentously on James's horizon. In a circular apparently prepared for distribution among his students in Philosophy 5 (1883–1885), James summarized this idealistic hypothesis, and stressed its failure to yield any moral or religious guarantee: —

IDEALISM

. . . This theistic idealism, without assuming any unintelligible matter *in se,* explains the physical world as a phenomenon intended for us all to think just as we do think it — intended also to be seemed by us *more truly* thought in certain ways than in others. Thus, the distinction between reality and moonshine is just as binding on idealistic as on other principles. If, comparing the bare world of molecular physics with the rich world of instinctive perception, sentiment, and æsthetics, we decide that the Power that sends them both, means that we should view the latter as moonshine, we are as complete materialists as if we were not idealists at all, and had no notion of an inclusive Mind. We are making of *It* a Materialist.

Materialism really means nothing more than setting more store by the mechanical than by the sentimental aspects of things. Now from the mere notion of an Over-soul, we can not deduce what it thinks we should do in this respect. We are still forced to consult the details of the world as it comes to our mind, and see into what shape they settle easiest, and then suppose that *that* is the shape meant by God for us. They naturally settle into a system of molecular physics producing, through a brain, cognitions of themselves *plus* sentiments, emotions, secondary qualities, and what not. But still the question remains: "Is the thinking attached to the brain *for the sake of cognizing* the molecular physics? Or are the molecular physics and the brain there *for the sake of arousing* the sentiments?"

When James published his *Principles of Psychology* in 1890 he explicitly disclaimed any philosophical settlement of the question of idealism. He assumed a world containing "thoughts and feelings" which know the external physical world, and which can be correlated with brain states which form a part of that physical world. He professed to adhere, for reasons of scientific method, to "a *thoroughgoing dualism*" between "mind knowing and thing known." "The dualism of Object and Subject and their preëstablished har-

mony are what the psychologist as such must assume, whatever ulterior monistic philosophy he may, as an individual who has the right also to be a metaphysician, have in reserve." [12] James always had such a philosophy in reserve. The parts of the *Principles* dealing with this subject were frequently rewritten, and it is evident that at one time he thought of introducing his revision of dualism. He was deterred, no doubt, by the fact that the discussion needed to justify that revision would have diverted him from his immediate psychological task, and by the fact that his views on the subject were not sufficiently stabilized.

When James spoke of having a "monistic philosophy" in reserve he meant to refer to the phenomenalism just set forth, or to some further development of it. Such a development was clearly indicated: the phenomenon or "representation" of Renouvier construed as *both* subject and object, was to become the phenomenon of "pure experience" construed as *neither*. But James *won his way* to this development only through mighty wrestling with his idealistic contemporaries. To this struggle we shall return after we have introduced those other contemporaries to whom James chiefly looked for comfort, and whom he regarded as his leaders and forerunners in the new empiricism.

[12] Preface, and I, 218, 220.

XXXVII

EUROPEAN CONTACTS IN 1882–1883

In its effect on his philosophical development the most important of all James's European adventures was that which lasted from August 1882 to March 1883. It was a period of domestic anxiety and bereavement, culminating in the death of both of his parents. Such was the intimacy of the family that no one could suffer without reverberations of sympathy, solicitude, and admonition throughout the entire circle. James had taught continuously for eight consecutive years and had written numerous articles. But this time rest and health were subordinate motives. Nor did he go to Europe because he had run out of ideas — quite the contrary; he was eager to write, and was seeking an escape from the interruptions by which his time was being fruitlessly dissipated. He did not find this escape, and the amount of writing which he succeeded in doing was small. But in Europe his interruptions were of a more profitable sort, consisting mainly of personal contacts which both stimulated his thinking and fortified his self-confidence. His articles and his letters had made him known, but now he was to meet philosophy in the home of its origin and measure himself in talk with its eminent living protagonists.

There were three German philosophers of his time to whom James was especially indebted, G. T. Fechner, Hermann Lotze, and Ernst Mach.[1] Although Fechner was still living, James does not appear to have met him at this time, and as his influence did not fully ripen until a later period we shall return to him in connection with James's final metaphysical synthesis. Lotze had died in the preceding year, described by James as the "deepest philosopher" of the day, and "the most exquisite of contemporary minds."[2] Like James, he had un-

[1] I reserve for later consideration those who, like Stumpf, influenced James primarily on the psychological side. *Cf.* below, II, 59–71, Ch. LXII.

[2] *Cf.* above, 577, and below, 766. James acquired Lotze's *Medicinische Psychologie* in Boston in 1867, and after that date bought, read, and annotated virtually all of this writer's works. James used Lotze as a text in Philos. 1 in 1890–1, and

dertaken to reconcile the new science with the old moral and religious earnestness; unlike James, he was a system builder on the grand scale. In his final reckoning with monism, James selected Lotze's proof of monism for special refutation. But while he rejected the argument,[3] he esteemed the man. He was moved by Lotze's moral eloquence. He was attracted to one who could write well in spite of being a German philosopher. And, waiving the fundamental issue between pluralism and monism, there were many doctrinal bonds. James's early and persistent rejection of associationism, in what he called its "nihilistic" implications, certainly owed something to Lotze, who had distinguished merely external conjunctions from the "inward kinship" of things that "belong" together.[4] Again, there was the appeal of panpsychism,[5] to which James never wholly yielded, but to whose attractions he was never insensible. Of even greater potency was Lotze's notion that worth or validity[6] is a radical principle, irreducible to existence; that, in fact, things *are* what they are *worth*. Here were intimations of pragmatism and of many ideas dear to James's mind. Finally, Lotze, like James, was willing that faith, prompted by conscience and feeling, should pronounce the last word.

It was during this trip that James first made the acquaintance of Ernst Mach, with whom he maintained a sympathetic contact for many years. There is a certain parallel between the careers of the two men. Just as James had begun as a biologist, so Mach began as a physicist at the University of Prague, and was called to a chair of philosophy at Vienna in 1895. Like James he attached himself to the British empirical tradition, and it is said that his appointment at Vienna was justified to the clerical authorities on the ground that his philosophy closely resembled that of *Bishop* Berkeley! Like James, Mach was not deterred by academic barriers from importing philosophy into science and science into philosophy. His *Analysis*

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in Philos. 3 in 1893–4 and 1897–8. For Lotze's influence on W.J.'s psychological development *cf.* below, II, 88–9. A special study of the relations of Lotze and W.J. is being made by Prof. O. F. Kraushaar and will shortly appear.

[3] *P.U.*, 55–62.

[4] *C.E.R.*, 99–100. This citation of Lotze (1879) is the earliest reference to that philosopher in W.J.'s printed works.

[5] That things *in* themselves are things *for* themselves; or that feeling is the true inwardness of reality.

[6] Lotze's term is *gelten*, commonly translated *"to be valid."* *Cf. E.R.E.*, 59, 167; *P.U.*, 377. For English readers Lotze's doctrines are most accessible in his *Microcosmus*, English trans., 1885.

of Sensation (*Beiträge zur Analyse der Empfindungen*), the best known of his works, was both a contribution to psychology and a precursor of James's doctrine of pure experience. He was a notable, and to James authoritative, proponent of the principle of economy in scientific description, and in his last work approached closely to the pragmatist position.[7] Not long after returning to America in 1883, James received the following letter: —

Prague, Jan. 29, 1884[8]

Most honored Colleague, —

I am returning your paper ("The Sentiment of Rationality") with many thanks, and enclose with it two short occasional lectures which I have recently given. I have had your fine paper copied inasmuch as I have not yet been able to study it thoroughly. . . . I hope soon to be able to send you my book: *Beiträge zur Analyse der Empfindungen*, and I shall be very glad if some considerable part of it commands your assent. With the assurance that what you sent me, and your letter as well, rejoiced me exceedingly, I remain, with most respectful greetings, yours very truly,

E. MACH

P.S. Your fine experiments on rotary dizziness[9] you will find already taken account of in my new book.

In France and Belgium James saw Renouvier, Delbœuf, and Pillon, who will concern us later. Taine did not die until 1893, but there is no evidence that James manifested any interest in him at this time. Taine's philosophical influence, like that of positivism generally, had declined in France. To James he was primarily the author of *De l'Intelligence*[10] and of the *Philosophie de l'art*, both of which works had been read and digested some years before.

The greater part of James's sojourn abroad was spent in England. Taken together with his teaching of Locke, Berkeley, and Hume, for two years after his return to Harvard, this was the time of that immersion in the British philosophical tradition, whose effects have been anticipated in earlier chapters. England abounded

[7] The *Erkenntnis und Irrtum* of 1905.

[8] Translated from the German by the author. For other letters from Mach to W.J., *cf.* below, II, 341, 463, 593.

[9] *Bq.*, 1882–3.

[10] *Cf.* above, 559.

in thinkers who continued the tradition of empiricism. Of those who had developed it in the direction of naturalism and positivism, W. K. Clifford had died in 1879, and Huxley was in full vigor. These two men were James's favorite examples of the unconscious passion of science. In the name of that "science" to which they were so intensely loyal they exhorted men to renounce their emotions. But, "How shall I say," asked James, "that knowing fact with Messrs. Huxley and Clifford is a better use to put my mind to than feeling good with Messrs. Moody and Sankey?" [11]

The following letter which James received from his friend Child throws light on his English visit as viewed by one who remained at home. On January 31, 1883, James had written to his wife describing a visit to Mrs. Clifford: "[She] talked a great deal about her husband . . . and when her two little girls came in to say goodnight, and whispered to her their 'prayer,' and I asked what it was, she replied it was this: 'Dear Mama, may I never forget dear Papa, and help everybody, and grow up into a good woman, and always speak the truth as long as I live.' "

[Cambridge], March 11 [1883]

Dearest Will, —

Having heard some considerable scraps of your letters read by Mrs. Alice after dinner, enough both to give the desire for more and to acquaint me at least with the names of the people you have been meeting, it is unavoidable that I should say a word in reply. I am very much cheered with the progress you are making. The dark days here suggested treble darkness in London, and I think my spirits sank under the thought of your gloomy environment (no philosophical *Nebensinn*). Spring already shows in our tree-tips. I know that thrushes have been singing these six weeks in London and primroses peeping almost as long in the country. We have a fairly thick covering of ice still. But our sun is worth four of yours and we can see well till six o'clock.

[11] *C.E.R.*, 66. For the most important reference to Huxley and to Clifford, the "delicious *enfant terrible*," *cf. W.B.*, 8. Clifford's scientific creed is set forth in "The Ethics of Belief" in *Lectures and Essays*, 1879, II. James reviewed this work at length for the *Nation* in 1879 (*cf. C.E.R.*, 137), and, while he conceded its brilliancy, complained of its thinness and inconclusiveness. Clifford was also to James a favorite example of the "mind-stuff theory," and both Clifford and Huxley of the "automaton" theory.

I had no idea that there were so many psychologies in England — or say "gists," if you please. They seem to be as thick as politicians. But no matter how many there be, I shall consider the truth as fully attained, and indisturbably fixed when I get your manual into my hands. I presume that there will be no difficulty in getting [it] into my head, with your private comments. As I was saying, it cheered me very much to hear Alice-William report good progress. The flitting to Florence for an opinion by Davidson [12] causes (Alice says) much wonder to Harry, and I confess to a little myself. Perhaps you only want to be accurate about something which he can tell, but much as I value Davidson in his place, I should as soon go to a Baptist church in East Cambridge for inspiration: therefore I infer that your object is to get his or somebody's else's views for statement.

I can't tell you a word about the College. I went to a meeting of the Faculty last week (it is an afternoon bit now) and Goodwin, Gurney, Bowen, Dunbar, and you being absent, I thought it an extremely second-rate body. Palmer and Shaler [13] and other sentimentalists seem to give the tone and direct the legislation. I was (as usual perhaps) only irritated and irritating, or I might say in addition a little contemptuous and very much discouraged. But I should not advise my estimates to be accepted without revision, and know that you are in no danger of doing such a thing. I am entirely despondent about the world and think one can see what it is coming to. Poetry is dead and science cocky. Science in killing poetry does not see that it destroys all its own interest. If there is nothing but accidents, I have no care to know about them. For example, in our *Science,* established by Moses King and edited by Scudder, there is a recent discovery of the parasites of the elephant. That is a fair specimen of science, I suppose, and as important as the peculiar woes of the heart of man. The poor twentieth century! Why did n't we end at 1000, as everybody thought we were to do! There is perhaps a mitigation in the wide study of Shakespeare that is going on. Now had you been visiting London in his day he would have thought it a favor to get a word from you: but when you see Huxley, who has not, I suppose, one touch of poetry in his

[12] For W.J.'s relations with Thomas Davidson during this period, *cf.* below, 745–53.

[13] W. W. Goodwin was professor of Greek and N. S. Shaler professor of paleontology.

whole being, and is therefore a member, however eminent, of an inferior class of beings, you find him rather looked up to.

I would give a good deal to know how Harry sees Englishmen. I have myself not much better knowledge of them than of the ancient Assyrians. There must be a good many kinds too. My heart bounded when Alice read of your evening with a French family. Oxford dinners in hall I really think don't affect my imagination. I should very much like to know what else is going on at Oxford. O! for my dear Clough again![14] He was an Oxford man. If there are such still, then I won't mind the dinners. But Clough recalls all my losses — your father and mother, Jane Norton,[15] and others. But for children, surely a man of fifty could not be induced to stay longer. *There's* the respect that makes calamity of so long life.[16] Wonderful, wonderful! What Alice told of Mrs. Clifford with the children touched me much. She seemed to assent to Clifford's epitaph. They might at least have found a better in the book of Job. Mrs. Clifford will be converted from Cliffordism if she goes on that way. — But, dearest Will, what a rigmarole, how despicable! Mind you, *don't* write to me. I would not read if you did. Ever your loving

F. C.

Spencer lived until 1902, and was in these early '80s heroically working towards the completion of his "Synthetic Philosophy." But his great books had long since appeared and his vogue had passed its crest. For James he had served the purpose of a teething ring, and was outlived as an incident of his philosophical infancy. In any case James did not make any attempt to see Spencer. Samuel Bailey, who, like Spencer, belonged to a past epoch in James's development, had died in 1870. There were three others who had recently passed from the scene and whose acquaintance he might otherwise have sought, as their attempts to revive the British tradition were in certain respects similar to his own. J. F. Ferrier (1808–1864) was to James a modernized Berkeley, whom he valued for his style, and as "the most brilliant of anti-nominalistic writers," but whom he singled out as a notorious exponent of the

[14] Arthur Hugh Clough, poet and writer, had died in 1861.
[15] Jane Norton, elder sister of C. E. Norton, died in 1877.
[16] *Hamlet*, Act. III, Sc. i.

false doctrine that all cognition is attended by self-consciousness.[17] From John Grote's (1813–1866) study of Ferrier in his *Exploratio Philosophica,* James derived the distinction of which he himself made so much, between "knowledge by acquaintance" and "knowledge about." In December 1884, a paper by James was read before the British Aristotelian Society on "The Function of Cognition," in which he quoted extensively from Grote, and commended the author to his hearers as one "too seldom quoted." [18]

G. H. Lewes, who died in 1878, had been discussed by James in two book reviews.[19] He was applauded as one who followed empiricism without falling into skepticism or nihilism. His *method* of avoiding these alternatives was also similar to that of James: both men affirmed identities and continuities where other empiricists found only manifoldness and irrelevance. But James felt that Lewes won his victory too cheaply. The latter affirmed that the effect was the same as the cause, cognition the same as its object, the subject the same as the predicate, and the psychical the same as the physical. He made a free use of that device so popular in recent times, the reduction, namely, of differences of entity to differences of relation or "aspect." He realized and often vividly described the rôle of feelings of relation, as, for example, in accounting for the sense of a word's meaning.[20] But on the whole Lewes did not seem to James to make *good* his affirmations, in terms either of perception or of logic. And he wore out James's patience by his "diffuseness and damnable iteration." [21]

Alexander Bain, although he lived until 1903, was James's senior by twenty-four years and was regarded by him as one of the elder psychologists, to be cited as an authority and to be attacked as an exponent of the associationist tradition. James referred to him in 1876 as (with Spencer) one of "the two philosophers of indubitably the widest influence in England and America since Mill's death." [22] With Hume, Mill, and Chauncey Wright, he belonged,

[17] *Principles,* I, 274, 475. James appears to have inherited this criticism of Ferrier, as he did his copy of Ferrier's *Institutes of Metaphysic,* from his father.

[18] James was in America at the time of the meeting and the paper was read by one of his friends. It was published first in *Mind,* X (1885), afterwards in *M.T.* (*cf.* 10–2).

[19] *Problem of Life and Mind,* for the *Atlantic,* in 1875, and *Physical Basis of Mind,* for the *Nation,* in 1877.

[20] *Cf.* W.J.'s citation in *Principles,* I, 270. James often found in Lewes's works items of shrewd psychological observation: *cf.* Index to the *Principles.*

[21] *C.E.R.,* 40.

[22] *C.E.R.,* 26–7.

in James's eyes, to the school of the skeptics and nihilists, who refused to be disturbed by the sheer arbitrariness and manyness of facts. But at the same time James drew upon him heavily in 1876–1879 in his thinking and writing on the motives of philosophizing, and later in his examination of the psychology of thought. The mental satisfaction derived from unity, and from the assimilation of the unknown to the familiar, the method of selecting attributes which will bring different things into the same class, the essentially active character of belief — these were all matters of importance to James, for which he gave credit to Bain.[23]

The Society for Psychical Research was founded in England in February 1882, and during James's visit to England the president was Henry Sidgwick. This was the beginning of James's interest in the subject and of his acquaintance with this remarkable man, whose "long-winded" criticism of Spencer's *Data of Ethics* he had read in the previous year.[24] The correspondence between James and Sidgwick was ordinarily connected with psychical research, or consisted in personal greetings and brief acknowledgments of books exchanged. In 1899, through James's influence, Sidgwick was invited to lecture at Harvard, but declined. During James's illness abroad in 1899 and 1900 there were repeated invitations, which could not be accepted, to visit the Sidgwicks in Cambridge. And then Sidgwick himself suddenly fell ill and died of cancer. The following was written two weeks before his death in reply to an expression of friendly solicitude written to Mrs. Sidgwick: —

London, June 11, 1900

My dear James, —

A line to say how much I value your sympathy. Five weeks ago I thought I might reckon on the average life which statistical tables allot to a man of sixty-two. Now I am struggling for a remnant under invalid conditions which may be long enough to enable me to bring out at the best the most important things I have to say on Philosophy and which ought not to have remained so long unsaid in a systematic form. Whether this will be granted to me no one can yet know, but I am assured that the signs so far are favourable. Illness tends to make one very selfish but it has not

[23] *C.E.R.*, 102, 125–7; *Principles*, II, 296, 322, note. For James's use of Bain in the *Principles*, *cf.* below, II, 55–6.

[24] *Mind*, V (1880). *Cf.* below, 790.

yet affected my keen longing for the complete recovery of your health, both for your sake and the world. My thoughts will be continually with you. Good-bye, my dear James. Your wife will know that we both value her sympathy. With best wishes I am, affectionately yours,

HENRY SIDGWICK

That there was little or no philosophical intercourse between James and Sidgwick is surprising, in view of their personal attachment and their community of ideas. Sidgwick, like James, criticized the traditional empiricism for confusing the genesis of ideas with their meaning and proof;[25] like James, he refused to look for relief in the direction of Kantian idealism; and as James inspired the modern pragmatic and realistic movements in America, so Sidgwick gave the impetus to the new school of realism at Cambridge.[26] Their philosophical aloofness was no doubt due to their division of interest, Sidgwick being largely preoccupied with ethics, James with psychology and metaphysics; and to their profound difference of temperament, Sidgwick being as deliberate, rigorous, and critical as James was enthusiastic and speculative. James would have appreciated the full flavor of the feeling which led Leslie Stephen to say, in describing a meeting of the Metaphysical Society: "Sidgwick displayed that reflective candour which in him becomes at times a little irritating. A man has no right to be so fair to his opponents."[27]

The Metaphysical Society of London was one of the many groups which existed in England at this time for the purpose of uniting good fellowship and philosophy. The Aristotelian Society had been founded in 1880, and the Metaphysical Club was designed to have a more informal and intimate character. At its meetings Sidgwick met Gladstone, Manning, Huxley, Clifford, Mivart, Croom Robertson, Martineau, and others.[28] The Grote Club, presided over by John Grote, who had been Sidgwick's predecessor in the Knightbridge Professorship of Moral Philosophy at Cambridge, included J. E. B. Mayor, the classicist, and J. Venn, the logician. Then

[25] *Cf.* Sidgwick's "The Incoherence of Empirical Philosophy," published at just this time, in *Mind*, VII (1882).

[26] *Cf.* J. H. Muirhead, *Contemporary British Philosophy*, First Series, 1924, 313.

[27] F. W. Maitland, *Life and Letters of Leslie Stephen*, 1906, 333–4.

[28] For a good account of this famous society, *cf.* L. Stephen, *Life of Sir James Fitzjames Stephen*, 1895, 358 ff.

there was the "Ad Eundem," the "Eranus," the "Synthetical Society," "The Soul," "The Apostles," each promoting for its zestful day the ineradicably characteristic British sport of intellectual combat.[29] "The Tramps," under the paternalistic leadership of Leslie Stephen, combined this sport with exercise and fresh air. The following was written by A. J. Butler and preserved by Stephen: —

THE BALLADE OF THE SUNDAY TRAMPS

If weary you grow at your books
  Or dyspeptical after you've dined,
If your wife makes remarks on your looks,
  If in short you feel somewhat inclined
  For fresh air and a six hours' grind
And good metaphysical talk —
  With a party of writers in *Mind*
  You should go for a Sabbath day's walk.

Leave the town by the earliest train
  (In your Bradshaw betimes underlined)
With umbrella in case it should rain,
  Enduring of sun and of wind —
  'T is no harm if they toughen your rind —
Your boots you 'll remember to caulk,
  Your pockets with sandwiches lined,
  You are good for a twenty-mile walk.

Though surely we all by our rule
  Are as peripatetics defined,
Yet each philosophical school
  Is here with each other combined:
  Idealists, realists, find
Representatives here, as we stalk
  In the breezes, like them unconfined,
  Over hills of clay, gravel, or chalk.

Envoy

So, Prince, leave your troubles behind,
  And resolving for one day to baulk
Black care, with the writers in *Mind*
  Go forth for your Sabbath day's walk.

A. J. B., April 3, 1881 [30]

[29] L. Stephen, "Henry Sidgwick," *Mind, N.S.*, X (1901).
[30] Maitland, *op. cit.*, 358–9, 363. There is also a good account of "The Tramps" in James Sully, "Sir Leslie Stephen." *Atlantic*, XCV (1905)

Speaking of Leslie Stephen, his biographer, Maitland, goes on to say: "He was to be seen to greater advantage in a small group that contained no cardinal or 'eminent scientist.' Eight of the Tramps, calling themselves the Scratch Eight, used to dine together and talk philosophy. Unfortunately it is the least philosophic member of the crew who here records its existence. A phrase from an essay on rowing, about 'delightful intimacies' formed in the process of 'talking nonsense and mistaking it for philosophy,' comes back to my mind at this inopportune moment. But it was good to hear a discussion between Stephen and Croom Robertson, or Edmund Gurney — I name the dead — and he would have said that he gained much thereby."

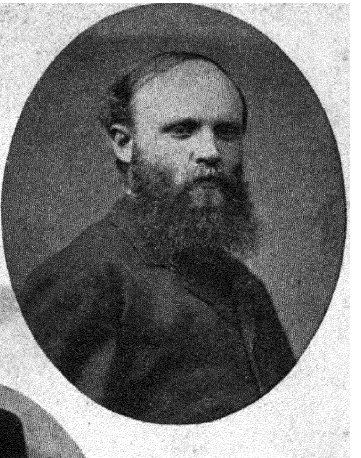
Writing at this time to his friend Thomas Davidson, James said: "I 'm getting into the thick of philosophic society here." At the Aristotelian Society he met the Right Honorable Richard B. Haldane, the afterwards distinguished Chancellor of the Exchequer and War Secretary: "I went to the Aristotelian Society last night and had an instructive time. A . . . pupil of Caird was there, Haldane by name, and for all the world you would have thought it was dear old Palmer talking — same unrivaled fluency, same blamelessness of diction, same purity of thought." [81] But the nucleus of James's "philosophic society" was the Scratch Eight, of which he became the ninth member. The first meeting which he attended is described in the following extract from a letter to his wife: —

Dec. 16, 1882

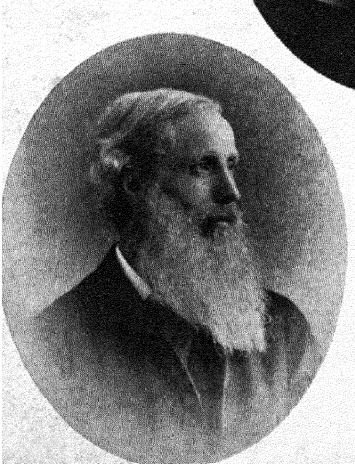
Last night I dined at Gurney's with the "Scratch Eight," spoken of in the invitation I enclosed to you. Gurney himself, whose *Power of Sound,* which I have now half finished, proves him to be one of the first-rate minds of the time, is a magnificent Adonis, six feet four in height, with an extremely handsome face, voice, and general air of distinction about him, altogether the exact opposite of the classical idea of a philosopher. The other seven were Robertson, Hodgson, Sully, Carveth Read, Frederick Pollock, Leslie Stephen, and a certain Maitland, he being, so far as I know, the only one not known to fame. I felt quite at home among them, was asked to the next meeting, invited by Stephen and Pollock, etc.

[81] W.J. to A.H.J., Feb. 6, 1883. R. B. Haldane, like Robert Bridges and W. R Sorley, was a member of "The Tramps," but not of the Scratch Eight.











SHADWORTH H. HODGSON, 1879

G. CROOM ROBERTSON, 1879

CHARLES RENOUVIER, 1888

HENRY SIDGWICK, ABOUT 1898

EDMUND GURNEY, ABOUT 1885

The discussion, carried on by Sully, Hodgson, and Robertson principally, seemed to show me that there was a great opening for my psychology. Story of Carlyle saying just before his death, apropos of Dean Stanley's desire to extend the hospitalities of Westminster Abbey, "that body-snatcher shan't have my corpse." But how tell of all these things when Father's ear, whom they would most interest, will perhaps not be able to hear! — Robertson has come and gone and I must haste to Hodgson's to dine and go afterwards to the Aristotelian Society.

At later meetings of the Scratch Eight James presented his own ideas — the central ideas of his new psychology — and felt a growing confidence both in the ideas and in his power to make them effective.[32]

Of the members of the Scratch Eight, James's earliest and most intimate friend was George Croom Robertson, from 1867 professor of mental philosophy and logic at University College, London, and first editor of *Mind*. He was a man of James's own age and after his own heart. In fact he was one of those men who are fated to be enshrined in the hearts of their friends rather than in monuments of their own making. He was a thorough scholar and a magnetic teacher, but his very conscientiousness and generosity prevented any considerable volume of production.[33] He was essentially a *collaborator*. After 1880 and for the twelve remaining years of his life Robertson was afflicted with a fatal and painful disease which, after the Stoic teaching, he seized as *his* opportunity to live nobly. When James wrote of his death and of the "perfume" which his manliness left behind, he reverted in memory to this season of 1882–1883: "Whom did he not help whom he could help, — even when most needing help himself? I, for one, can never forget what I owe to his encouragement and indefatigable kindliness many years ago, in an otherwise dark London winter." [34]

The first issue of *Mind* had appeared in January 1876. James became a subscriber and reader at once and a contributor soon after, this being from thenceforth one of his chief avenues of intercourse with British philosophy. Robertson not only opened the pages of

[32] For the meeting of Feb. 9, 1883, *cf.* below, II, 38–9.
[33] His scattered writings, other than this volume on *Hobbes*, were published in 1894 under the title of *Philosophical Remains*.
[34] *Philos. Rev.*, II (1893), 255.

Mind with James's articles, but read and criticized them with sympathetic interest. He, too, was a partisan of the British tradition, and in spite of his editorial neutrality he sympathized with James's effort to defend this tradition against the Hegelian invaders. The relations between the two men began with the following letter from James to Robertson: —

Cambridge, Jan. 17, 1878

Dear Sir, —

I enclose herewith the first part of a manuscript which I hope you may not find unworthy of insertion in *Mind*. I am one of several candidates for a psychological chair which is to be filled in June. It is therefore of great practical consequence to me that this paper, if accepted by you at all, should appear in your April number. May I beg of you therefore to read the manuscript promptly, and if you find it unfit for your review, or incapable of so early a publication as I would like, to return it to me forthwith, so that I may get it in time to offer it to a journal here. In case, however, that the manuscript is accepted, let me inform you that the second part of it is about half as long as the first part, and will be forwarded to you in ample time for your July number. I would send you a neater copy of this first part, but the shortness of the time, and a temporary affection of my eyesight force me to mail it as it stands.

Trusting that you will read it with indulgent eyes, I am with great respect, yours truly,

WM. JAMES, M.D.

(*Asst. Prof. of Physiology, Harvard University*)

P.S. On second thoughts I send the manuscript separately to Williams and Norgate's care. It is entitled "The Sentiment of Rationality."

Both James's ambitions and his article were postponed, the former to 1880, when he became assistant professor of philosophy, the latter to *Mind*, July 1879. The following letters contain gossip about the Scratch Eight, and testify to a growing friendship: —

Brighton, Aug. 13, 1883

My dear James, —

. . . Everybody had gone from London by the time we last left. I had just one glimpse of Stephen before he went off to his Corn-

wall. Gurney also looked in, about to start for Tyrol: would that he might there be weaned from the fury of this hunt after ghosts and the like, which is positively wasting him — the very body of him, I mean! Sully has gone to Norway, after finishing his psychological manual for teachers, to recruit, as he much needs. Pollock *felix,* Read and Maitland all for this time gone their several ways. There has been no other meeting of the Scratch Eight since that night when you solved the whole mystery of the universe for the seven of them who were there, or for some of the seven. Next winter they will have to go on as seven — Wise Men of England — without the weak brother banned for the time from London. . . . Ever yours,

G. CROOM ROBERTSON

London, Jan. 28, 1884

My dear James, —

I vowed to myself that the next time I should have occasion to write to you it should not be on a postcard, however little might be said. Now already you have given me the occasion by sending your manuscript on the Hegelians, come to hand today. I shall be very glad to print that in the next number, as well as your "Emotion," because I desire nothing better than to keep *at* them.[35] Your *Schlagfertigkeit* is altogether admirable, and if, besides the positive value of the stroke (which in this case I think not little), it means that you feel yourself in the best of intellectual trims, I rejoice in it. As for the other paper still on the stocks, I am not in the least afraid of giving our people a surfeit of you, and if you will let me have it on no other terms than that it must appear in July, some one else must just get out of the way of your impatience or need; but the some-one-else won't like it, will think himself not too well used etc., etc. — and, in short, if you can, upon reconsideration, see your way to giving me the choice of October (if need be), I should be very glad. It is difficult to suppose that what you call "college promotion" will be affected by three months' delay in your case, but of course I don't know anything about it.[36] . . .

Our Scratch Eight *may* resume its work next winter. At present

[35] "What Is an Emotion?" was published in the April number. The other article referred to was published in the same number under the title of "Absolutism and Empiricism." How James and Robertson were "keeping at" the Hegelians is described below, 714–6.

[36] Whether or not it was an effect of his increased productivity, in any case James was promoted to a full professorship in 1885.

the elements have broken too far loose to be drawn together in a hurry: Gurney now interested only in you know what; Stephen beginning today his literature lectures at Cambridge and at his wits' end getting his Dictionary team to run; Pollock, engulfed in law-professoring at Oxford as well as here; and some others also with more to do than they can well manage. My wife sends kindest greetings, and I am yours ever,

G. C. ROBERTSON

London, Jan. 9, 1885

My dear James, —

I make haste to reply to yours from Philadelphia (wherever that may be), but first would say that I was about to write of myself to thank you for the copy of your father's *Remains*. This we are both of us reading with extreme interest — both his part of the book and yours. It will be some time before it is all read, term having begun again; but already I begin to understand better than before where something of you (also of your brother's writing) came from. It was a good and pious deed to put the book together. For the present, being fresh from Froude's last two volumes on Tummas, I will say of only one of your father's pieces that it is in my judgment, without exception, the best appreciation I have ever read of that forcible but hidebound and not too "veracious" son of Adam.[37] . . .

No space left (or time) for other matters. I agree with you that Hodgson's last is about his best.[38] Tomorrow afternoon we are to meet him at Pollock's, where is to be, for the amusement of youngsters, something described before hand as a "feat of arms." What, remains to be seen. But known that Frederick Pollock has taken in these later times to collecting all manner of deadly weapons, bright and rusty, new and old — of the sword or knife sort. Whose eye he is to put out tomorrow, — his own spectacles on, — we shall, as before said, see. Fine work, any way, for a law-professor! Afterwards it may come to philosophy, for Hodgson and we remain to dine. Pity you are not to be there. . . . Always yours,

G. C. ROBERTSON

[37] "Tummas" is, of course, Carlyle. For the "piece" in question, *cf.* above, 64.
[38] The reference is perhaps to Hodgson's "Metaphysical Method in Philosophy," *Mind*, IX (1884).

Jaffrey, N. H., Aug. 29, 1886

My dear Robertson, —

Months have passed since my last brief writing to you,[39] and I hardly know where to begin. My principal interest in you is to know *how* you are in these days, and I get no tidings on that point from anybody. Correspondence perforce grows rarer as separation prolongs itself and as correspondents grow older, and my English friends seem to become more august and remote figures as the years elapse since my seeing them in the flesh. How are you, anyhow? Just tell me on a post-card, if you can do so consistently with modesty and truth, that you *are* better, much better than of yore! The *Hobbes*[40] was a good sign. After leaving it a long while, to do more ephemeral duties first, I read and digested it, and should have written you some weeks ago about it save for interruption by an attack of sickness which I was three weeks in getting over, and by other things. I know naught of Hobbes continuously, my reading being confined to hasty *dips* here and there, as references occurred in other reading. I must therefore *believe* your book to *be* as scholarly as it *seems,* which is very scholarly indeed. It must stand for a great deal of reading of various kinds. I gained a *vue d'ensemble* of the philosopher, found your style very clear and pithy, and only regretted what, if I remember rightly, you defend yourself for at the end, namely that you had n't sprinkled in more specimens of Hobbes's own quaint and rich and pregnant style. I am glad you have got that piece of work so well off your hands. Of *Mind* I continue to admire the punctuality, and on the whole the solidity, especially the long list of short book notices; though the crack-of-doom article for which I always anxiously look, seems in no haste to appear. It seems to me *some*body ought to do something more momentous. Bradley's article on "Attention"[41] threatened great things, but hardly performed them, and I confess left on me an impression of haste and crudity which a man in his position should guard against. I 'm sorry to say I have not read his *Logic* yet, having begun it only two days ago, but am mightily interested as far as I have got. He is a powerful and original, but essentially *im-*

[39] James's reply (Aug. 13, 1885) to Robertson's letter of Jan. 1 is printed in part in *L.W.J.*, I, 254, where, however, it is misdated.

[40] Robertson's *Hobbes* was published in 1886.

[41] "Is There Any Special Activity of Attention?" *Mind,* July 1886.

patient mind, and his evolution will certainly be an interesting spectacle. It looks as if he were working up a psychology now, *nicht wahr?* Ward's article "Psychology" [42] I have of course carefully read, and find it very suggestive indeed. If only he *could* become a little *prolix!* With the extreme condensation of all he writes one is never quite sure that one grasps all the *bearings* of his formulas, and has a lingering uncertainty of having understood. Nevertheless his article makes the transition to a new era in English psychology.

I have wasted a good deal of time on "Psychical Research" during the past year, and Gurney and I have scribbled a number of notes to each other in consequence. "Two lost souls!" you will say, — but that is what remains to be seen. Our poor little "Society" will very likely break down for lack of a Gurney or a Myers to devote time to it. But I feel quite convinced at the end of my year's work, such as it has been, that this sort of work is as worthy a specialty as a man could take up; only it *is* a specialty, demanding an enormous sacrifice of time, and in which amateurs will be as inferior to experts as they are in most other departments of experience. Believing this, I shall probably give very little time to it next year, because at the utmost I should be a dabbler and amateur. I wish that by giving up this, I might get ahead with writing, but I 'm once for all a lame duck, and might as well accept it. The moment I get interested in anything, bang goes my sleep, and I have to stop for ten days or a fortnight, till everything has grown cold again and the mood is off. One makes very slow progress at that rate. I am with wife and babes on a quiet farm in the country, — on the whole in prosperous condition, though I sometimes grow impatient.

Our friend Tom Davidson at the Concord School of Philosophy recently furnished a text to all the newspapers of the land by coupling the names of Jesus and Zola together as both masters of something or other.[43] Excellent T. D.! Now don't write me a letter, if you don't feel like it, but pray send a health bulletin without delay, — address always "Cambridge, Mass." I hope you don't let your Irish troubles prey upon your soul too much. The Irish, as we know them here, are on the whole excellent creatures. And I feel very

[42] The reference is to Ward's famous article in the *Encyclopædia Britannica; cf.* below, II, 58–9.

[43] The *Boston Advertiser* of July 23, 1886, carried the headline, "Zola Defended. Prof. Davidson Astonishes the Concord School."

optimistic, now that the question of satisfying their sentimental wants is fairly and practically put, that the genius of your people will find its way to some sort of a satisfactory solution. Pray give my heartiest good wishes to Mrs. Robertson, and with most affectionate greetings to yourself, believe me, ever yours,

WM. JAMES

St. Leonard's-on-Sea, Aug. 29 [1886]

My dear James, —

I think that between us you at present are the debtor but never mind. You will soon see why *I* am writing. *Mind* has been more than dull of late and you can guess why: or if not, let me remind you that it is a great many numbers since Harvard last spoke. I have been disappointed as to several articles I was counting on for the new year — among others two from Archimandrite H. Spencer (who is in a very poor way of health these some months back); and if you (as is pretty certain) have something fresh and stirring by you, do let a poor Editor have it as a New Year's gift for his readers. Poor Editor in more ways than one! I don't know if it came round to you in any way that my wife and I had a rare fling in Italy for six weeks at Easter, postponed from that dismal time three years ago, and got all the pleasure we expected out of it; but there is now the piper to pay — if not for that, then for the intervening years, during all of which you know I have feared that the enemy lay scotched only, ready to rear its head again at the first good chance. I have been in a bad way since the beginning of May, and did not have an easy job of the end of the session. . . .

Gurney told me before leaving town of having heard from you and I have supposed you well and flourishing. May that have been so! and so may it be! Is it the Adirondacks or what other best of wildernesses that you have chosen to roam in this vacation? This will find you when you come back to the haunts of men, if not out there. . . . Yours ever,

G. CROOM ROBERTSON

Jaffrey, Sept. 12, 1886

My dear Robertson, —

Your letter of the 29th . . . crossing mine, has just come. They were probably written at the same moment of time, and afford another proof of telepathy to add to the mass of evidence already col-

lected, particularly as you answer only too well my apprehensive question about your health. I am indeed sorry that you should have grown such a martyr. And under the pluck and voluntary cheerfulness of your tone I read all the direful misery and disheartening sense of mortality which you feel. All I can do is to send impotent sympathy and ineffective prayers, — may it be a short attack, comparatively! A man like you who does so much for others might, it would seem, be left in peace. The Grant Allens, who made us a pleasant visit, described you as caring for no one who was prosperous, and almost made me think that your friendliness to me in London had nothing personal in it, but was addressed only to a specimen of the genus outcast.

However, I don't quite believe that, and your very flattering request about *Mind* quite tunes me up again. But woe is me! I can't comply. I have fallen into a phase of unsettlement about many things, seeing difficulties where facilities used to be. And although there are a couple of topics on which trying to write an article might possibly help me to my own conclusion, yet I believe, all things considered, I had better follow the slower process of gradual evolution. My working power is so limited that I *must* let nothing interfere now with getting my senseless psychology contract fulfilled. Of already written things I have a long-finished paper on space-perception, clinging closely to the experimental facts, and being of course the last word of human wisdom in that matter. But it might fill eighty of your pages, and I can't advise you to take it, unless you are really hard-up for matter.[44] It certainly is as dull as the dullest thing you can possibly have printed of late.

I have been off for a week in the White Mountains by myself and read Bradley's *Logic*. *What* a fresh book! How he ploughs up the black mould in every direction! I don't know when I have read a more stimulating and exciting book. And in the style there is a *man*, though whether his sarcasms flow from an acidulous and unsocial, or from a genially humorous temper, I can't well make out. At any rate, it will be long ere I "get over" the effects of reading his book, and digest its results.

Good-bye! And Heaven help you through your troubles. I hope Mrs. Robertson keeps good heart and courage. We both of

[44] Robertson *was* "hard-up," and the paper on "The Perception of Space" appeared in *Mind* as three articles during 1887.

us send warmest greetings to her, and I am always, affectionately yours,

WM. JAMES

London, Sept. 25, 1886

My dear James, —

There can no longer be a doubt of it! Gurney and *vous autres* have got hold of the right end of the stick and have but to push it home. It was, you say, the 29th August whereon I wrote or caused writing to be done to you. It was, I now say, the 29th August — precisely that and nothing else — whereon you wrote to me, putting questions that got answers just as (perhaps even before) they were put. Then, again, on the 23rd of this current month — the day before yesterday — it was the mere accident of having a long and somewhat fatiguing talk with my *locum tenens* (or *tenturus*) Sorley [45] that kept me from writing in reply to yours of that 29th, and — would you believe it? — that very evening came your last in reply to mine. What a wondrous scheme of things is that in which we have our being! How, after such conjunctions as we have just had experience of, the sceptic . . . but I will not pursue that matter further.

Your first letter and eke the second were anyway most welcome and cheering to the receiver of them. Their accounts of yourself, despite your confession of having drifted more or less uncomfortably out to (philosophical) sea, seemed not at all unsatisfactory, and will, I hope, go on being followed by no worse. I wish you were well through your '*psychology*-task, and with that upon you understand your disinclination to turn aside to article-writing (lively or other). But as to those eighty pages written out on the space-question, *do let me have them.* The length in no way deters me from asking for them — quite the contrary, if you are willing they should be published in (continuous) instalments. . . . Dull, are they? I know what that means. In short, — once more, — let me have them. . . .

Room left only to say about Bradley, whose book has so impressed you, that I fear his peculiar humour (which is remarkable enough in itself) comes not least from kidney. He has long, I understand,

[45] W. R. Sorley, at this time Robertson's "deputy" at University College, London, and afterwards professor of moral philosophy at Cambridge.

been a martyr to nephritis, which keeps him from any regular career at Oxford or elsewhere. It has certainly not kept him from doing some rare strokes of work; and the *Logic* is the chief of them. But I cannot help thinking him a little *méchant* withal. Now I am tired and must have done. Yours affectionately and *expectantly,*

G. Croom Robertson

Robertson's wife died in May 1892, and Robertson himself survived her only four months. Ten days before his wife's death he had written to James that he had given up hope of her recovery. The letter reached James in Europe and the following is his reply: —

Freiburg, June 15, 1892

My dear old Friend, —

Your heart-rending letter of the 21st of May has just been put into my hands, forwarded from Cambridge. How sorry I am, how sorry I am! And what a burden you both of you have had to carry all these years. . . . But my dear fellow, in all the darkness, "as of night eternal," that girdles us about, there must be *some* ulterior significance in the fact that the hearts of onlookers are so warmed when they see calamities such as yours have been endured with such a staunch and uncomplaining spirit. The experience of which *that* is an integral part cannot interiorly be as bad as it outwardly seems. You of course know your own weaknesses, and your own failures and disgusts; but I assure you that to others your life has been a source of deepest inspiration — and more I cannot say. . . . Good-bye, my dear old Robertson! Warmest love . . . from your friend

Wm. James

Let us return to the Scratch Eight as James knew them in 1882–1883. With Frederick William Maitland, professor of English law at Cambridge, and Frederick Pollock, writer on philosophical and legal subjects, there seems to have been no philosophical bond. Carveth Read, later professor of philosophy in the University of London, had written frequently for *Mind,* and the tendency of his thought was broadly similar to that of James. Many years later, after 1908, James read his *Metaphysics of Nature,* and welcomed him to "the pragmatistic church," but there is no evidence that this

mild and cautious thinker played any part in the forming of James's mind.[46]

For Leslie Stephen, who was ten years his senior, James felt both affection and admiration.[47] Stephen had visited "the American Cambridge" in 1863,[48] and laid the foundation of his American friendships, many with members of James's circle, such as his brother Henry, Lowell, Holmes, and Norton. Several of Stephen's letters to James testify to a growing intimacy. But there could be no profound intellectual sympathy between the two men. Stephen inclined to the positivistic, deterministic, or left wing of empiricism, James to the right. The author of *The Agnostic's Apology* could and did delight in James the man, but he could not in his heart applaud the exuberance of James's beliefs. Two paragraphs, taken from letters written by Stephen to Norton, illustrate the mixture of his feelings. Writing in 1884, after reading James's "Dilemma of Determinism," [49] he said: "I have just received a denunciation of the wicked determinists from William James, who is a clever fellow, but, I think, rather flighty. I stick to Spinoza and Jonathan Edwards and Hume and all really clear-headed people." And thirteen years later, speaking of the *Will to Believe,* he said: "Of other books, I have got on my table William James's new essays. They look bright, like all his writings. He is the one really lively philosopher; but I am afraid that he is trying the old dodge of twisting 'faith' out of moonshine. Well, I always liked him, though I have not had time to read him." [50]

Although Stephen did find time to read this book and even to write a criticism of it, there could, of course, be no agreement on such a theme, Stephen advocating that very abstention from belief which James thought to be either impossible or equivalent to disbelief. In 1901 Stephen wrote, in reply to a request from James, that he had no religious experience or spiritual history worth recording. He read the *Varieties* with interest in its literary quality but with entire skepticism as to its contents. The mystic's raptures (granting that he is as rapturous as he claims to be) seemed to Stephen to "represent abnormal excitement, morbid or otherwise, which is presumably

[46] *M.T.*, xvii.
[47] *Cf. L.W.J.*, II, 152.
[48] *Some Early Impressions*, 1924, 89.
[49] As published in the *Unitarian Rev.*, XXII (1884).
[50] Maitland, *Life and Letters of Leslie Stephen*, 1906, 383, 445; reprinted by permission of the publishers, Gerald Duckworth & Co., Ltd.

favorable to delusion." In short the relations between James and Stephen had little or no philosophical foundation. Saddened by bereavement, illness, and growing deafness, Stephen found comfort, however, in James's affectionate and unforgetful friendship.

The account of James Sully [51] belongs to a later chapter devoted expressly to psychological matters, but his friendship with James began at the Scratch Eight dinners. "We took to one another," he wrote, "in a quiet steadfast fashion"; and when, in 1910, James died, Sully spoke of him as "one of the strong supports of my life." [52] The following letter is reminiscent of the early days. It was written just after James's return from the European trip which included his Hibbert Lectures at Oxford.

Cambridge, Nov. 9, 1908

My dear Sully, —

. . . My last ten days in England were very tumultuous and hurried. . . . I am very sorry not to have seen you after all. . . . The fact is that my duties as *pater familias* interfered very much with my own inclinations, which were sedentary and sociable towards old friends, while my womankind were like Ulysses, forever roaming with a hungry heart in search of novelties, and I had to escort them. I did n't see dear old Shadworth Hodgson, which I also much regretted. How times have changed! Of all the members of that philosophical dining club, to which you so kindly admitted me in 1882, you, he and I are the only survivors, if I remember aright.[53] Gurney, Robertson, Stephen and Maitland are gathered in. I think that Haldane was only a guest. It is good to get back to my own library and habits. . . . Believe me, ever affectionately yours,

WM. JAMES

The first of the circle to be "gathered in" (in 1888, at the age of forty-one) was Edmund Gurney, he whom James loved the most. Loyalty to Gurney and admiration for "his devotion to this un-

[51] Sully was born in 1842 and died in 1923. He was for many years professor of philosophy, University College, London.

[52] James Sully, *My Life and Friends*, 1918, 221, 249. The book contains interesting personal impressions both of the Scratch Eight circle and of other contemporaries. It was at Sully's house and in this winter of 1882–3 that James first met Samuel Alexander.

[53] James had evidently at the moment forgotten Frederick Pollock, who still survives.

fashionable work" constituted one of the strong motives that impelled James to stick by the ship of psychical research.[54] But this was by no means the only, or indeed the chief virtue that commended Gurney to James. He saw in him the promise of an "intellectual synthesis" that should be "solider and completer than that of anyone . . . except perhaps Royce." As Gurney had "recognized" James, so James "awaited from Gurney the most nourishing communion."[55] The latter's *Power of Sound* (1880) was to James "the best work on æsthetics ever published," though he foresaw that musicians would find it too psychological, and psychologists too musical. It is easy to understand James's admiration of Gurney's *Tertium Quid*,[56] with its criticism of the "monism" of Clifford and Spinoza, and its formulation of a "hypothetical supernaturalism." And James had not forgotten him even as late as 1902 when he concluded the *Varieties of Religious Experience* with a reference to him as one who had distinguished the life "of which the keynote is hope" from that "of which the keynote is resignation."[57]

Adding to Gurney's "rare metaphysical power" his "tenderest heart," it is not strange that in Gurney's death "the destroying angel had outdone even himself in heartlessness."[58] To Robertson he wrote in August 1888: "Poor Edmund Gurney! How I shall miss that man's presence in the world. I think, to compare small things with great, that there was a very unusual sort of affinity between my mind and his. Our problems were the same, and for the most part our solutions. I eagerly devoured every word he wrote, and was always conscious of him as critic and judge. He had both quantity and quality, and I hoped for some big philosophic achievement from him ere he should get through. And now — *omnia ademit una dies infesta* — ! The world is grown hollower."[59]

To which Robertson replied, on September 8: "I knew what you would feel about our irreparable loss in Gurney and have often thought of you in connexion with him since the catastrophe. About

[54] These words were spoken apropos of Gurney's two bulky tomes, *Phantasms of the Living* (*L.W.J.*, I, 267). *Cf. W.B.*, 307.

[55] *L.W.J.*, I, 279–80.

[56] James reviewed Gurney's *Tertium Quid* (two volumes of essays) which had appeared in 1887, in the *Nation*, XLVI (1888). *Cf. W.B.*, 307–8. It was through his familiarity with musical æsthetics that Gurney was led to criticize James's theory of the emotions. (*Cf. Mind*, IX (1884), 421, and *Principles*, II, 469.)

[57] *V.R.E.*, 527.

[58] *Nation*, XLVII (1888), 53.

[59] For the remainder of the letter, *cf.* below, II, 85, 277. *Cf.* a'so W.J. to Robertson, Oct. 7, 1888, below, II, 42.

my own last intercourse with him I must not now attempt to write. I saw less of him, for one reason or another, this winter than usual. In May when he did again come here (for the last time) he struck me as haggard and worn. I could not easily now have a greater blow than when I opened the paper one day at the seaside and read the dire news. . . . Tomorrow I am to try to set down a few sentences about him for the October number. It has amazed me that a man of his power and performance should have dropt out of sight so little heeded even to so vain a world. Sidgwick, as you may suppose, has felt the loss enough. Myers will pronounce his *éloge* in the next number of their Proceedings." [60]

The closing words of Myers's tribute might have been written by James: "Not all in vain did his heart grieve for human woe. He beat against the bars of our earthly prison-house, and he has forced a narrow opening through which we seem to breathe immortal air."

[60] *Mind*, XIII (1888), 630; and *Proc. of Soc. for Psych. Research*, V (1888–9).

XXXVIII

JAMES AND HODGSON: AUTOMATISM AND MONISM

On January 13, 1883, James wrote to his wife: "I had a delightful evening last night at the Scratch Eight. Charming fellows all. Gurney strikes me as a big man with any amount of loose power about him. But Hodgson is simply an incarnate angel, the most exquisite human creature I ever knew, a *gentleman* to his finger tips and a professional philosopher as well. I love the rare combination."

While Gurney became the dearest of the English circle, it was the "divine" Shadworth Hodgson upon whom James drew most heavily for philosophical sustenance — Hodgson, "the wealthiest mine of thought" he "ever met with," and (with Renouvier) one of his "two foremost contemporary philosophers."[1] James had been familiar with Hodgson's books for some years and had met him in 1880. He was a private scholar, ten years older than James, but destined to outlive him; a man respected by his contemporaries with whom he engaged in talk, and neglected by the posterity which can approach him only through his books. His published works are voluminous and repetitious — clear and powerful in sentences, obscure in paragraphs, and incomprehensible in volumes. In explaining why the greater Hodgson was neglected while the lesser Bain and Spencer were widely read, James said that while these abounded in concrete illustrations, with Hodgson "the concatenation of the thoughts is everything."[2] Hundreds of pages of meticulous analysis of a peculiarly elusive sort, in which the beginning slips away before the end is reached! But everywhere happy and original ideas, new and illuminating ways of seeing old things, and a prophetic alignment with tendencies which since Hodgson's day have come to be increasingly dominant.

Hodgson was, like James, and before James, a reformed em-

[1] Both statements were made in 1879: *L.W.J.*, I, 203; *C.E.R.*, 133.
[2] *C.E.R.*, 27.

piricist, who hoped to restore the prestige of the British tradition.[3] He rejected what passed in his day for empiricism [4] on two grounds: because, in the first place, it rested on the dogmatic assumption of an external material substance; and because, in the second place, it was infected with Hume's sensationalistic atomism. Writing as early as 1865 in a manner that is strongly suggestive of James, Hodgson referred to Hume as "one of those philosophers who have kept closest to phenomena themselves," but who nevertheless "produced a picture of the universe as if it were unconnected, the work of chance, incoherent." [5] And later: "Hume . . . was perfectly unconscious that he was making an assumption when he spoke of impressions as separate, as if they came in upon us like hailstones." [6]

Hodgson was a professed empiricist in the double sense. He was an experimentalist in his view of existential knowledge: "Experiencing is a process in which all our knowledge of being or of existence originates. . . . Of being or existence we can only say *it is*, not *it must be*. But of these the *is* is practical, actually forced upon us as a fact." [7] It is as an exponent of the experiential theory of being, however, that Hodgson is James's master.[8] He is the philosopher who keeps insisting that realities are only what they are "known as." [9] Like Renouvier, he wages war in behalf of phenomena against all substances and substrata. But while James thus cites Hodgson as an exponent of empiricism in general, and names him with Charles Peirce as one of the two sources of his pragmatism, the influence of

[3] He believed that "a greater philosophy could arise in the line of Locke than can ever arise in the line of Leibnitz" (*Philosophy of Reflection*, 1878, I, 245). Hodgson once wrote to James urging him not to fail to "go back far enough in tracing the specialities of English thought." "Those Oxford Franciscans, Roger Bacon (Englishman) and Duns Scotus (probably Irishman by origin), united in basing themselves *on experience!* The English School of Philosophy had, then, already begun; *Thomism* represented the *a priori* view." (Oct. 28, 1898.)

[4] In his *Philosophy and Experience*, 1885, Hodgson uses the term "experientialism" to distinguish the radical appeal to experience or consciousness as distinguished from the positivistic or naturalistic empiricism. In fact, Hodgson uses the term "empiricism" habitually for what is defective rather than for what is essentially sound in the philosophical school to which he attaches himself. Thus what is to James a word to conjure with is to Hodgson usually a term of disparagement.

[5] *Time and Space*, 33. James's copy of this book is inscribed with the date, "December, 1875."

[6] *Philosophy of Reflection*, 1878, I, 11.

[7] *Method in Philosophy*, 1903, 13–4. *Cf. Philosophy of Reflection*, 1878, I, 263.

[8] *Metaphysic of Experience*, 1898, I, 455. Hodgson's "fideism" appears not to have influenced James, who had reached a more radical view of this sort for himself. For Hodgson's influence on James's psychology, *cf.* below.

[9] *Pragm.*, 50. *Cf.* Hodgson's *Method of Philosophy*, 1882. "Known as" here means *immediately* known, as in perception.

Hodgson is most evident in matters of detail.[10] He helped James to bridge chasms created both by the traditional dualism and by Hume's sensationalistic atomism.

Thus Hodgson proposes to consider "phenomena as they possess an objective and a subjective aspect." [11] The distinction between objective and subjective is to be regarded as a distinction which appears, on a certain level of reflection, *within* the field of consciousness. Similarly, the difference between concepts and percepts is not a difference of entities, but consists in the fact that every portion of the field of consciousness has both an "actual character" and an "expectant character" — "expectant as it waits for the completion of its relationship to other portions. In its actual character every portion of the chain is a percept; in its expectant character it is a concept." [12]

Hodgson anticipated James in his emphasis on the continuity and fluidity of the conscious stream. The static juxtaposition of parts is an artificial effect of analysis. This effect being discounted, the minimum of consciousness, like its longer stretches, reveals itself as through and through transitional. Time itself is ceaseless passage, and not a series of pauses: "Crudely and popularly we divide the course of time into past, present, and future; but, strictly speaking, there is no present: it is composed of past and future divided by an indivisible point or instant. That instant, or time-point, is the strict *present*. What we call loosely the present is an empirical portion of the course of time." Hodgson's minimum of consciousness becomes James's "specious present" and "passing moment." [13] It is itself only a phase of the flux, a "process-content," which looks forward and back, as prospect shifts forever into retrospect.[14]

[10] It was in 1910, reminiscently, and in writing to Hodgson himself, that James coupled that philosopher with Peirce. (*Cf. L.W.J.*, II, 328.) In a letter to Renouvier, May 8, 1882, James wrote, "I find that all the good he does me is from details."

[11] *Time and Space*, 1865, 7. *Cf. Metaphysic of Experience*, 1898, I, Bk. 1, Ch. V–VII.

[12] *Philosophy of Reflection*, 1878, I, 294. James equates this distinction with his own distinction between "acquaintance" and "knowledge about." In his last work, in which he went back to many of his sources, he refers to the substitution of "a conceptual order for the perceptual order in which . . . experience originally comes" as "first described in these terms by S. H. Hodgson in his *Philosophy of Reflection*, I, 288–310." (*S.P.P.*, 51, note.) In the *Principles* James refers to the same passage to support his insistence on the volitional and selective character of conceptual abstraction. (I, 482; II, 635.)

[13] Hodgson, *op. cit.*, 253; *C.E.R.*, 380.

[14] *Metaphysic of Experience*, 1898, I, 34, 35. *Cf.* also Ch. VII, VIII, which James in *E.R.E.* cites as containing adequate accounts of the continuity of *experience*.

This is James's Hodgson, the apostle of the new empiricism. There was another and to James a recreant Hodgson, who denied freedom, who reduced mind to dependence on body, who made inferences from consciousness to realities beyond, and was even tainted with monism. Hodgson regarded the immediate deliverance of consciousness as consisting of essences, but not of existences.[15] In his method he made much of this distinction, and of the equivalent antithesis of "being" and "origin," "nature" and "history," "what" and "that." Existence and explanation both involve a transcendent world which can be known only *a priori*. From this "rationalistic" Hodgson James was separated by a gulf that widened with the years, and converted his relation into one of personal affection and grateful recollection.

In fact James began to have doubts about Hodgson very soon after he discovered him. Writing to Royce in 1880, he said: "He *is* obscure enough, and makes me sometimes wonder whether the *ignotum* does not pass itself off for the *mirifico* in his pages." Even during the winter of 1882–1883 he complained that he could not "throw" himself into Hodgson's "central attitude," or get at its "root."

And to his wife he wrote: "You say in your letter you told Harry I might spend a summer with Renouvier and the Pillons for company. Beware! *You* are the only society I want for the summer, you and some of my Boston and Cambridge friends. Philosophers must part as soon as they have extracted each other's juice; that is, if they are each working on his own line there inevitably comes a day when they have gone as far together as they ever can go, and after that it is nothing but the accentuation and rubbing in of differences, without change. I feel as if I had touched Hodgson's finiteness *for me*. He has the defect of many extremely original minds, that of not easily catching the meaning of others." [16]

Over and above Hodgson's heresies and his obscurity there was also an effect of flatness which resulted from the inevitable oscillation of feeling. It was impossible to continue forever upon the same high key an admiration so enthusiastic as that which James first felt for Hodgson.

[15] Suggesting the view of Santayana, who was perhaps influenced by Hodgson.
[16] Jan. 29, 1883.

The correspondence between James and Shadworth Hodgson begins with "the automaton theory" — the question whether consciousness is or is not an effective agent in its own right. By a curious coincidence James began as an automatist and was converted to the opposite view, while Hodgson first denied automatism and later affirmed it. In an early unpublished manuscript James writes as follows: "Mr. S. H. Hodgson . . . says: 'It is impossible . . . to suppose consciousness to be a mere foam, aura or melody arising from the brain but without reaction upon it. The states of consciousness are links in the chain of physical events, or circumstances in the external world.' In his later work, the *Theory of Practice,* this most original, subtle and thorough of contemporary British philosophers expressly recants this doctrine, and affirms 'that consciousness depends, both as a whole and in all its moments, upon states or movements of nerve, and that the states of consciousness do not in their turn react upon the states or movements of nerves.' " [17] James thereupon proceeds to defend against its critics, including the earlier Hodgson, the view that the chain of physiological causation is complete without the intervention of any links of feeling or will. But at least as early as 1875 James has changed his position and speaks of Hodgson's later automatism as "prematurely dogmatic." [18] This *denial* of automatism is then elaborated in a course of public lectures and published in 1879 in *Mind,* under the title, "Are We Automata?"

London, Feb. 27, 1879

My dear Sir, —

I have received from my friend Croom Robertson the photograph of yourself which you have been kind enough to send me, wishing, he tells me, to have one of mine in return. This I have great pleasure in sending.

I believe I have to thank you for sending me your article on "Brute and Human Intellect" in the *Journal of Speculative Philosophy.* I may say that I had read and been much struck with that article, before your copy came, as the Editor is kind enough to send me the *Journal* regularly. I was pleased too to find that it squared

[17] The Hodgson references are to *Time and Space,* 1865, 280; *Theory of Practice,* 1870, 416.

[18] *North Amer. Rev.,* CXXI (1875), 201.

very well with my own views on the subject of reasoning, and so, being worked out from quite a different point of view from mine, was *pro tanto* an independent confirmation.

I see you attack, in *Mind,* the "conscious automata" theory. The *name* given to that theory is detestable; but I still do not see that (restricted to its own subordinate sphere) that theory has any rival in the field which can be intelligibly construed to thought. It appears to me rather as the *only* than as the true theory, true being taken in the sense of final. When we know what *matter* is, and how it is formed, then we may know more of the truth of this theory. But I will not enter farther on this inexhaustible topic. Believe me, very truly yours,

SHADWORTH H. HODGSON

Cambridge, March 11 [1879]

My dear Sir, —

I was most unexpectedly pleased this morning at the receipt of your note and photograph, for both of which I thank you heartily. I sent mine to Robertson asking him half jocosely to put you in my debt by its means, but since my act has borne such fruit I need not now apologize for obtruding my insignificant person on your attention. I think I shall understand your books better for having this vision of your face. I regard them as the greatest mine of philosophic wealth now extant, though I find it hard enough to rethink your thought — every sentence, yea, every clause being original. I think some disciples must come and retail you in small change before your influence becomes what it should be. Such disciples are now forming, I am sure, and you can afford to wait. It is rather a strange thing that you and Renouvier, who seem to me the two foremost modern thinkers, should disagree on so many fundamental matters whilst agreeing on others. But so obscure are still the relations of the individual consciousness to the universal thought which is the other aspect of "objective" truth, that I can't help hoping even after all you have written on the matter, that some way will be found by which causality may still be ascribed to individual volitions and reactions of attention. My article in *Mind* was written against the swaggering dogmatism of certain medical materialists, good friends of mine, here and abroad. I wanted to show them how many empirical facts they had overlooked. *In petto*

I hold myself liable to future conversion by such as you. I wish I could open a long correspondence with you about some points in your philosophy, but I cannot use my eyes and must stop here. Some day perhaps I shall meet you in the flesh and then, Heavens! won't I try to pump you! With the deepest respect and admiration, believe me faithfully yours,

WM. JAMES

The summer of 1880 James had spent in Europe, and he had improved this opportunity to have that first meeting of which he had dreamed — with Hodgson in the flesh. The following letter was written soon after his return: —

Cambridge, Sept. 25, 1880

My dear Hodgson, —

Eyes, eyes, eyes! Not a bit better than when I left home, and you see I am writing by my wife's hand. They broke down entirely as soon as I began to walk in Switzerland, so that I have not read a line of your immortal works since I left you. I returned home three weeks earlier than I intended, and spent but three days in London on my way. I had a delightful day with Renouvier who is the queerest looking old boy you ever saw. He bore with apparent stoic fortitude — save a blinking of the eyes — what I told him of your articles, confessing to a great interest in your writings but saying that he found them *terriblement difficiles à comprendre*, and fancying a part of the difficulty lay in his unfamiliarity with English.

I send you an anti-Spencerian squib of mine which has just appeared.[19] It was written and delivered as a lecture; the editor wiped out traces of this origin, and I did not see the proofs; however, *valeat quantum*. I can write no more now, but shall never forget the hours I spent with you in your room. "Conduit Street" shall be henceforth *dulcissimum mundi nomen* to my exiled Yankee ears. Always faithfully yours,

WM. JAMES

Hodgson replied in October with an acknowledgment of the anti-Spencerian squib, as well as the elder James's *Society the Redeemed*

[19] "Great Men, Great Thoughts and the Environment," which appeared in the October number of the *Atlantic*.

Form of Man; commending the "sound good sense and insight" of the one, and expressing his "interest" in the other. Early in 1881 Hodgson published two articles on Renouvier,[20] which James criticized in a missing letter of April 1881. This, in turn, evoked from Hodgson a defense against the charge of "monism" which James had evidently brought against him: —

London, July 15, 1881

My dear James, —

A quarter of a year is far too long to intervene between letter and letter, and I am ashamed of myself when I see by the date of your last . . . how nearly I had approached to this monstrous interval. More especially when the letter is such a one as yours, and which gave me so much pleasure. I am delighted that you have been so struck with that "supernatural in poetry" article in my book. You are the only person I know of who finds anything approaching to "style" in my writings, which is another though comparatively minor subject of satisfaction to me. That article . . . is really the chief thing, the most special to me, which I put into the whole book.[21] The little volume has excited no attention whatever in this country, though I have some friends who, like yourself, see something in it, and some particularly in that same article.

To come to what you say on my Renouvier articles. I do not admit that I have not felt the full force of his arguments on the subject of the infinite, — though I could not give very much space to the discussion. The fact is this, and this I tried to make manifest in my (first) article, that the yes or no of the infinite question depends entirely on a previous question, *viz.,* what the relation between percept and concept is. If the whole formal furniture of consciousness, time and space themselves included, consists of *concepts,* then M. Renouvier is right, and there is no such thing as infinity. Because conceiving is limitation. Existence is then a concept, and only limited things exist. . . . I, however, say, *Whatever,* limited or unlimited, is *anyhow* in consciousness, *exists* for that consciousness; and then I am in an infinite universe at once; not a merely possible universe, but a real one and *actual* one. . . .

[20] *Mind,* VI (1881).

[21] The chapter entitled "The Supernatural in English Poetry" is from *Outcast Essays and Verse Translations,* 1881.

You speak of my theory being a *monism*.[22] It is just that which it is not. . . . When, transcending matter and motion, I try to picture what exists prior to them and beyond them . . . I take the *moral* nature of man as my guide — why? Because the relation of the individual's reflective consciousness to that beyond is a practical one, not a speculative one; that is, he feels himself a part of that universe which includes the beyond, and yet he can *take no point* in it which is a starting-point or anchorage for *knowledge*. . . . The great ontological systems — I will name Neo-Platonism, Spinoza, Hegel, and Schopenhauer — all thought that we could take such a point. . . . That starting-point of speculation was then their monism. You say you "do not feel that my monism assuages the demands of the sense of moral reality." I reply — it is because you look at it as a monism that it does not. . . . It is because it is infinity, and *not* a monism, that it is to me satisfactory. I don't want the Creator to be something nice and neat and small, a puppet of the conceiving faculty. I want to feel *reality* around me, — the everlasting arm. You won't get reality out of the conceiving faculty. After any amount of defining, you will always come to an *ὑπερουσίον*. . . .

I am very glad you are to be in England next year. . . . It is not you, I suppose, who are the Dr. James whom Mr. T. Davidson is expecting to visit him (as he tells me) at Domodossola this summer. He, Mr. Davidson, a great disciple of Rosmini, called upon me this spring, and very kindly asked me to visit him at the place mentioned; which, however, I am not able to do. He is a countryman of yours. I have just finished *Society the Redeemed Form of Man*. It is not *metaphysic;* but it is fine, profound, and noble. I am not adequate to criticize it.[23] Ever sincerely yours,

SHADWORTH H. HODGSON

Cambridge, Dec. 18, 1881

My dear Hodgson, —

I feel as if some title of reverence ought to precede your name when I write it, so vast is the gulf that separates the infinite firmament of your philosophizing from the base, contracted earth of mine.

[22] Hodgson's monism seemed to James to follow from his *determinism*.

[23] James sent this letter to his father, whose comment on it has been printed above, 147.

I have duly received and read twice over your exquisite address.[24] I think it lets me deeper into the essence of your thinking than I have reached hitherto, and seems to me altogether the most extraordinary manifestation of original power. Things are so plastic in your hands, distinctions never fail when they are needed, words fall as pure and effortless as snow and cover everything, so that, apart from the question of truth or falsehood, one gains an æsthetic pleasure in what you write that is of a *quasi* physical order, and is altogether peculiar. If I now come to no closer quarters than this with what you write, it is certainly not for lack of material stimulation by your details or of reaction on them; but it is that the details in you all range themselves in consequence of the total attitude, and it 's no use discussing them till one has succeeded in grasping that. Now, with regard to that I feel that all my reading has left me with the electric circuit still unclosed; and though each return makes me feel nearer and nearer to the day when the thrill of the current shall pass, and I shall finally say either "I believe" or "I know now exactly why I don't believe," the day has not *yet* come, and I think it best to articulate nothing but this general physical fascination, so to speak. I know this is not as satisfactory to you as would be even a downright manly dissidence, but I must trust to the future to justify me. When the circuit *does* close I promise you shall hear from me something far more definite than this. Meanwhile, pray consider me as still and always one of your most earnest students.

I am also in your debt for your letter of July 15 about infinity, monism, etc. I am still perplexed, in spite of what you say; but I heartily agree with you about our relation to the beyond being practical, not speculative. I sent you an "address" of my own on the subject [25] which I suppose you will have read ere now. I confess I rather deliberately sacrificed accuracy to effectiveness in its composition — and reaped my reward in much applause. If I had made a true analysis of mind proper, into its extremes of impression and purpose with conception and decision swinging between them, and not adopted the ready-made triad of reflex-action with its copulation of heterogeneities, I should probably have made no impression at all.

[24] *The Practical Bearing of Speculative Philosophy*, presidential address, the Aristotelian Society, Oct. 1881.

[25] "Reflex Action and Theism," in *Unitarian Rev.*, XVI (1881).

A card from Robertson yesterday tells me you are going to spend the next evening with him. How I should like invisibly to hear your talk! Science in an *infinite world must*[26] bring this possibility about. Ever gratefully yours,

WM. JAMES

London, Jan. 26, 1882

Dear James, —

I wish I could say anything to close the electric current which you speak of in your letter of December 18, as I cannot say how much I should rejoice in obtaining your agreement with my views of philosophy as a whole. Meantime, I confess your undecided attitude is more hopeful to me than a decided negative. In one way the electric circuit cannot be closed, in another it can; the system of our knowledge can never, according to me, be rounded off, so as to make a complete circle; but the principles and method on which we coördinate our knowledge can be and must be rounded off and systematised, so as to show why and how the knowledge itself transcends, and refuses to enter wholly and be bounded by, the closed circuit of our principles and method. . . .

I am delighted that my writing pleases you so much, though I know you prize it far beyond its merits. Still, such is human infirmity, I cannot help being pleased that it is so. It is quite a new sensation to me, I assure you. I read your "Reflex Action" address with great pleasure, though I thought (what you say) that you might in other circumstances have stated the same thing in more exact form. I have also just been reading Delbœuf's criticism of your "Feeling of Effort" in the *Revue philosophique* for November last. I think he has puzzled himself with his psychological assumption of an ego (or soul), and is an instance of the necessity of beginning with philosophical, not with psychological analysis, if clear ideas are to be attained on these subjects. . . . And then, what *is "le libre arbitre"?* He talks as if he and everybody knew what they meant by the phrase. But the first step, surely, is to find what it means, before saying whether it exists or not. . . . People have always their heads full of traditional phrases — we have all been taught to believe, are born into the reflective stage of thought already believing, in (say) Abracadabra. We begin with Abraca-

[26] A playful allusion to Hodgson's doctrines of infinity and necessity.

dabra, — all of us. . . . The ontologists say: "It is certain that Abracadabra exists, — if there were no Abracadabra there would be nothing — no good, no true, no evil, no false, no nothing." . . . The metaphysician says: "Let us first see what we mean by Abracadabra, and then we shall be in better position to determine what parts of it exist, and what do not exist." The question whether a proposition is true or not, has nothing whatever to do with whether we are "free" to make it or not.[27] . . . Truth means the perfect fitting in of an idea with all other ideas, or parts of knowledge, that are or may be ascertained. Whether we are compelled, or of our own motion choose, to adopt an idea and fit it into its place, makes no difference in its truth, so long as it *does* fit. . . .

Let me go to another topic for a moment, your "Hegelism" paper for *Mind,* which Robertson showed me, and on which you will have heard from him.[28] I don't think it goes quite to the core of the Hegelian cocoon, but I do not see any great objection to printing it, and in many ways it may do good. Some things I thought were extremely well and pointedly put; and were just the things that ought to be brought to people's notice who are on the point of parting with their common sense.

I hope you are still meditating a visit to England this year. Robertson told me there was a chance of it; but in your last letter to me, this last letter, you do not say a word about it, which makes me fear the idea has been given up. I hope you are not suffering from your eyes, and have not to give up much work in consequence. Ever sincerely yours,

SHADWORTH H. HODGSON

Although James had sailed for Europe in August 1882, and had landed first in England, it was not until December that he settled down in London. The following letter must have reached him in Prague, where he had gone after a fortnight in Venice. It is clear that his effort to create a unison of doctrine and a bond of esteem between the "two foremost philosophers" was not an unqualified success! Renouvier had just been publishing in his *Critique*

[27] James, Delbœuf, and Renouvier were all interested in the relation of free will (*"le libre arbitre"*) to the act of intellectual affirmation. Must not an idea be *freely* affirmed if it is to be true? Can an idea which is necessarily affirmed be false? For relations of the three men, *cf.* below, 688–93.

[28] "On Some Hegelisms" appeared in *Mind* in April 1882. For Robertson's opinion of it, *cf.* below, 714.

philosophique [29] translated extracts from Hodgson, characteristically accompanied by his own opinions thereon: —

London, Oct. 17, 1882

Dear James, —

. . . My controversy with Renouvier was, as you found it, most inconclusive. I quite failed to make him see my meaning. But what can be expected of a man who first translates a foreign writer into French, before seriously asking what his meaning is. Of course he translates him into ideas already familiar to himself. All hope of seeing any *new* meaning in him, even if there is one, is in this way evaporated. Renouvier does not see my meaning at all. Now I do see his; so at least I flatter myself. He makes just the same mistake that Kant made, — assumes a spiritual agent working in certain indispensable forms of thought. Where is the foundation for assuming an agent at all? Is the notion an *a priori* one, something *per se notum?* I class him with the German cognition-theorists; his system is a French *Erkenntnisstheorie;* neither psychology nor philosophy, but a *Mittelding* — half science, half philosophy. The *philosophical* problem is to find the means of philosophizing *without making assumptions.* . . . Ever sincerely yours,

SHADWORTH H. HODGSON

After James's return to America in March he settled down to work on his psychology, "floundered round in the morasses of the theory of cognition," [30] lectured in Concord, transformed the lectures into an article on "Some Omissions of Introspective Psychology," and finally sought refuge at Keene Valley in the Adirondacks, whence he wrote to Hodgson. This and several subsequent letters are unfortunately lost, but something of their tenor can be gathered from Hodgson's replies. James had evidently acknowledged indebtedness to Hodgson for the method and doctrine of the article.

Sept. 2, 1883

Very glad to get your letter from Keene Valley in the Adirondack wilderness, and to find from it that you are having a good mount

[29] Two articles of a series entitled "La Philosophie de réflexion" had appeared in *Critique philos.*, 1882, II. Five more followed in the next year's issues.

[30] Below, 694.

upwards from the dark valley of discomfort and depressed health situate in London in the winter of 1882–1883. I am very glad you have written out in definite shape that paper you gave us at Carveth Read's, and that it will appear in *Mind*. I did recognize in it, so at least I thought, a train of speculation not altogether unfamiliar to me, and which I was and am particularly glad you are applying your great gift of sturdy scrutiny of facts of experience to develop and bring to order. . . . I don't take quite the same view of a monument to Schopenhauer that you do. Not that I like the man, or his pessimism, a whit more than you do.[31] But as a metaphysician, or rather philosopher, he has done this great service — following up one of the several lines possible out of Kant, and demonstrating its absurdity by exhibiting it. . . . All these men must be kept in the hands of studious youth, and carefully studied, until we are firmly planted on the top of our climb, the table-land of experience pure and simple. . . . The *temper* of trusting to experience, — that is the secret of philosophy. . . . When you say, in your kindness, "friend and disciple," I think I can return the compliment with equal right. At least I don't know what I have to teach unless it be that *temper* I spoke of, and that you have as much as I.

Feb. 14, 1884

Thank you very much for your friendly letter of January 25. I hope from it you are as well in body as you are cheerful in mind. I say *friendly* letter, because I think it is particularly so, to explain so clearly where and how precisely you find my ways of thinking in philosophical matters defective and misleading. Bad however as you think my method, I am delighted to observe that you do not scruple to employ it, as you have done with such marked success in your article in *Mind* for last month. . . .

I think your American philosophy is something like your American politics. In the new world over there in the West, you do not seem to feel the grim and deadly character of the struggle for philosophical truth. As you remark about our political questions being *focussed* for us, so also are our philosophical. In both domains we are in our middle-age, in the heat of the day, in the high and dreary table-lands of middle-life; the charming glamour of morning is

[31] James's letter to Karl Hillebrand on this subject is printed below, 722.

over; and *atheism* stares us in the face, as the consequence of a single slip, a single misdirected blow, in the deadly wrestle with the prince of lies and darkness. We therefore, as it seems to me, take the matter of philosophy much more seriously than you have occasion to do, on whom the necessity is not impressed by social and political and ecclesiastical and economical problems clamouring for a solution, and by the hostility of man to man, and nation to nation, in the seething commotion called Europe.

Now to come to your misapprehension of myself, and I thank you sincerely for speaking it out so plainly, and in so friendly and kindly a way. But it is a misapprehension, and a bad one. . . . You say . . . that you "cannot escape the impression that I am always trying to get rid of mind as agent"; — now to that I answer, that it was got rid of before I came into the field at all; I found it *gone,* broken up by its inherent contradictions; and generating nothing but scepticism by its putrefaction. This being so, I resolved to base philosophy no longer on an assumption but on *experience.* . . . The answer "mind" can be given from [the "how comes"] point of view, provided a definite and non-contradictory *meaning* of the term "mind" is first found from the "what" point of view. There is nothing in my method, as such, which forbids you or anyone showing that there is such a thing as mind, and that it is the cause of matter, and of consciousness.[32] . . . Then you come to the *books in the closet* mystery. . . . You say, in relation to . . . how we are to conceive them as existing when not perceived, that the answer must, for me, be given by a "what" which is at least a *possibility* of sense presentation. And then you say, but what are they *actually?* . . . Well, according to me, they are actually some form of *matter,* quite independent of a percipient, but dependent, ultimately, on some real condition in the Unseen World. . . . Consciousness depends for its existence upon matter; and the Unseen World, matter and consciousness depend, for their being known, on consciousness, which mirrors as it were both itself and them. . . .

The Scratch Eight has not met since — when? Why, I almost think not since you read your paper there. The Aristotelian Society, on the other hand, I am glad to say, flourishes. . . . I wish you

[32] The "what" point of view reveals the natures or essences of things, apart from their causes or conditions (the "how comes" point of view). We must not assign mind as a cause unless we have first apprehended "what" mind is. James suspects that Hodgson's subordination of mind to matter is a sort of methodological device.

could be present at some of our . . . meetings now. You would never hear that strident tone which struck you sometimes so disagreeably before. Farewell, thou ardent champion of entelechies! *You,* not I, ought to be President of an *Aristotelian* Society.

March 20, 1884

Your *second* post-card arrived yesterday. I am glad to find that my letter has let in at least a ray of light on the meaning which I attach to my method. . . . A word or two more will perhaps set these things in a still clearer light. . . . Take then your Hume, *Treatise of Human Nature.* . . . Hume [first] makes use of the assumption of the reality and real agency of the mind to destroy the belief in the reality of matter. Without this assumption he could not do it, for the proof rests on the dependence of perceptions on the mind. . . . Then . . . the reality of matter having been destroyed in the way shown, Hume thereby demolishes the reality of the mind. . . . Its real seat, the organism, has fallen with matter generally; and there is nothing left to keep perceptions together. Here his awful mistake of the *isolation of perceptions* . . . comes into play. Perceptions in airy dance, now dissolving into a nebula, now hanging together by memorial glue, are Hume's notion of real existence. It may equally well be called scepticism or idealism. Now my point is this: The root of this scepticism in Hume's argument, is the *premature assumption of the mind as a real agent.* Think of that. The most apparently sound, conservative, scholastic, and orthodox, of all possible tenets, — *this* is the parent of all (philosophical) evil. . . . It is also clear that we must avoid making the same assumption with regard to *matter.* That is, again, we must begin by asking, What *is known* of mind? What *is known* of matter? These questions are shirked by Hume — and I believe by everybody till *Maimon,*[83] and then till *S.H.H.* . . .

To ask me what *I hold* about the nature of mind is not a question to be answered off-hand. People think that writers of philosophy "hold views" which they write to explain and propagate. The views which I hold are those on the method of philosophizing; but it is not these which the questions intend. What they want is yes or no

[83] Hodgson repeatedly acknowledges his indebtedness to Salomon Maimon (1754–1800), a German philosopher who professed to adhere to the critical method of Kant, rejecting both Kant's "own thing-in-itself" and the metaphysical constructions of his followers.

to questions, *in their own sense of the terms* containing them. . . . The real answer depends on the working out of the analysis. But to those who have not so much as heard whether there be any analysis, to reply thus to their question is eminently unsatisfactory.

July 31, 1884

I hope the last sentence in your letter, which has a most cheering effect on *me,* the "God bless you!" with which it ends, does not move from that morbid condition of things with you, in which you say the *one* has a tendency to predominate over the *many.*[84] I would fain believe that the predominance of the one over the many . . . is the normal and healthy condition of humanity. Speaking of it, however, strictly as a question of philosophy or logic, the one *vs.* many question does not seem to be the great crux of philosophy, or even a crux at all. The great crux of philosophy is — *where will you have your ignorance?* Since everybody is limited (except Hegel), and nobody (except Hegel) omniscient, we must have ignorance somewhere — the question is, *where?* The point is to find out where nature has determined that we should be ignorant, and where that we should be able to acquire knowledge. Man is always trying to know, and to be ignorant of, the *wrong things.*

[84] An allusion to James's complaint of Hodgson's philosophy as monistic.

XXXIX

HODGSON: FREEDOM AND OTHER SUBJECTS (1885–1887)

EARLY in 1885 James sent Hodgson his edition of his father's *Literary Remains,* and received that "responsive" acknowledgment which fell so gratefully on his heart. In rendering his thanks to Hodgson, James added, "I am going over idealism again, and mean to review your utterances on the subject." [1] He returned to this topic six months later: —

Jaffrey, Aug. 16, 1885

My dear Hodgson, —

It is over-long since my pen has traced those three words, but the truth must be admitted that epistolary babble does not flow as easily after forty as after twenty! It does not follow that the heart is any the less in the right place, though I will not say as much for the *head* in my own case, for you are a correspondent to whom the head owes duties which my poor cranium rarely fulfills. I seem dimly to remember, on reception of your last "Address," [2] sending you a post-card to say that when I should have gone over Berkeley with my class, a few weeks later, I would write to you about it. I never wrote, because, although I read the address again, I failed to hitch ahead much in my ideas about Berkeleyism; and I failed to ignite the train (which I still live in the hope of igniting) which will run, hissing and crackling, through all the hidden recesses of your philosophy, lighting it with what for you will no doubt be a strange, but for me, a momentous illumination. Forgive my awful slowness! Things must have time to incubate. I know that very probably the only difference between a genius and a "natural" is the time required for incubation, and that death *may* be due before my thoughts will hatch; but something inside of me tells that the spark

[1] Feb. 20, 1885; *cf.* above, 148; *L.W.J.*, I, 242.
[2] Presumably *The Relation of Philosophy and Science.*

is there, and that *if* the time comes, the hatching will occur. Meanwhile, *paciencia!*

I don't feel like writing much philosophy on this transparent Sabbath morning, as I sit in a little deserted schoolhouse on the hill-side with the insects humming and stridulating outside and the great blaze of noon spread over all things. My wife and I and the two elder children are passing six weeks in a lonely farmhouse here among the hills in the shadow of Mount Monadnock. . . . We have had a rather eventful six months, with many ups and downs in our own household and in others that are very near. But I rejoice to say, that through it all, my eyes have grown better, so that now I may say I am hardly impeded practically at all in their use. This gives me a serious hope of really doing a little work next year over and above my mere teaching. I have already read more in the past six months than in any two years for many years back. I still stick to psychology. When I settle my scores with that, I shall be free for larger sweeps.

Have you looked into Josiah Royce's *Religious Aspect of Philosophy?* It seems to me a book of genius decidedly. His argument of the last half, for absolute idealism, is one that I confess seems to me a very strong one, and leaves me hardly knowing what to think. I can't see my way to refuting it (the argument), and yet there are tremendous difficulties in the way of accepting the *theory* in my eyes, difficulties which he does not consider in the book. I shall be very curious to hear your opinion. Royce seems to me an exceedingly strong man. He is now busy — as a bread and butter task — writing a history of California for a certain "American Commonwealth Series." I envy him his great facility. . . .

We have been stirred up by the English Society for Psychical Research's example, to start a similar society here, in which I am somewhat interested, though less practically than I could wish. Returns come slowly, — I mean stuff to inquire into comes slowly; and altogether my small experience has filled me with a prodigious admiration of the devotion and energy of Gurney, Myers and others with you. Something solid will come of it all, I am sure. By the way, who is Mr. Richard Hodgson? One of your family? I am glad of his demolition of that jade, Blavatsky, but I must say I think his last article in *Mind* rather muddy and ineffectual. . . .

Pray acknowledge this, if only by a card, just to let me know how you are. Ever truly yours,

WM. JAMES

Saltburn-by-the-Sea, Sept. 9, 1885

My dear James, —

I had long been looking for a letter from you, I confess, when yours of date August 16 came to hand, forwarded to me here, where I am again spending a summer in studious fashion, after a sufficient interval of thorough holiday. Your letter was very welcome, telling me so much of your own immediate concerns, sunshine and shadow mingled, which have however left you cheery on the whole, and in which I am rejoiced to hear particularly of your eyesight being so materially improved. I hope selfishness does not enter too much into my rejoicing on this account, from the anticipation of its enabling a more steady perusal of lucubrations of my own. I want you particularly to look at "Free-will and Compulsory Determinism, a Dialogue," in the forthcoming October number of *Mind*. I know from a paper of yours which you once sent me that you have not been hitherto satisfied with my views on the free-will question. I hope better things, however, from this Dialogue, if you should read it. At any rate I shall be very glad of your criticism, whether favourable or otherwise. I hope, too, before the year is out, to send you my address to the "Aristotelians" for this next session, to be delivered on October 26 *proximo;* the title "Philosophy and Experience." . . . I really think that this paper will light up my whole system of thought in such a way, that it will no longer present any obscurity in its main and essential links of concatenation, or in the foundation on which I suppose it to rest securely. . . .

Yes, I have read Royce's book, which he was kind enough to send me. It is pleasant reading, but I cannot say I think it a strong book, as you say you think the author. He neatly states the fundamental fallacy of idealism as if it were a self-evident truth . . . "All reality is reality because true judgments can be made about it." [8] This is saying — existence depends on something *subsequent* to itself; which would require the logical postulate, *ante hoc ergo propter hoc,* to be valid — reversing all non-idealistic ways of thinking. The common fallacy of *post hoc ergo propter hoc* is nothing in comparison to this!

[8] *Op. cit.*, 433.

The Richard Hodgson you ask about is no relative, and no acquaintance even, of mine. . . . Ever sincerely yours,

SHADWORTH H. HODGSON

Newport, Dec. 30, 1885[4]

My dear Hodgson, —

I have just read your "Philosophy and Experience" address, and re-read with much care your dialogue on "Free Will" in the last *Mind*. I thank you kindly for the address. But is n't philosophy a sad mistress, estranging the more intimately those who in all other respects are most intimately united, — although 't is true she unites them afresh by their very estrangement! I feel for the first time now, after these readings, as if I might be catching sight of your foundations. Always hitherto has there been something elusive, a sense that what I caught could not be *all*. Now I feel as if it might be all, and yet for me 't is not enough.

Your "method" (which surely after *this* needs no additional expository touch) I seem at last to understand, but it shrinks in the understanding. For what is your famous "two aspects" principle more than the postulate that the world is thoroughly *intelligible* in nature? And what the practical outcome of the distinction between *whatness* and *thatness* save the sending us to experience to ascertain the connections among things, and the declaration that no amount of insight into their intrinsic qualities will account for their existence? I can now get no more than that out of the method, which seems in truth to me an over-subtle way of getting at and expressing pretty simple truths, which others share who know nothing of your formulations. In fact your wondrously delicate retouchings and discriminations appear rather to darken the matter from the point of view of teaching. One gains much by the way, of course, that he would have lost by a shorter path, but one risks losing the end altogether. . . .

As for the "Free Will" article, I have very little to say, for it leaves entirely untouched what seems to me the only living issue involved. The paper is an exquisite piece of literary goldsmith's work, — nothing like it in that respect since Berkeley, — but it hangs in the air of speculation and touches not the earth of life, and the beautiful distinctions it keeps making gratify only the understanding which

[4] Reprinted, with omissions, from *L.W.J.*, I, 243 ff.

has no end in view but to exercise its eyes by the way. The distinctions between *vis impressa* and *vis insita,* and compulsion and "reaction" *mean* nothing in a monistic world; and any world is a monism in which the parts to come are, as they are in your world, absolutely involved and presupposed in the parts that are already given. Were such a monism a palpable optimism, no man would be so foolish as to care whether it was predetermined or not, or to ask whether he was or was not what you call a "real agent." He would acquiesce in the flow and drift of things, of which he found himself a part, and rejoice that it was such a whole. The question of free will owes its entire being to a difficulty you disdain to notice, namely that we *cannot* rejoice in such a whole, for it is *not* a palpable optimism, and yet, if it be predetermined, we *must treat* it as a whole. Indeterminism is the only way to *break* the world into good parts and into bad, and to stand by the former as against the latter.

I can understand the determinism of the mere mechanical intellect which will not hear of a moral dimension to existence. I can understand that of mystical monism shutting its eyes on the concretes of life, for the sake of its abstract rapture. I can understand that of mental defeat and despair saying, "It 's all a muddle, and here I go, along with it." I can *not* understand a determinism like yours, which rejoices in clearness and distinctions, and which is at the same time alive to moral ones — unless it be that the latter are purely speculative for it, and have little to do with its real feeling of the way life *is* made up.

For life *is* evil. Two souls are in my breast; I see the better, and in the very act of seeing it I do the worse. To say that the molecules of the nebula implied this and *shall have implied it* to all eternity, so often as it recurs, is to condemn me to that "dilemma" of pessimism or subjectivism of which I once wrote,[5] and which seems to have so little urgency to you; and to which all talk about abstractions erected into entities, and compulsion *vs.* "freedom," are simply irrelevant. What living man cares for such niceties, when the real problem stares him in the face of how practically to meet a world foredone, with no possibilities left in it?

What a mockery then seems your distinction between determina-

[5] "The Dilemma of Determinism," *Unitarian Rev.,* XXII (1884); reprinted in *W.B.*

tion and compulsion, between passivity and an "activity" every minutest feature of which is preappointed, both as to its *whatness* and as to its *thatness,* by what went before! What an insignificant difference then the difference between "impediments from within" and "impediments from without"! — between being fated to do the thing *willingly* or not! The point is not as to how it is done, but as to its being done at all. It seems a wrong complement to the rest of life, which rest of life (according to your precious "free-will determinism," as to any other fatalism), whilst shrieking aloud at its *whatness,* nevertheless exacts rigorously its *thatness* then and there. Is that a reasonable world from the moral point of view? And is it made more reasonable by the fact that when I brought about the *thatness* of the evil *whatness,* decreed to come by the *thatness* of all else beside, I did so consentingly and aware of no "impediments outside of my own nature"? With what can I *side* in such a world as this? this monstrous indifferentism which brings forth everything *eodem jure?* Our nature demands something *objective* to take sides with. If the world is a Unit of this sort there *are* no sides — there 's the moral rub! And you don't see it!

Ah, Hodgson! Hodgson *mio!* from whom I hoped so much! Most spirited, most clean, most thoroughbred of philosophers! *"Perchè di tanto inganni i figli tuoi?"* [6] If you want to reconcile us rationally to Determinism, write a Theodicy, reconcile us to *Evil,* but don't talk of the distinction between impediments from within and without when the within and the without of which you speak are both within that *Whole* which is the only real agent in your philosophy. There is no such superstition as the idolatry of the *Whole.*

. . . Farewell! Heaven bless you all the same — and enable you to forgive me. We are well and I hope you are the same. Ever faithfully yours,

W. J.

London, Feb. 3, 1886

Dear James, —

If any one wanted a striking instance of the "union of opposites" in natural events, he might find one in that mixture of keen pleasure and keen pain which I experienced in reading your long and welcome

[6] "Why so heartlessly deceive your sons?" Leopardi, *To Sylvia.*

letter of the 30th December last. Let me hasten to say, however, that this union was transitory and has now long given way to the feeling of unmixed pleasure which comes from the true and strong kindness and cordiality which your letter breathes. Yes, *that* is the essence, the value of the letter; the misconceptions of my views are, I see now, of no importance comparatively; I mean even supposing I cannot remove them, which however I mean to make one more effort here and now, to do.

First, as to the "two-aspect principle" being no more than the "postulate that the world is thoroughly intelligible in nature." In the first place, it is not a postulate, but involved in every instance and moment of experience, being involved in the moment of reflection. In the next place, being that, it is the true and final answer to the vain imaginations of (1) absolute existence, (2) things-in-themselves.

But now to come to the real burden of your letter, the criticism of my free-will doctrine in the "Philophron" dialogue, and the discovery of its shameful and total breakdown and utter insufficiency. Where do you find me holding that the world is a monism, or that everything therein — action, event, existent — is *pre*-determined? I grant that, if we could imagine a finite being, like one of ourselves and with our present capacities and modes of thought, enlarged to infinity . . . so as to see the whole which we can now imagine at a glance, — that then we should have to recognise the whole as a fixed whole in which no freedom was possible, because *no action* or *movement* was. But this is a one-sided, or abstract, as well as an impossible supposition. . . . Now note what follows from this. This being so, the adoption of a principle of indeterminism, to escape from this terrible phantom, is *not needed.* Illogical, unintelligible, desperate, — it always was in itself. Fortunately it is also superfluous. Indeterminism, taken in relation to laws of nature (as distinguished from laws of men), means chaos, chance, inconsistency, irregularity, impossibility of existence for two moments together. The free-will of indeterminists is the imaginary *agency* which gives effect to this absence of law. That of determinists (I mean "non-compulsory" ones) is the agency which gives effect to law. Law is not agency; but it is the result, the expression, of what the agents of nature, men and things, *do.* From their actions and behaviour we discover the fact that they act and behave uniformly. But that does

not make the law, the uniformity, a pre-determining power. . . .

The great law of nature under which man as a conscious and volitional agent stands or, in other words, which he exemplifies, is this — *Choose and take the consequences.* In acting we look forward into an unknown but partly anticipated future, and we are the agents which partly determine that future. We know by previous experience, that whether we determine for *A,* or determine for *B,* we shall *exemplify* uniformity of natural law; but that does not tell us which we shall determine for — which is, and which is not, the exemplification of law. *We* determine that, and determine it solely in and by the act of choice. Our choice is one of the facts upon which is built the conception of uniformity. . . .

Now, my dear James, I think you will see my position, and allow me this at any rate, that granting the reality of natural agents, and man among them, the question of free-will, and whether a man's actions are determined from within him, or compelled from without him, is a real and a vital question. You would escape to indeterminism, and the operation of supernatural agency in man, because you think that determinism involves man's actions not being really *his.* Whereas I hold that without determinism neither action nor indeed existence, let alone free-action, are possible. You first grant the detestably bad logic of the fatalists, and then think to escape from it by an unthinkable assumption. . . . Surely it were better to look into the fatalist's logic a little more closely, before adopting such a desperate remedy. . . .

I am delighted with your rigorous *dictum,* and echo it to the letter and in the spirit: "There is no such superstition as the idolatry of the *Whole.*" Only I marvel that you attribute that superstition of all others to me! . . . The *Unbounded Infinite* is, if anything, my superstition. (The Infinite is the object of interpretation by faith; the *Whole,* of interpretation by *reason.*)

I don't give up hope even yet of getting within hail of you. Bad as you are, my dear fellow, I wish I had more, many, many more, friends and critics like you. Write again, if it be but a word, just to say if I have made myself intelligible. Ever most sincerely yours,

SHADWORTH H. HODGSON

P.S. Feb. 4. It is fatal to liberty, as well as to consistency of thinking, to oppose liberty (as you seem to do) to *law,* instead of

opposing it to *constraint*. Opposed to law, human liberty can only mean license. Opposed to law of nature, it can only mean chance, or chaos. Law is the prior condition both of liberty and of constraint. Without law, no existence. A man, and his nature, and the law of his nature, — are not three things, but one thing, one concrete agent. To play off one of these against the others is to make entities of abstractions. . . .

To go to another point which you moot in your letter. Inscrutable to us as the origin and *raison d'être* of evil in the world, and in man, are, and I think always will be, our *practical* course is clear enough on my theory; and I don't think you can fairly charge my theory either with giving no guidance as to *the side* to take, or with reducing our choice of sides to a vain appearance, an unreality, only existing by favour of verbal subtleties. It is the reality of realities. . . .

S. H. H.

Cambridge, Feb. 21 [1886]

My blessed old Hodgson, —

Your letter, which I confess I awaited with some *Spannung*, is received, and found worthy of yourself — what more can I say? It finds me at a horrible time, with company in the house, a wakeful spell upon me, three courses of lectures, laboratory work, engagements with mediums, and all the small businesses of a *Hausvater*, so you will perceive why I wish to postpone any detailed reply. I have read it twice with care, and still it does n't quite hit the mark, to my mind. But I am unfit to deal with it seriously now any farther than to say that it makes me more than ever, your friend,

W. J.

London, March 6, 1886

My dear James, —

Your letter of 21st February reached me the day before yesterday, and I am delighted to find that I am in some measure re-instated in your good opinion, though still, I suppose, incurably bad as a *logician*. I have, however, one sad confession to make. . . . It is that, when I wrote "Philophron," I had *not* present to my memory your "Dilemma of Determinism"; and still more, when I wrote my last letter to you, I had *not* that same lecture of yours present to

my mind. . . . Your "Dilemma of Determinism" goes on the assumption that determinism is necessarily fatalism. On that assumption your dilemma, *hard determinism* or *soft determinism,*[7] hangs. Now I raise the antecedent question, and I deny that determinism is necessarily fatalism. That is the real issue between us; not whether I am a *hard determinist* or a *soft determinist.* Hard and soft determinists be d——d! They are an *ignoratio elenchi.* . . .

My proof rests on two points, both worked out in the *Philosophy of Reflection,* (1) the essential priority of perception to conception, (2) the vital and clear difference between logical and physical necessity. I hope you will give your attention, when you can, to this antecedent question. . . . And don't go blindly by Renouvier's judgment, who *starts* with a list of conceptual categories as his ultimates and basis of experience.

By the way, is Royce still living, or has he not received my letter, in reply to his long letter of queries of date October 28, last year; or has his reply to me miscarried in the post?

We all want to know the nature of God. Some try the method of *assumptions,* for that purpose; others that of *faith.* Now I have *no* faith — *in assumptions.* Ever sincerely yours,

SHADWORTH H. HODGSON

Jaffrey, N. H., Sept. 12, 1886[8]

My dear Hodgson, —

I ought long ere this to have written you a genuine letter in reply to your two of Feb. 3 and March 6 respectively. (The latter by the way came to me many weeks too late, all blurred and water-stained, with a notice gummed on it telling as how it had been rescued from the *Oregon* sunken on the bottom of the ocean. This makes it ex- as well as in-trinsically interesting, and does honor to our nineteenth-century post-office perfection.) I suppose one reason for my procrastination has been the shrinking-back of the fleshly man from another gnashing of the teeth over the free-will business. I have just been reading your letters again, and beautiful letters they are — also your pregnant little paper on Monism. But I 'm blest if they

[7] In the essay James had classified Hodgson as a "soft determinist" ("freedom is only necessity understood, and bondage to the highest is identical with true freedom"; *W.B.,* 149).

[8] Reprinted, with omissions and additions, from *L.W.J.,* I, 256–8.

make me budge an inch from my inveterate way of looking at the question. I hate to think that controversy should be useless, and arguments of no avail, but the history of opinion on this problem is ominous; so I will be very short, hardly more than "yea, yea! nay, nay!"

The subject of my concern seems entirely different from yours. I care absolutely nothing whether there be "agents" or no agents, or whether man's actions be really *"his"* or not. What I care for is that my moral reactions should find a real outward application. All those who, like you, hold that the world is a system of "uniform law" which repels all variation as so much "chaos," oblige, it seems to me, the world to be judged integrally. Now the only *integral* emotional reaction which can be called forth by such a world as this of our experience, is that of dramatic or melodramatic interest — romanticism — which *is* the emotional reaction upon it of all intellects who are neither religious nor moral. The moment you seek to go deeper, you must break the world into parts, the parts that seem good and those that seem bad. Whatever Indian mystics may say about overcoming the bonds of good and evil, for *us* there is no higher synthesis in which their contradiction merges, no *one* way of judging that world which holds them both. Either close your eyes and adopt an optimism or a pessimism equally daft; or exclude moral categories altogether from a place in the world's definition, which leaves the world *unheimlich,* reptilian, and foreign to man; or else, sticking to it that the moral judgment *is* applicable, give up the hope of applying it to the *whole,* and admit that, whilst some parts are good, others are bad, and being bad, *ought* not to have been, "argal," possibly *might* not have been. In short, be an indeterminist on moral grounds with which the differences between compulsory or spontaneous uniformity and perceptive and conceptive order have absolutely nothing to do.

But enough! I am far beyond the yea and nay I promised, and feel more like gossiping with you as a friend than wrangling with you as a foe. I hope things are going well with you in these months and that politics have not exasperated you beyond the possibility of philosophizing. . . . I got successfully through the academic year, in spite of the fact that I wasted a great deal of time on "psychical research" and had other interruptions from work which I would fain have done. I intend *per fas aut nefas* to make more time for myself next year. . . .

Poor Robertson has just written me of his renewed collapse. I don't know anyone for whom I feel more sorry — except for the god-like spectacle of seeing a strong man fighting well with adversity. . . . I have just read, with infinite zest and stimulation, Bradley's *Logic*. I suppose you have read it. It is surely "epoch-making" in English philosophy. Both empiricists and pan-rationalists must settle their accounts with it. It breaks up all the traditional lines. And what a fighter the cuss is! Do you know him? What is he personally? Whether churlish and sour, or simply redundantly ironical and irrepressible, I can't make out from his polemic tone; but should apprehend the former. It will be long ere I settle my accounts with his book. Well! adieu and good luck to you, in spite of your viciousness in the matter of determinism! Send me all you write and believe me as ever, always most affectionately yours,

WM. JAMES

London, Nov. 9, 1886

My dear James, —

Let us, as you say, have no more "gnashing of the teeth over the free-will business"; let us agree to differ. The best of it is, that we both believe in the reality of free-will, only that I think it can be reconciled with determinism, while you think that indeterminism is required to make it conceivable. I have a very neat idea which seems to me to put the question of Determinism *versus* Indeterminism in a nut-shell; but since it might appear to be but the beginning of another "gnashing" I rigidly suppress it. Let us say to our friend free-will, as Descartes is represented (in Voltaire's witty skit at the systems, *Les Systèmes,*[9] of the philosophers) as saying to God: —"Pour être, c'est assez que vous soyez possible." But perhaps you won't grant even this, on the determinism hypothesis, — if it be an hypothesis. . . .

I shall be . . . anxious to hear what you think of the Address.[10] It seems to me to have life in it, though in the midst of a somewhat dead world. No more now from yours ever sincerely,

SHADWORTH H. HODGSON

[9] A short poem, *Œuvres de Voltaire*, edited by M. Beuchot, 1833, XIV, 242.
[10] The "address" (before the Aristotelian Society) this time was *The Reorganization of Philosophy*, Nov. 8, 1886.

London, Nov. 23, 1886

Dear James, —

This is a merely additional, intercalary, sort of a letter, interjectionary, though not exclamatory, — because I have remembered, — remembered almost as soon as the last was posted, — that I had wholly omitted two subjects on which I had intended, and was indeed bound, to say a word. The first, Dr. Noah Porter's visit to me, bringing your note of introduction. . . . The other subject is your encomiums on Bradley's *Logic*. I cannot say I find the book of so much importance as you do. First, it is almost as excruciating to read as if it came from a German brain, and was written in the German tongue. Next it belongs to that Neo-Kantian line of thought from which, except as mental gymnastic, I hope nothing; as you will see more at large in that last Address of mine, which will be in your hands, I hope, before you get this letter. I do not see that Mr. Bradley's book makes their principles clearer, or bases them more solidly than other writers of the same general tendency. Much that he says, in various parts, is very good . . . but . . . has been already said. . . .

You will see I have endeavoured in the Address to wave the flag of experientialism as distinguished from empiricism; — now transcendentalism is but a particular case, a more refined and airy form, of empiricism. With empiricism in *all* its forms metaphysic is in deadly strife for possession of philosophy.[11] Also excuse this abominable egotism, which will break out sometimes. Only I ought not to inflict it upon *you*. But then Bradley's Germanisms are a provocative. So strike the balance and lean to mercy's side. Ever sincerely yours,

SHADWORTH H. HODGSON

Cambridge, March 15, 1887

My dear Hodgson, —

I am taking the liberty of giving a card of introduction to you to a young friend George Santayana, one of our graduates of last spring, who has been studying philosophy in Berlin this winter, and writes me that he goes to London.[12] He is half-Spaniard, half-

[11] *Vide Time and Space*, p. 6, line 1 (Hodgson's note). For Hodgson "empiricism" is the view that assumes the distinction between the internal mental world and the external physical world, while metaphysic treats experience or consciousness as it is intrinsically without any such assumption.

[12] For Santayana's correspondence with James at this period, *cf.* above, 401–5.

Yankee, and a genuine philosophic intelligence if ever there was one. He has the real dialectical zest, of playing with distinctions for the mere sweet fun of the thing, but is withal of a most serious turn — a Catholic in fact. A capital writer, both of prose and verse, good classic scholar, perfectly modest and simple character — I hardly know a more interesting young fellow, if you once get at him. But he cares nothing about showing off and is rather reserved. However, it seems to me he ought to see something of the philosophic circles of London, and as you are the man most friendly and at the same time most master of your time, I have ventured to give him the aforesaid card, in the hope that you might enjoy meeting him yourself, or, at any rate, might give him an entrée to the Aristotelian Society.

I have read your last address and find it diabolically subtle. Also your paper on poor Dewey,[18] which I approve in the main — but I am in no mood just now to talk philosophy, and put it off to a better hour. Ever yours,

WM. JAMES

London, April 8, 1887

My dear James, —

Your introduction of Mr. George Santayana has been duly honoured. He was present at our Aristotelian meeting last Monday, and took part in the discussion. . . . I hope I shall see more of him, if he comes to my At Homes as I have asked him to do, and of which there are three remaining before he leaves England, and before our Session closes. I was very glad to get a line from you, though it was but a short one. You pay a high compliment to the subtlety of my last Address, in calling it "diabolical." If it *is*, the devil can speak truth of fact sometimes, that is all. But in reality this appearance of subtlety merely comes from the circumstance that *attention* is required to make out the plain meaning of the words I use, and you *give* this attention, while most of my readers (if I have any) imagine it to be superfluous.

I must say a word or two on your articles now appearing in *Mind*, on the "Perception of Space." I don't know anything that has given me greater pleasure, or excited more genuine admiration in

[18] "Illusory Psychology," *Mind*, XI (1886). For James's relations with John Dewey, *cf.* below, Ch. LXXXI.

my mind, than these articles, especially the second, the one which has just appeared in the April number. I am delighted with it. You are working out in detail, and with psychological proofs, my very conception of space as an inseparable but distinguishable element of certain classes of sensation . . . setting the conception itself on a broader basis of admitted fact, and making it all the more applicable and valid as the true basis of our conception of an external reality. . . .

Of course you can't expect me quite to know what you mean by "the mind" adopting movable centres for itself, now in the head, now in the throat, now in the breast; as if it was an immaterial but automatic racket-ball. What *is* "the mind"? *Res volatica?* Or perhaps *volatica* alone, — a sorceress or witch? But be this as it may, prove that there is such a thing, or *any* intelligible thing that answers to the word "mind," and I shall welcome the proof with joy, nay eagerness. As it is, I suspect it is a mere *façon de parler,* a traditional *hum,* which has a basis neither in psychological construction nor in philosophical analysis. . . . It is not a question for philosophy, but for science, that is, for psychology. Whether there is a "mind," or whether there is not, makes not the smallest difference to philosophy. . . . But for the present I am inclined to hold that the expression, the popular expression, used in the second chapter of Genesis, to the effect that God formed man of *the dust of the ground,* and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and man *became a living soul* (*i.e.,* his dust did), is more true to the facts of the case than the Greek racket-ball theory — an immaterial entity *inhabiting* the body, or even (some may hold) contemplating it and animating it from a neighbouring fixed star.

I hope I have not tried your patience and good nature too much. I claim you as an experientialist, for such you are, and cannot help it. You are neither empiricist nor transcendentalist; and *tertium non datur, — nisi experientia docendus.* . . . I can only say that you have rendered unnecessary, and relieved a certain manuscript work of the burden of, a lengthy chapter or two; — I mean a work I have in hand called provisionally "The Metaphysician." *Now* I shall simply say — "See Professor Wm. James," etc., etc. I hope your health and strength are holding out. Ever sincerely yours,

SHADWORTH H. HODGSON

To which James replied on April 18: "Thanks for your delightful letter. I 'm glad you have smiled on young Santayana, who deserves it, and still gladder you have smiled on my space articles, which were all written out seven years ago. I always supposed myself that they were but a filling out of your *Time and Space* framework. As for "the mind," in the passage you refer to I was simply using the word popularly and not implying a theory. Very busy!"

XL

HODGSON AND JAMES: PARTING OF THE WAYS (1890–1910)

FROM 1890 there was a definite slackening of the correspondence between Hodgson and James. The younger of the two had now acquired definitive views of his own and was engaged in writing and publishing them. His philosophical interest was less desultory and less hospitable. Hodgson had long since uttered his message and James had assimilated what nutriment it contained for him — the later restatements of it seemed repetitious and disappointing. James was now a man of rising reputation, while Hodgson felt a sense of isolation and futility which appealed mainly to James's chivalry. The letters are less hopeful of mutual understanding and enlightenment, their coloring is the afterglow of old associations.

In 1890 and 1891 Hodgson wrote his half-approving, half-dissenting comments on the *Principles*. The appearance of this work from James's pen led Hodgson to reaffirm their old and fundamental agreement at the same time that he recognized the multiplication of their differences: —

London, Dec. 13, 1890

My dear James, —

I have to thank you for your kind present of your *Principles of Psychology,* two portly volumes which reached me last Tuesday from your New York publishers, through Messrs. Macmillan. I congratulate you on having at length got through the labour of seeing such a work through the press, and having now such a solid bit of work to take your stand upon. But what I feel more particularly grateful for is the kind way in which you speak of me in the Preface, and the high place you give me among those whom you are pleased to call your "creditors." I assuredly have never been so highly placed before, and that *you* should be the first to do so, gives me the greatest pleasure. . . . I have not as yet made any regular ac-

quaintance with your book, though I hope to do so before long.[1] Of course I know, independently of brief references to the passages about myself, that we differ on some of the most important and fundamental points in philosophy and psychology. Nevertheless we both belong to the *experiential* as distinguished from the *empiricist* school of thought. At least that is my belief about us both. And so the only question between us can be, which of us carries out most consistently the principles of that, the experiential, method. . . . Believe me, ever sincerely yours,

SHADWORTH H. HODGSON

In 1893, there was a hurried visit to London, a failure to see Hodgson, and an apologetic pledge of unbroken friendship.[2] Mutual acknowledgments of books and of articles followed from time to time. In 1898 Hodgson published his *Metaphysic of Experience* in four large volumes: —

London, June 7, 1898

My dear James, —

To you, my generous and noble friend, is due the first of all the copies which I set aside as presents for friends, of that work which has been my constant companion for eighteen years, and which I expect will be issued . . . in the course of the next month or six weeks. . . . *The Metaphysic of Experience,* in four volumes, *octavo.* You see you will be accepting no slight burden, physically speaking, for your book-shelves. I shall await with eagerness, and no small anxiety, your judgment on the work itself. It is probably the last considerable stroke of work which it will be allowed me to do. "Wood, hay, stubble," whichever it be, there the work I have had it in me to do is at last done. You will judge me with kindness and generous sympathy, at any rate, — *that* I know. And to you I turn for this, first and foremost among all from whom I venture to anticipate a similar reception. So many kind and good friends drop away, as we get older — I mean in death — and leave us bare and more bare to weather. It is only individuals, here and there at long time-intervals, who really philosophize in this country. And this being so, I suppose we ought really to be *thankful,* that a certain be-

[1] For Hodgson's detailed comments after reading the book, *cf.* below, II, 93.
[2] *L.W.J.,* I, 343.

lated after-shine of what was once in its day a philosophy of the German sort, Hegelianism, has for the last thirty years or so illumined the headpieces of our university youth, and brought the name, at least, of philosophy out of its perennial discredit and disgrace.

But enough and more than enough of this croaking. . . . Write me a line and believe me ever with affectionate regards, yours,

SHADWORTH H. HODGSON

Owing to ill-health and the pressure of work, now increased by his appointment to the Gifford Lectureship, James was unable to read the book until 1900. His comments indicate the grounds of his dissatisfaction. Hodgson is still in the doldrums of dualism while James is sailing hopefully away into new waters.

Montreux, June 10, 1900

Dear Hodgson, —

Yours of the 5th has just come to hand, and I hasten to gratify your desire for *de mes nouvelles*. Nauheim once more knocked me out, *flat!* . . . I am slowly recovering the lost ground, but am going to use my own judgment on myself hereafter, and take doctor's prescriptions merely as "suggestions."

Gifford "work," if such it ever could be called, stopt weeks and weeks ago. I have been "on the point" of writing to you for the past fortnight, to speak of Vol. I of your *Metaphysic of Experience,* which I at last got at and read, with enormous interest, and pleasure in the style of its execution.[3] Dry; but *clean* in the extreme, like a beautifully prepared museum skeleton, with all the soft tissues got rid of and nothing but white ivory left. It reads easily, too, so clearly does the statement pursue the even tenor of its way. It seems to me that the first three chapters are an absolutely *classic* bit of work — never to be superseded. "Es kann die Spur von *deinen* Erdentagen nicht in Aeonen untergehen." The space part struck me less; and when it came to matter and cause, I confess I had doubts of the eternity and absolute definitiveness of your statements! I am in no fit state of brain to formulate my, even to myself as yet, not definitely de-

[3] In a letter to C. A. Strong, on June 12, 1900, James expressed himself less enthusiastically: "I have just read Hodgson's Vol. I of *Metaphysic of Experience;* I suppose you may have read the whole book, and doubt not you have got stimulating suggestions. It is mighty *clean* work; but sticks too much to familiar categories, to seem to me highly important."

termined doubts, but they arise from the fact that for some years past I have been struggling with a problem which in many of its features seems identical with yours, which I am utterly unable as yet articulately to solve, but which in my mind points to openings of solution, which your statement does n't enter — hence my dissatisfaction with the latter. If ever I hitch ahead positively at all in my own effort, it will now be thanks to the terms in which you have written your solution. The problem I take to be this: Assuming no duality of material and mental substance, but starting with bits of "pure experience," syncretically taken, to show how this comes to figure in two ways in conception, once as streams of individual thinking, once as physical permanents, without the *immediately real* ever having been either of these dirempted things, or less than the full concrete experience or phenomenon with its two aspects. Solving this problem simply, one might outflank many puzzles, such as the psychic causality question, the soul and body question, etc., which it seems to me you less outflank than attack as a partisan. I don't make myself clear; but you may be sure that your book will stay and be the stuff on which another generation will use its teeth. Such things take a long time to succeed, for they must first be quoted, discussed and refuted *in other books,* and those must *erst* be written. I shan't be in London ere September. What will happen then I know not — I may even have to return to America without seeing you. I hope not. Ever faithfully your

W. J.

London, June 28, 1900

Dear James, —

. . . Only to think of your laying aside your Giffords to read my poor Vol. I! You think too highly of it in one way (so I fear), and too lowly (so I flatter myself) in another. It convinces you only so far as the three first chapters go. Now Chapter II is the very chapter which G. F. Stout singled out as the object of his first attack — in his Inaugural Address as President of the Aristotelian Society, published in *Mind* for January last, and replied to by me in the April number following. He said that I held the doctrine of "memory images," exploded now by the best German psychologists. I replied that no German psychologist could convince me that I did not hear a postman's double rap at the door, and that I was not representing

the first rap while actually hearing the second — retaining it, in fact, and so laying the foundation of memory of it, in the full sense of memory.

The psychological philosophy now rampant in England, *vice* the Hegelian form of it now discredited here or nearly so, is what I have to contend with. And its adherents will prevent me getting a hearing if they possibly can; and in England, always glad of an excuse for disregarding philosophy, they are only too likely to succeed. Germany, of course, will be contemptuous. If I get a hearing at all, it will be due to America and France. . . .

The problem which you describe yourself as struggling with, I can hardly distinguish at all, as you describe it, from that which I approach in my Vol. I. Of course it is only the basic or fundamental part of that problem which I think I have solved in that Vol. I, — it is the old problem of the real existence of an "external world," or physical world as distinct from consciousness. The final step in my proof is to be found at pp. 404–5, of that volume. On that foundation I work in the three following volumes. Both mind and psychical energy on the one side, and matter and physical energy on the other, are *inferences:* the question is, are they *true* as inferences, realities truly inferred? I hold that the latter is, the former is not. . . . If I should have read *your* problem wrongly, and you are thinking of a *real construction* of the world as it seems to us out of some form or other of pure experience (which I don't think you are), — then the thing has been tried by Hegel, and, in my opinion, has turned out a mere castle in the air. It is what we *can know* of reality that is the real problem. . . . I shall be very anxious to know what you think of my four volumes as a whole, when you have read the last three.[4] I should like to have a long talk with you, when you have. . . . Kind regards to Mrs. James. Ever sincerely yours,

SHADWORTH H. HODGSON

Nauheim, Oct. 7, 1900

Dear Hodgson, —

Methinks it is time to render account to you of my ill-spent life, after all these months of silence. I suppose that *you* are by this time back in London, ready for the struggle with your beloved autumnal

[4] James read to the middle of the third volume. The fourth volume remains uncut!

and winter darkness, and I hope no longer dejected within, as apparently you had been after the parturition of those four volumes. I have read Vol. II, since I wrote to you, and found it extraordinarily clean and clear, though in the physico-chemico-biological parts less original than most of your writing. It takes its place as a big synthesis, and will certainly be more and more referred to. I got *much* instruction from the mathematical part, which seemed to me admirably clear and convincing. I wish you were not so stuck on the non-causality of the mental; and *überhaupt* you seem to me, with your "condition" and "conditionate," to be too much of a causalist for Hume, and too little for common sense. As I wrote you before, I am myself trying to get a non-dualistic formulation of the canvass of experience, and like all such people, can't take a book objectively, but for what it brings to my own mill, and I find your radical dualism provoking, or at least disappointing. . . .

WM. JAMES

London, Oct. 18, 1900

Dear James, —

. . . As to what you say about your way of reading a book "not objectively, but for what it brings to my own mill," — that is just my case too. So I fully sympathize. But don't misunderstand what you call my "radical dualism." Mine is not the dualism between mind and matter, but a dualism *of method,* a dualism imposed by the distinction in thought and made necessary by experience, — the distinction between *οὐσία* and *γένεσις*.[5] I own I do not think it possible to conceive anything objective in which those two *membra distinctionis* are unified or made one. . . .

It seems to me of absolutely no importance to philosophy whether we conceive human consciousness dependent on and worked by an immaterial, or a material agent, by mind or by brain. Locke, I believe, saw this clearly. I mean, of course, *supposing* the true philosophy once established. Till then, the difference, the question between the two claimants, is of the utmost importance; because an error on this point prevents the clearing of the intellectual atmosphere, leads our thoughts off into a false route, and effectually prevents the establishment of strictly philosophical truth. You know that on this point I hold strongly with the so-called materialists. Hence

[5] Essence and genesis.

my so strongly insisting on the difference between psychology and philosophy. . . .

You, my dear friend, have for years both named and quoted me with honour. Which I don't forget, nor ever shall. But I shall go under. Well, what matters it? I shall make no "bubbling groan." Many others have gone under, silently, before me. Don't *you* talk of an "ill-spent life" — I am speaking "by *the card!*" *viz.*, the postcard. Work away at the Giffords; I hope the improvement you speak of will be maintained. Let me hear from you again soon on this point, and on your progress with the Giffords. Reserve my next volume for more leisure moments. Kind regards to Mrs. James. Ever sincerely yours,

SHADWORTH H. HODGSON

Rye, June 30, 1901

Dear Hodgson, —

. . . It will please you, I know, to learn that the much dreaded lectures went off very well indeed, and that I am essentially better and tougher than when I saw you a couple of months ago. Edinburgh is the proudest and strongest of places, and the people were very kind, but of course I had to shut down on most of the invitations, etc. They attended the lectures to the last in undiminished numbers, owing, I imagine, to my cannily puzzling them by blowing alternately hot and cold on Christian dogmas, as to what my theology was, and thus holding their curiosity in suspense. I am now well rested, and go to Nauheim tomorrow, for another bout of bathing. Thence to America, August 31st, passing through London only a day or two before that date, when of course you will be at Yorkshire again. Fare right well, and don't lose heart over what you erroneously deem the lack of public success of your philosophy. Your work is as accurate and hard as a dentist's, and remains as an integral part of the final structure. The two papers you gave me, especially the one at the Aristotelian Society, seemed to me first-rate, though I wrote no comment on them.[6] "No 'cause' for qualities" is one of the ideas that rankles; also the elegance and neatness of the manner in which you reduce substance to efficient cause. Those achievements remain! Ever fondly yours,

WM. JAMES

[6] Presumably "The Conception of Cause and Real Condition," and "The Substance-Attribute Conception in Philosophy," *Proc. of the Aris. Soc.*, 1900–1.

The publication of James's *Pluralistic Universe* in 1909 provoked from Hodgson a long letter in which his dissent was definitive and profound. He had already rejected "pragmatism." [7] "Pluralism" seemed to be only an aggravation of the same fallacy: —

London, May 18, 1909

My dear James, —

Many thanks for so kindly sending me, as in so many former instances, your most interesting Hibbert Lectures of last year at Oxford. I have now read them with the greatest interest, — the volume entitled *A Pluralistic Universe.* I now see, far more clearly than before, where and how it is that you and I differ so profoundly in our philosophical speculations. I fear this is an inauspicious beginning for a letter of thanks; but I pray you pardon me if I now try to explain the new clearness as to our differences, which I seem to owe to your own new volume. Our *differences* I fear I must say; and I fear also they are *ab initio,* and therefore (the subject being philosophy) also *in toto. Pluralism* seems to me just a term for a convenient mode of treating of *pragmatism* from a theological point of view, the view required in a Hibbert Lecture. . . .

Surely (I should say) the *effort* of philosophy throughout its history has always been to see the "whole drift of life" in a vision which is "forced upon us," *not* by one's "total character and experience," but by the facts of experience which are forced upon us after discounting (from that total) those which are peculiar or special to ourselves individually. Of course this is no easy task, — philosophers have not yet succeeded in performing it. Nevertheless it is the specific *differentia* of philosophy (in my opinion); it would lead us to the discovery of what is universal, essential, necessary, in all experience such as human beings can be possessed of. Consequently (in my opinion) philosophy does *not* consist in the discovery of an individual's "best working attitude." [8]

Another criticism also I must make upon this, the pragmatic, view of philosophy. It is this. That view begins with, is based upon, a pure assumption. It begins with assuming (as if known *a priori*) the real existence of a real individual conscious being, or beings, and also that of an universe of some sort or other, in or

[7] *Cf.* below, II, 466.
[8] The citations are from *P.U.*, 20–1.

towards which he or they stand in some sort of relation, and towards which they can adopt some sort of attitude. Pluralism and pragmatism are both inevitably involved in this assumption. And I think it will be found, that you can't reply to scepticism as to what is most valuable in ethic, by any system founded on an assumption. . . . So that, if you can only refute the "thin" Oxford intellectualism, as you call it, by means of some such pragmatic assumption as this of a *"preferred"* attitude, I for one cannot think much of your refutation, though I am very far from being one of your "intellectualists." . . . In my humble opinion, the very meaning of such terms as "attitude," "individual," "self," "universe," "being," "existence," "feeling," "will," "thought," "perception," "soul," "mind," "ego," etc. . . . is what philosophy has first and foremost to ascertain. To do this it must analyse, and that without assuming any particular piece of knowledge as representing known fact. . . .

To go to one other point, what you say of Bergson; I know unfortunately very little of Bergson's writings, far too little to enable me either to endorse or in any way to criticise what you say of your debt to him. I can only say this, that I am delighted if Bergson (or anyone, be he who he may) has succeeded in convincing you, as it seems Bergson has, that (to put it in phrases more familiar to myself) our ultimate data of experience are both pre-supposed by conceptual thought, and are empirical moments, every one of which, down to the very least of them, contains elements which are inseparable though distinguishable. If Bergson has convinced you of that, — there at least your views and mine would be in agreement.[9] . . .

There are many and many other topics in your volume, on which I could enlarge indefinitely; — but where (pragmatically speaking) would be the *use* of doing so? Somewhere indefinitely distant, I strongly suspect; somewhere behind Arcturus and the Pleiads. So for the present, my dear James, accepting again my thanks for your volume, — *Vive, Valeque*. . . . Ever sincerely yours,

SHADWORTH H. HODGSON

James's last book pleased Hodgson even less than its predecessors: —

[9] Hodgson says that he is "thinking" of *P.U.*, 260–1.

London, Dec. 21, 1909

My dear James, —

I ought long ago to have thanked you for your *Meaning of Truth* volume, so kindly sent me through your New York publishers. I must say, the logic of the two first pages of your Preface[10] . . . has somewhat amused me. I think you must have found it guaranteed by a religious experience which would take its proper place among those "varieties" which you have spoken of. Nothing short of celestial aid would suffice. A longer war than that of the Austrian Succession would not be enough to enforce *your* Pragmatic Sanction. Please let me hear if any miracle is wrought in attestation of it.

Meantime, as this year is about closing, as usual, with a Christmastide, all good Christmas and New Year's wishes be fulfilled for you and yours — so wishes your old friend who keeps plodding humbly on earth, and who is ever sincerely yours,

SHADWORTH H. HODGSON

Here is James's last message, a postcard written seven months before his death.

Cambridge, Jan. 1, 1910

A Happy New Year to you, dear Hodgson, and may it bring a state of mind more recognizant of truth when you see it! Your jocose salutation of my account of truth is an epigrammatic commentary on the cross-purposes of philosophers, considering that on the very day (yesterday) of its reaching me, I had replied to a Belgian student writing a thesis on pragmatism, who had asked me to name my sources of inspiration, that I could only recognize two, Peirce, as quoted, and "S. H. H.," with his method of attacking problems by asking what their terms are "known-as." Unhappy world, where grandfathers can't recognize their own grandchildren! Let us love each other all the same, dear Hodgson, even though the grandchild be in your eyes a "prodigal." Affectionately yours,

WM. JAMES

[10] To the effect that "the true . . . is only the expedient in the way of our thinking," etc.

XLI

JAMES AND RENOUVIER: EARLY CORRESPONDENCE

JAMES's two great reformers of empiricism and "two foremost contemporary philosophers" were Shadworth Hodgson and Charles Renouvier. Hodgson linked him more directly with the British school, but the influence of Renouvier came first, lasted longer, and penetrated more deeply. It was James's ardent but vain hope that his two great philosophers should be as great to one another as they were to him. He strode cheerfully in the middle, arm in arm with each, and turning now to the one and now to the other with beaming friendliness; while his half-reluctant partners to right and left responded in kind to James, but greeted one another with what was at best an amiable grimace.

The first allusion to Renouvier in the writings of James is in a letter to his father written from Divonne on October 5, 1868. James there refers to his recent reading of Renouvier's Introduction to the first volume of Pillon's *L'Année philosophique*,[1] and expresses his warm admiration for the author's style. From this date James followed Renouvier's writings with close attention and eager interest.

In 1870 he was peculiarly attuned to a gospel such as Renouvier offered — the right, namely, to believe what his moral will dictated, or a philosophical justification of the attitude required for his personal salvation. With all his heroic resolves and pious hopes he had felt in 1869 "that we are Nature through and through, that we are wholly conditioned, that not a wiggle of our will happens save as the result of physical laws."[2] Bearing this in mind, it is not strange that the reading in 1870 of Renouvier's *Psychologie rationnelle*, with its doctrine of freedom, should be associated with a crisis in James's life in which he found at one and the same time health, courage, and insight. Three years later, in March 1873,

[1] Dated 1867, published in Paris in 1868. *Cf. L.W.J.*, I, 138.
[2] *L.W.J.*, I, 152–3.

he was still in the mood of hopefulness and buoyant self-expression induced by Renouvier's teaching.[3]

In 1878 James contributed an article entitled "Quelques Considérations sur la méthode subjective" [4] to the *Critique philosophique,* and thereafter translations of James's papers appeared at frequent intervals in that periodical. In 1879–1880 James took the bold step of offering a course on Renouvier, in which the latter's untranslated works were used as texts; and during the following years of his preoccupation with the British empiricists Renouvier was constantly in his mind as a source of objections and alternatives. He followed Renouvier's later works and later editions of earlier works with loyal attention even when he had ceased to nourish his mind upon them. The dedication of *Some Problems of Philosophy,* published posthumously in 1911, but prepared by James himself before his death, contains the following retrospective judgment: "He [Charles Renouvier] was one of the greatest of philosophic characters, and but for the decisive impression made on me in the seventies by his masterly advocacy of pluralism, I might never have got free from the monistic superstition under which I had grown up. The present volume, in short, might never have been written. This is why, feeling endlessly thankful as I do, I dedicate this textbook to the great Renouvier's memory." [5]

That Renouvier's was the greatest individual influence upon the development of James's thought cannot be doubted. Renouvier's phenomenalism, his pluralism, his fideism, his moralism, and his theism were all congenial to James's mind, and in them James found support and confirmation. On the other hand, he dissented from Renouvier's intellectualism, from his monadism, and from certain of his speculative extravagances. It is their likeness in difference which makes the friendship of these two great thinkers a significant episode in the history of modern European thought.[6]

[3] *Ibid.,* 169–70.

[4] Renouvier, as editor, added a note, accepting James as an exponent of *"la méthode criticiste,"* and praising his style and *"cachet de personnalité."*

[5] *Cf. S.P.P.,* 165, note.

[6] For the numerous references to Renouvier in the writings of James, see the indices of James's works. To these should be added the reviews of Bain and Renouvier in the *Nation,* XXII (1876) and of Renouvier's *Principes de la nature,* in *Philos. Rev.,* II (1893). *Cf.* also the articles by J. Wahl on "William James d'après sa correspondance" in *Revue philos.* (1922), 93–4. Renouvier's comments on James are to be found in the *Critique philos.,* beginning 1878, and usually written as introductions or replies to James's contributions to that periodical. *Cf.* also

In 1872, writing to him for the first time, James expressed to Renouvier the hope that the latter's philosophy, *"par son côté phénoméniste,"* might attract English thinkers of the reigning empirical school and divert this school from its current tendency towards determinism and materialism. When, as in 1879, James said "we who are phenomenists," [7] he meant to associate himself with Renouvier; and by "phenomenism" he meant that experiential notion of being and meaning which we have found to be one of the two principles of empiricism. He proclaimed Renouvier as "the classical and finished representative of the tendency which was begun by Hume." Renouvier had rendered himself eligible for this description when, in an appreciative article on Mill written immediately after the latter's death, he said that his own "criticism" had two sources, Kant and Hume, having borrowed from the latter its *"théorie phénoméniste."* [8] He then went on to say that Mill and Hume, being empiricists and individualists, should have been libertarians — instead of determinists, as they had unaccountably proclaimed themselves.

To James, Renouvier was thus first of all an empiricist. His Renouvier was the philosopher who identified the real with the apparent, and knowledge with evident presence; who substituted "representations" for substances [9] or other hidden entities; who construed representations as embracing in their inherent duality of aspect both the subjective and the objective, and as standing in perceivable relations to one another, "multiple, composite, linked, interlaced." [10] He was "the greatest living insister on the principle that unity in an account of things shall not overwhelm clearness." [11] Even his "categories" were not deduced, but empirically observed: and by recognizing these evident connections of things, he escaped the skeptical atomism, the "nihilistic juxtapositionalism," of Hume and Mill: "M. Renouvier's polemic against the metaphysical notions of substance, of infinite in existence, and of abstract ideas seems to us more powerful than anything which has been written in Eng-

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Renouvier's *Esquisse d'une classification systématique des doctrines philosophiques,* 1885, index under "James."

[7] *C.E.R.,* 114.

[8] *Critique philos.,* I (1873).

[9] The passage on substance, *Essais de critique générale, Premier Essai,* 1854, I, 36, especially impressed James when he read it in 1871.

[10] Renouvier: *Traité de logique générale,* 1875, I, 121.

[11] *C.E.R.,* 98.

lish; but he differs from his English allies in giving as great an emphasis to the laws of grouping as to the phenomena grouped." [12]

I have stressed Renouvier's empiricism lest it be slighted — I do not deny that it was the voluntaristic and fideistic sequel which touched James most deeply. I use the term "sequel" advisedly. The empiricist, abandoning the hope of absolute certainty, except a narrow and momentary certainty in the immediate presence of particular facts, will recognize the discrepancy between this dubiousness of knowledge and the assurance of belief. Belief is nothing, if not sure; reason cannot ensure it; therefore, the consummation of belief can take place only through an act of will — a premature and hazardous self-commitment. The only sort of justification which such an excess of assurance over evidence can possess is a moral justification. So we are brought back to the *subjective* basis of belief. This does not mean that belief is subjectively extemporized, or created out of whole cloth; but that belief is *completed* — clinched, adopted, fixated — by a subjective act impelled by subjective motives. And once the legitimacy of these motives is granted they are entitled to a sphere of their own. Broadly speaking, we may say that where experience and logic are not decisive, and where there is at the same time a practical need of belief, *there* belief may and should be dictated by moral and religious considerations. As a matter of fact, says Renouvier, followed by James, all of the great philosophical systems *are* expressions of the temperaments and inclinations of their authors, however much they may profess to submit only the irresistible proof.[13]

Such is the fideism which Renouvier advanced in his *Deuxième Essai* in 1859,[14] and which James devoured with such avidity and with such momentous results in 1870. It defends voluntary belief — believing what one wills. But is it psychologically possible that will should induce belief? Renouvier's answer is that this is the one and only thing that will *can* induce. The will cannot act directly on the body, but applies itself, in the form of attention, to ideas; and when an idea is thus dwelt upon, and survives to the

[12] 1876, *C.E.R.*, 29.

[13] This point is stressed by Renouvier in *Critique philos.*, 1877, II, 273; and cited by James in his notes.

[14] Afterwards (in the edition of 1875) entitled *Psychologie rationnelle;* as the *Premier Essai* became the *Logique rationnelle.*

exclusion of others, it straightway expresses itself in appropriate action. This is that doctrine of will which James said he owed to Renouvier.[15] But if will is essentially a "stable survival of one representation," then the question of freedom turns on whether the "reënforcement" which enables a successful representation to survive is wholly predetermined. Freedom means "the sustaining of a thought *because I choose to,* when I might have other thoughts." [16]

What is the proof of freedom so defined? In the long run the proof that carried most weight with James was the moral argument developed in his "Dilemma of Determinism," but to Renouvier and his school he owed another argument, interesting and ingenious, which was profoundly congenial to his temper of thought. This was the argument that *thinking* must be free if it is to be either true or false; so that it can mean nothing to discuss the question of freedom unless one is free to affirm or deny it. This argument is deeply rooted in the Cartesian tradition, and may be said to be a reinterpretation of the famous *cogito ergo sum,* in which freedom affords the only escape from doubt. But it is evident that it is closely akin to many developments of later thought — the neo-Fichtian reduction of logic to ethics, the mathematico-logical emphasis on the free choice of postulates, as well as James's likening of knowledge to a bold adventure in which there is no chance of truth without the hazard of error. James's earlier acceptance of the argument, as it came from Renouvier, is to be found in the record of his recovery from depression in 1870, and in the following statement published in 1876: "In every wide theoretical conclusion we must seem more or less arbitrarily to *choose* our side. . . . But if our choice is truly free, then the only possible way of getting at that truth is by the exercise of the freedom which it implies." [17]

[15] And to Lotze. James found this view in Renouvier's *Deuxième Essai,* §§9, 11. *Cf. C.E.R.,* 31, 194, 200; *P.U.,* 391, note.

[16] James's formula at the time of the "crisis" of 1870. (*L.W.J.,* I, 147.)

[17] *C.E.R.,* 33–4. The important part of Renouvier on this topic is in *Deuxième Essai,* Pt. XVII. In 1899 Renouvier's friend Pillon published an article in *L'Année philos.* (X) entitled "Les Remarques critiques de Bayle sur le Spinozisme," in which the writer argued that if the truth is what one ought to judge, and since in a Spinozistic world all that happens is for the best, then all judgments must be true. In other words, error, like wrongdoing generally, depends on freedom. This article was read by W.J. and annotated with approval, especially pp. 116, 121. But apparently the idea came to Renouvier, and through him to James, from Lequier; *cf.* below, 661.

. The possibility of freedom involves, so Renouvier and James agree, a particular kind of universe, in which there are "original commencements of series of phenomena, whose realization excludes other series which were previously possible." [18] The one philosophy which is fatal to freedom, therefore, is monism, with its all-enveloping, all-constricting Whole. Renouvier, though reared in the philosophical tradition, was free from this, its major superstition. As regards the existent world he was a *finitist.* He believed that an actual infinite was self-contradictory, because as actual there must be a determinate and numerable amount of it, while if infinite it could not be so reckoned. He saw no objection to the supposition that nature is limited in space, time, and causality. This means sheer beginnings, *ex abrupto;* and if they can occur at the outermost boundaries of nature, why not *within nature?* [19] James wrestled long and earnestly with the problem of infinity, and although his final conclusions by no means coincided with those of Renouvier, he had learned to believe that first beginnings and unanticipated novelties are at least intelligible hypotheses.[20]

More important still for James's pluralism was Renouvier's argument that the world may *compose* a whole without being determined by it. Neither James nor Renouvier was interested in a pluralism of unrelated entities, — a many without unity, — but it was of first importance to them that the unity should not predetermine the many. Hence the significance of Renouvier's view that the whole is an expression of the interaction of originally independent forces. Therein lies the whole ground of that priority of part to whole which James concluded was the essence of empiricism.[21]

In 1881 the *Critique philosophique* contained translations, with notes and comments, of the articles which Hodgson had written for *Mind* on "M. Renouvier's Philosophy"; and in 1882 the same periodical contained translations of two selections from Hodgson's *Philosophy of Reflection,* preceded by an introductory article by

[18] *C.E.R.*, 31.

[19] *Cf. Premier Essai* (*Logique rationnelle*), Pt. I. In 1877 Renouvier wrote for his *Critique philos.* a series of articles on infinity under the title of "Les Labyrinthes de la métaphysique." These James studied and annotated.

[20] James's full discussion of Renouvier's position on the question is to be found in his letter of Dec. 1879, and in *S.P.P.*, 163 ff., 172.

[21] *Logique générale,* 1875, 188 ff. (marked by W.J. in his personal copy); *P.U.*, 7, 8.

Renouvier on "La Philosophie de la réflexion de M. Shadworth Hodgson." In this same year the *Critique philosophique* also published replies by Hodgson to Renouvier's critical comments of the previous year, and to these replies Renouvier appended a fresh set of critical notes! If James's two prima donnas did not arrive at that better understanding which their common admirer urged upon them, it was not for lack of an honest effort. Their discussion was conducted with great courtesy and with the exchange of many compliments. They repeatedly pledged themselves to the common cause of "phenomenism," and recognized one another as collaborators. But their differences multiplied — on the categories, on infinity, on freedom, on the limits of knowledge. At the bottom of it all was Hodgson's orientation towards physical science, and Renouvier's towards a spiritualistic theism. At the same time their doctrinal differences were heightened by difference of temperament, and aggravated by the fact that they could not speak a common language.[22]

As for James and Renouvier, their doctrinal differences were numerous and their divergences widened with the years. Renouvier's thought moved steadily in the direction of a monadism, in which the world was conceived as a multitude of "personalities," rudimentary or developed. James thought that this ran counter to Renouvier's professed rejection of idealism at the opening of his *Premier Essai,*[23] as well as to his assault upon substance. For in monadism the thing-in-itself is after all not abolished, but only reinterpreted as the "thing-for-itself." [24] Finally, monadism was to James *excessively* pluralistic. "His world is so much *dust,*" [25] consisting of discrete elements, each "for itself," and "corresponding" to the rest so as to create an appearance of influence. It is Leibnitz's preëstablished harmony — *dis*established. That this should be contrary to James's view of an interpenetrating and continuous flow of existence, where causality is a real transition, and where two

[22] Thus Hodgson opens his reply to Renouvier by pointing out six errors made in the translation of his article (*Critique philos.,* 1882, I, 241 ff.).

[23] *Logique rationnelle,* 1875, 210.

[24] Writing to James Aug. 20, 1902, François Pillon, official interpreter of Renouvier, said: "Cette thèse, que la *chose en soi* n'est rien, si elle n'est la *chose pour soi,* et que la *chose pour soi* est la vraie et ultime réalité cachée sous les phenomènes auxquels la science proprement dit applique exclusivement son attention; cette thèse, mon cher ami, permettez-moi de vous rappeler, caractérise le neo-criticisme; elle est, pour M. Renouvier et pour moi, fundamentale."

[25] *L.W.J.,* I, 334.

can be *both* the same and not the same, need scarcely be pointed out.[26]

At the same time there gradually emerged a profound difference of philosophical manner and attitude between Renouvier and James. The former was more rigorous and systematic, but less bold. James felt himself to be too "bottomless and romantic" to suit Renouvier, which is only his manner of saying that he felt obliged to follow his own genius even though it burst bonds and overran boundaries.[27] But there remained unshaken the profound personal and emotional sympathy that united these two men in their "affirmation of the moral world."

The correspondence between James and Renouvier extended over a quarter of a century. Although James outlived Renouvier by only seven years, there was twenty-seven years' difference in their ages. When James wrote his first letter in 1872, he was a young man of thirty at the beginning of his career, while Renouvier was fifty-seven and long since a distinguished figure in the intellectual life of France.

Cambridge, Nov. 2, 1872[28]

Monsieur, —

I have just learned from your *Science de la morale* that the work of M. Lequier, to which you allude in your second *Essai de critique,*[29] has never been placed on sale. This explains the failure of my long-continued efforts to obtain it through the library. If you still have copies would it be too much to ask you to send me one, which, after I have read it, I shall present in your name to the university library here? If the edition is already exhausted, do not take the trouble to reply. I hope that the keen interest which I take in your ideas will serve as an excuse for my request.

I must not lose this opportunity of telling you of the admiration and gratitude which have been excited in me by the reading of

[26] This is the implied criticism in the sympathetic summary of Renouvier's position in *Philos. Rev.*, II (1893); *cf.* especially 215.

[27] *L.W.J.*, II, 204.

[28] For the French original of this letter, *cf. L.W.J.*, I, 163.

[29] The work alluded to is Lequier's *La Recherche d'une première vérité.* Jules Lequier was a private scholar, and the above work consisted of posthumous fragments edited by Renouvier, who acknowledged his indebtedness to him on the subject of freedom and certitude, in his *Deuxième Essai,* 1859, 371, note. For Lequier's influence on Renouvier, *cf.* L. Foucher, *Jeunesse de Renouvier,* 1927, 88 ff. In his "Feeling of Effort" (1880) James quoted from Lequier and referred to him as "a French philosopher of genius" (*C.E.R.*, 212), but there is no evidence of any important *direct* influence.

your *Essais* [30] (except the third, which I have not yet read). Thanks to you I possess for the first time an intelligible and reasonable conception of freedom. I accept it almost entirely. On other points of your philosophy I still have doubts, but I can say that through that philosophy I am beginning to experience a rebirth of the moral life; and I assure you, Monsieur, that this is no small thing!

With us it is the philosophy of Mill, Bain, and Spencer which just now carries everything before it. This philosophy has done good work in psychology, but from the practical point of view it is deterministic and materialistic; and already, I think, I can discern in England the symptoms of a revival of religious thought. Your philosophy seems, on its phenomenist side, to be peculiarly qualified to appeal to minds trained in the English empirical school, and I have no doubt that when it is a little better known in England and this country it will attract a good deal of attention. It appears to make its way slowly, but I am convinced that each year will bring us nearer to the time when it will be recognized by everybody as the most powerful philosophical effort of the century in France, and that it will always count as one of the great landmarks in the history of speculation. As soon as my health (which has been very bad for several years) allows me to undertake serious intellectual work, I mean to make a more thorough and critical study of it, and to write a report of it for one of our reviews. So, if Monsieur, there is still an available copy of the *Recherche d'une première* vérité, I take the liberty of asking you to send it to the enclosed address of the library, writing my name on the wrapper. M. Galette will pay the charges, if there are any. I again beg you, dear Monsieur, to be assured of the feelings of admiration and of high respect with which I remain your most obedient servant,

WM. JAMES

La Verdette, near le Pontet, neighbourhood of Avignon
May 23, 1873 [31]

Dear Monsieur, —

I must ask your forgiveness for my tardiness in thanking you for your most kind letter, — for all of its encouraging words about

[30] James read the second essay in 1870, the first in 1871, the third in 1892. He read the fourth essay, but the date cannot be established.

[31] This and the following letters from Renouvier are translated from the French. The originals have been reprinted in *Revue de métaphysique et de morale,* XXXVI

my thought and my work, and for the article from the New York *Nation,* of which I admire the precision, exactness, penetration and profundity.[32] I assure you that I am most grateful for this exposition of my philosophical principles, which you have grasped and set forth so well; and I am touched by your praise of me and my studies. I awaited, before writing to you and testifying to my gratitude, the occasion of the appearance of a prospectus which the *Critique philosophique* launched a little while ago, and of which several copies should have been sent to your Boston book-seller or perhaps to your own address. Then, when this moment arrived, urgent business delayed me again far longer than I expected. If you feel disposed to distribute this little prospectus in Cambridge and among those of your circle, so far as seems useful, you will earn a further title to thanks which I cannot too often repeat.

You do not, then, wish the copy of Lequier's work which I was happy to offer you?[33] In any case be assured that it remains at your disposition, for yourself or for anyone else whom you may designate. At the first indication of your wish it will be sent to you, for I still have several of these volumes at hand, and I know few appreciators of its merit to be compared with you. I have received the acknowledgment of its receipt from the Library of the University at Cambridge, and I am glad to know that this posthumous edition of the thoughts of my master — fertile, though unfortunately curtailed — is thus placed in this center of light, where perhaps better than in a large city, it will encounter readers who are capable of fathoming its content.

The death of Stuart Mill[34] was especially sad for those who like myself were his near neighbours — for he passed at least half the year at Avignon — and the friends of his friends. One could still expect from him, and reasonably expect, interesting clarifications of his philosophical thought. One's regrets are extremely poignant, furthermore, because of his high moral qualities and his exquisite

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(1929). Many of James's early letters are missing, but their contents can usually be inferred from Renouvier's replies.

[32] The reference is to a short notice which appeared in the *Nation,* XVI (1873), 94. The *Essais de critique générale* is spoken of as "incomparably the ablest effort of philosophical speculation to which France has given birth during this century."

[33] Apparently a second copy for James's personal use, the first having been sent to the Library.

[34] Mill died May 7, 1873. For Renouvier's comments and criticisms, *cf. Critique philos.,* 1873, I, 235, 273.

kindness. After having offered in the *Critique philosophique* a preliminary tribute to this great man whom we have lost, I shall undertake to bring together the points on which *"criticisme,"* as I understand it, finds common ground with him. It is only fair thus to review the accord before the dissent. You say quite truly that the teaching of Mill and of Bain (not that of Spencer) can serve as a preparation for mine (disregarding any comparison of ability). I shall try to develop this idea. Accept, most dear Monsieur, etc. . . .

C. RENOUVIER

Aix-les-Bains, July 17, 1876

Dear Monsieur, —

The thanks I owe you for the beautiful article in the *Nation* which you have devoted to my *Essais de critique générale*[85] have been delayed first by my absence from Paris, and then by a trip which I made here for reasons of health. At last I am sending them, most warmly and from the bottom of my heart, seeking but failing to find terms that adequately convey all the gratitude which I feel. What you have written is not a simple review, but a masterly exposition of the chief points on which the new *empiricisme* departs from the empiristic, associationist and deterministic doctrines of the English, while at the same time recognizing certain grounds in common with these doctrines. I would never have believed it possible to report and define in so few lines, with so much exactness and rigor, positions on substance, certitude and free will where the difficulties, bad enough elsewhere, seem in a peculiar degree to exceed the power and scope of a journal. It is indeed unusual when an author does not complain of some slight inexactness in the manner in which the most well-intentioned critic expounds his idea. Here everything is perfect, and there is room only for approval and gratitude.

I am struck by what you say, Monsieur, about Stuart Mill, — that his aversion to substantialism, and his indifference, at times remarkable, to the notion and to the reality of laws, ought to have delivered him from the deterministic bias; and that he shows himself here to be so completely dominated by the effects of education and filial piety. The fact is that this predisposition of mind be-

[85] The review entitled "Bain and Renouvier," *Nation*, XXII (1876) and reprinted in *C.E.R.*

trayed an otherwise skilful and profound dialectician into a most astonishing vicious circle in his logic of induction, and led him to give the lie completely to the principle of pure experience.

I renew, dear Monsieur, my most heartfelt thanks, and beg you, etc.,

C. RENOUVIER

Cambridge, July 29, 1876[86]

My dear Sir, —

I am quite overcome by your appreciation of my poor little article in the *Nation*. It gratifies me extremely to hear from your own lips that my apprehension of your thoughts is accurate. In so despicably brief a space as that which a newspaper affords, I could hardly hope to attain any other quality than that, and perhaps clearness. I had written another paragraph of pure eulogy of your powers, which the editor suppressed, to my great regret, for want of room. I need not repeat to you again how grateful I feel to you for all I have learned from your admirable writings. I do what lies in my feeble power to assist the propagation of your works here, but *students* of philosophy are rare here as everywhere. It astonishes me, nevertheless, that you have had to wait so long for general recognition. Only a few months ago I had the pleasure of introducing to your *Essais* two *professors* of philosophy, able and learned men, who hardly knew your name!! But I am perfectly convinced that it is a mere affair of time, and that you will take your place in the general History of Speculation as the classical and finished representative of the tendency which was begun by Hume, and to which writers before you had made only fragmentary contributions, whilst you have fused the whole matter into a solid, elegant and definitive system, perfectly consistent, and capable, by reason of its moral vitality, of becoming popular, so far as that is permitted to philosophic systems. After your Essays, it seems to me that the only important question is the deepest one of all, the one between the principle of contradiction, and the *Sein und Nichts*.[87] You have brought it to that clear issue; and extremely as I value your logical attitude, it would be uncandid of me (after what I have said) not to confess that there are certain psychological and moral

[86] Reprinted from *L.W.J.*, I, 186–8.
[87] Being and non-being.

facts, which make me, as I stand today, unable wholly to commit myself to your position, to burn my ships behind me, and proclaim the belief in the *one* and the many to be the Original Sin of the mind. I long for leisure to study up these questions. I have been teaching anatomy and physiology in Harvard College here. Next year, I add a course of physiological psychology, using, for certain practical reasons, Spencer's *Psychology* as a textbook. My health is not strong; I find that laboratory work and study, too, are more than I can attend to. It is therefore not impossible that I may in 1877–1878 be transferred to the philosophical department, in which there is likely to be a vacancy. If so, you may depend upon it that the name of Renouvier will be as familiar as that of Descartes to the Bachelors of Arts who leave these walls. Believe me with the greatest respect and gratitude, faithfully yours,

WM. JAMES

P.S. . . . I must add a *vivat* to your *Critique philosophique,* which keeps up so ably and bravely! And although it is probably an entirely superfluous recommendation, I cannot refrain from calling your attention to the most robust of English philosophic writers, [Shadworth] Hodgson, whose *Time and Space* was published in 1865 by Longmans, and whose *Theory of Practice,* in two volumes, followed in 1870.

The letters which James wrote to Renouvier between July 1876 and December 1879 have been lost, but Renouvier's replies reveal something of their tenor, and show how close was the interest of Renouvier in the unfolding thought of his young American ally: —

Dec. 14, 1877

Thank you most cordially for the remarkable bit of philosophizing whose first fruits you offer to the *Critique philosophique.*[88] I feel both flattered and grateful. . . . I was delighted, dear Monsieur, to receive your photograph, and thus be enabled to add a knowledge of your face to the deep sympathy which already binds

[88] The reference is to the "Quelques Considérations, etc.," published in the *Critique philos.,* 1878, II. Renouvier's comments were appended to the article.

me to you. And since you desire to do the same with regard to me, I am glad to send you one of my own photographs. . . . I am happy to learn that you are thinking of changing from your present chair to a chair of philosophy. We have not enough real philosophers, and it is very desirable for all concerned that those who have a real calling for it should employ their power in the field of general ideas. That calling you unquestionably have.

May 14, 1878

How grateful I am for all the amiable and flattering things, addressed to my humble person and to my labors, contained in your letter of last month! Such encouragement is extremely precious, above all as coming from you, and to me who am not yet used to being spoiled by praise. I have received your "Remarks on [Spencer's] Definition of Mind As Correspondence," and have read them with the most lively interest. As regards the question of Spencer, the point of your attack is very well chosen, and your arguments striking. . . . You feel that I treat this philosophy too seriously. . . . Perhaps you are right, but this is what happens when the thinkers of this world usurp glory: he who would treat them without respect runs the risk of offending a public which is dazzled by them. . . . He owes his great renown in Europe to the fact that he has systematized the theory of evolution. But evolution is a craze. It will last fifteen or twenty years, and then we shall again speak of it as one spoke of the system of Lamarck at the time of Cuvier. So the world goes. . . . But pending this reaction it is inevitable that the most extreme generalizer of the evolutionary idea should be famous among all who follow the fashion. And they are very numerous.

It is very kind of you to protest about the trouble which you think I have taken in retouching a few sentences of the admirable article . . . which you were good enough to send me in French for the *Critique philosophique*. . . . But it has been a joy . . . to fit your foreign turns of phrase into our vernacular, because, quite apart from the interest of the content itself, the conciseness and force of your expressions pleased and attracted me in themselves. . . . I may say . . . my dear Monsieur, that those of our subscribers, university professors, with whom I have come in con-

tact, have been struck by the force and originality of your work. . . .

I am still counting, the first moment of leisure that I have, on taking up in my own way and appropriating as well as I can, your thesis on the affirmation of the moral world. But I should like even better to see you take it up yourself. . . .

Your reflections on the vices of democracy, on the encroachment of mediocrities, are certainly quite just. But with what can the man of delicate feelings and high aspirations ever be satisfied? Perhaps we should not judge by comparing what we have before us with the ideal, solely. We should compare it with other régimes and with other epochs. Have monarchical and aristocratic states really been so noble and great? . . . As to France, which is the only country with which I have some slight acquaintance, the old régime is plainly odious; and when I look about me I see that our monarchists, our aristocrats and our clericals have fallen into such a state of imbecility that the mediocre products of primary education, adding to this the little they have been able to teach themselves, quickly become their superiors both as politicians and as men of progress. Mediocrity combined with a vague ideal of public good is what saves us. . . . I am therefore strongly democratic, although I agree with you in believing that the group is inferior to the individual. Let us be content to demand of democracy that it shall not stifle the individual. That is everything.

Aug. 21, 1879

I have allowed the many thanks which I owe you to accumulate. Receive them all at once, I beg you, with the expression of my intense gratitude for the great honour which you have done me in including my writings among those which you deem worthy of being assigned as university readings, — not merely *en passant,* but as something like subjects of instruction. I am more than anyone else aware of the weakness of my *Essais;* and I am all the more happy to think, thanks to approval such as yours, that they have certain comparative merits that permit them to be recommended. And I assure you that I am extremely touched by the praises which you bestow upon me on every occasion.

After reading with the greatest interest your remarkable article, "Brute and Human Intellect," I gave an analysis of it in the *Critique philosophique,* with remarks in which I am very anxious that you

should find no cause for offense.[39] . . . As to the "Sentiment of Rationality," I have just finished a translation of it [40] to which I have given all the attention and care that I am capable of. . . . I count myself very fortunate to publish this fine piece of work in French, the more so because while we both have the same stock of ideas, make the same critical applications and reach the same general conclusion, your version of *criticisme* is presented with a startling originality, or happiness of expression, with an accent all your own; and offers us a necessary transition from the *theoretical* to the *practical,* in a manner that is more scientific and empirical than any we have yet known. This method cannot fail to be noticed by those among our professors here who are inclined to *criticisme,* and who are fighting at the same time both against the traditional rationalism of our universities and against positivism.

[39] Two articles appeared under the title of "De la Caractéristique intellectuelle de l'homme, d'après M. W. James," *Critique philos.,* 1879, I.

[40] The article appeared with a note of tribute by Renouvier in the *Critique philos.,* 1879, II.

XLII

RENOUVIER: FREEDOM AND DETERMINISM (1880–1883)

JAMES'S use of Renouvier's writings as "university readings" or "subjects of instruction" occurred in 1879–1880 when he gave a course on Renouvier, and went over the text of the *Premier Essai* with a class of seven. He was then as later greatly preoccupied with the problem of infinity, a problem as inescapable as it was stubborn and uncongenial. He treated Renouvier's views on the subject with respect, but as he worked them over with his students, his doubts multiplied. Thereupon he set down his objections item by item and submitted them to Renouvier. James's questions and Renouvier's replies are not light reading. James deliberately made his style "abrupt," and Renouvier was *"raide et heurté";* but the two documents form an interesting dialogue of differences as well as an exhibition of candid and amiable contention.[1] The broad differences are quite unmistakable. Renouvier refers to his lifelong preoccupation with "the mathematical and physical question of the infinite," and although he treats James's objections with deference, it is clear that his mind is made up; James, on the other hand, approaches the question in a spirit of inquiry. Renouvier stands by what he regards as logical finalities, and insists that existence shall conform; James is suspicious of all "musts" and "cannots," and is always willing to leave problems open. As regards the particular questions of space and time, James was disposed to accept Renouvier's opinion of their finitude, but because they so *appeared* rather than for any compelling dialectical reasons such as Renouvier advanced.

At the close of the college year James sent Renouvier his final impressions of the course, and announced his approaching visit to

[1] They have appeared in full (James's letter being translated into French) in *Revue de métaphysique et de morale,* XLII (1935).

Europe. He had already some months before written to Royce: "I 've tried Renouvier as a textbook — for the last time." [2]

Cambridge, June 1, 1880 [3]

My dear Monsieur Renouvier, —

My last lesson in the course on your *Essais* took place today. The final examination occurs this week. The students have been profoundly interested, though their reactions on your teaching seem as diverse as their personalities; one (the maturest of all) being yours body and soul, another turning out a strongly materialistic fatalist! and the rest occupying positions of mixed doubt and assent; all, however (but one), being convinced by your treatment of freedom and certitude.

As for myself, I must frankly confess to you that I am more unsettled than I have been for years. I have read several times over your reply to Lotze,[4] and your reply to my letter. The latter was fully discussed in the class. The former seems to me a perfectly masterly expression of a certain intellectual position, and with the latter, I think it makes it perfectly clear to me where our divergence lies. I can formulate all your reasonings for myself, but — dare I say it? — they fail to awaken conviction. It seems as if, the simpler the point, the more hopeless the disagreement in philosophy. But I will enter into no further discussion now. I think it will be profitable for me, for some time to come, inwardly to digest the matters in question and your utterances before trying to articulate any more opinions.

I am overwhelmed with duties at present, and shall very shortly sail for England to pass part of the vacation; maybe I shall get to the Continent and see you. If we meet, I hope you will treat my heresies on the question of the Infinite with the indulgence and magnanimity which your doctrine of freedom in theoretic affirmations exacts!! I will send you in a day or two an essay which develops your psychology of the voluntary process, and which I hope will give you pleasure.[5]

[2] *L.W.J.*, I. 205.

[3] Reprinted from *L.W.J.*, I, 206–7.

[4] The published discussion between Lotze and Renouvier consisted of the following articles: (1) a series of criticisms by Renouvier, entitled "L'Infinité de l'espace et du temps dans la métaphysique de M. Lotze," *Critique philos.*, 1880, I; (2) an article by Lotze, entitled "L'Infini actuel est-il contradictoire?" *Revue philos.*, IX (1880); (3) Renouvier's reply, with same title, *ibid.*

[5] Presumably "The Feeling of Effort," published in this year.

Pray excuse the haste and superficiality of this note, which is only meant to explain why I do not write at greater length and to announce my hope of soon grasping you by the hand and assuring you in person of my devotion and indebtedness. Always yours,

WM. JAMES

Viège, Aug. 9, 1880

My dear M. Renouvier, —

I write this hastily at a railway station to ask you whether you will be at your home about the end of this week and whether it will be convenient for you to receive a visit from me there. I have been spending some weeks in England and have afterwards come *via* Holland and the Rhine to Switzerland, where for three weeks I have been walking about in the mountains. . . . I have . . . decided to sail from Liverpool on August 21st, which obliges my movements to be rather rapid as I must spend nearly a week in England and would like three days in Paris if possible. Will you kindly write to me immediately . . . saying whether I had better make the journey to Avignon to see you. I am not sure that I shall be able to after all, but a letter from you will help me to see that. It will be a great cause of regret to me if I have to leave Europe without seeing you at all. Excuse the haste of, yours faithfully,

WM. JAMES

The appointment proposed by James was cordially accepted. The meeting took place, not at La Verdette, but at Uriage-les-Bains, a watering place near Grenoble where Renouvier was staying with his friend Pillon.[6] There, about August 15, the three philosophers passed those hours of which James later wrote so picturesque a description to Hodgson.

London, Aug. 21, 1880

Dear M. Renouvier, —

I reached London the day before yesterday only to find that it was impossible to get a place in tomorrow's steamer and that I must wait

[6] François Pillon, one of James's "best of men," was Renouvier's closest collaborator and disciple. He had been the editor of *L'Année philosophique* which preceded the *Critique philos.* (1867–9) and was its co-editor when it was revived in 1890. After Renouvier's death in 1903 Pillon faithfully continued it as the exponent of "Criticisme," until his own death in 1914. It was to Pillon that James dedicated the *Principles,* as an acknowledgment of what he owed to the *Critique philos.*

till next Wednesday, the 25th. I might therefore quite well have stayed two days, if I had wished, at Uriage. And I wish now I had not come away so soon. For hardly had I left when a number of questions that I might have asked you, but did not, arose in my mind, and I should have profited far more by my opportunity and by the sympathetic reception you and M. Pillon gave me if I had had time for the mountaineering state of mind to wear off a little, and the philosophic one to come on. I stayed only twelve hours in Paris, and of course saw no one.

I have just found a copy of my essay on "Effort" [7] and send you the pages of the errors. . . . I only hope that you and M. Pillon will feel free to render the sense in the easiest and most flowing French, without a too scrupulous fidelity to the words I have used. I think the paper will gain by such treatment. Believe me, with feelings of redoubled attachment since seeing you, faithfully yours,

WM. JAMES

Cambridge, Dec. 27, 1880 [8]

My dear Monsieur Renouvier, —

Your note and the conclusion of my article in the *Critique* came together this morning. It gives me almost a feeling of pain that you, at your age and with your achievements, should be spending your time in translating my feeble words, when by every principle of right *I* should be engaged in turning your invaluable writings into English. The state of my eyes is, as you know, my excuse for this as for all other shortcomings. I have not even read the whole of your translation of [my] "Feeling of Effort," though the passages I have perused have seemed to me excellently well done. My exposition strikes me as rather complicated now. It was written in great haste and, were I to rewrite it, it should be simpler. The omissions of which you speak are of no importance whatever.

I have read your discussion with Lotze in the *Revue philosophique* and agree with Hodgson that you carry off there the honors of the battle. *Quant au fond de la question,* however, I am still in doubt and wait for the light of further reflexion to settle my opinion. The matter in my mind complicates itself with the question of a universal

[7] A translation of James's "Feeling of Effort" appeared in *Critique philos.*, 1880, II.

[8] Reprinted from *L.W.J.*, I, 207–8.

ego. If time and space are not *in se*, do we not need an enveloping ego to make continuous the times and spaces, not necessarily coincident, of the partial egos? On this question, as I told you, I will not fail to write again when I get new light, which I trust may decide me in your favor.

My principal amusement this winter has been resisting the inroads of Hegelism in our University. My colleague Palmer, a recent convert and a man of much ability, has been making an active propaganda among the more advanced students. It is a strange thing, this resurrection of Hegel in England and here, after his burial in Germany. I think his philosophy will probably have an important influence on the development of our liberal form of Christianity. It gives a quasi-metaphysic backbone which this theology has always been in need of, but it is too fundamentally rotten and charlatanish to last long. As a reaction against materialistic evolutionism it has its use, only this evolutionism is fertile while Hegelism is absolutely sterile.

I think often of the too-short hours I spent with you and Monsieur Pillon and wish they might return. Believe me with the warmest thanks and regards, yours faithfully,

WM. JAMES

During the next year James continued to send his publications to Renouvier, who read and translated them. Renouvier apologized for the defects of his translations and James apologized for putting Renouvier to so much trouble. The great admiration which each felt for the other was received with no sense of desert, but was none the less heartening in its effect.

La Verdette, April 23, 1882

Dear Monsieur, —

I have received the "Rationality, Activity and Faith" which you sent me and for which I thank you heartily. I have read this new piece of work with the same, if not more, pleasure and interest than its predecessors, which it clarifies and completes admirably. I certainly know nothing that goes more to the bottom of things, without any scholastic apparatus and with a most original way of appealing to the reader's practical sense. It is an entirely new way of writing philosophy and of revealing the man before the philosopher — above

the philosopher, guiding him, making him aware of that which is essential in everything, and of which philosophers very generally appear to be ignorant. But I shall need to read it again to enter wholly into the spirit of the final discussion of the case of the formula $M + x$. I am baffled here by a sort of conscious abstention on your part from certain natural and common ideas concerning the interest in a future life — the *salvation* of the individual as depending on the way he determines the direction of x by his thoughts and by his conduct.[9] But, as I have said, I must read the article again and try to understand you more plainly.

I should like very much, dear Monsieur, with your permission, to translate this fine piece of work for the *Critique philosophique.* But even more than with the earlier articles, I stick at certain passages where my poor knowledge of English only enables me to guess at the meaning, and I am afraid of blundering. I have become all the more hesitant since M. Hodgson, in replying to my notes on his review of my *Essais,* has found it necessary to call my attention to certain misunderstandings which I was incapable of avoiding in translating him. It is true that these mistakes are not such as to affect our polemic in the least. But it is unpleasant just the same. You, dear Monsieur, are more indulgent to my *hommes de guerre* (men of war!)[10] than M. Hodgson. But *I* am afraid of being too indulgent to myself.

This reply of M. Hodgson will appear in the *Critique philosophique,* with my notes of comment. We understand one another, he and I, less than ever. I am well aware that this is the common fate of philosophical debate, that one does not even succeed in speaking a language which one's opponent understands. Nevertheless, I cannot help being astonished that a man of M. Hodgson's worth does not make a slight effort to grasp what I really think, and reply to *that,* instead of beating about the bush in matters which must be presented with the greatest precision if one is to get anywhere with them. Accept, etc.,

C. RENOUVIER

[9] M is the general "state of things," and x is what the individual's subjective reaction adds to them. James argues that when x is an optimistic attitude it may justify *itself,* bringing about that very good in which it believes. This is quite different from the "natural and common idea" of man's power to *earn* an immortality or salvation, awarded through the intervention of divine agency outside himself.

[10] James's "store-room of a man-of-war" (*W.B.,* 220–1) had been rendered by Renouvier as *"la magasin de l'homme de guerre"* (*Critique philos.,* 1880, II, 339).

Cambridge, May 8, 1882

My dear Monsieur Renouvier, —

Again I feel almost humiliated at the way in which you write. It is really almost absurd that a great philosopher like you should treat with such respect my slight and fragmentary productions. All I can say is this: that if you still feel like honoring them by your translation, I sincerely hope that you will handle the text with absolute freedom; cutting out, expanding, altering, paraphrasing, introducing entirely new matter, wherever you see fit. If you will use absolute *carte blanche* in these respects you will give me the most unfeigned satisfaction, for the best function any article of mine can fulfill would be to serve as a kind of nucleus for reflections of your own. The article on "Rationality, Activity and Faith" was written three and one half years ago, and is the one referred to in the note to the title of "Reflex Action and Theism" as having been withheld so long from publication by the *Princeton Review*. The Editor sent me some new proofs the other day and promised to publish the article in July. I sent you one of those proofs. You speak of an "abstention" on my part to discuss certain cases of the formula $M + x$, etc. The whole thing is a mere fragment which I hope some day may form a part of a much larger whole. You will observe that I have changed somewhat the ultra indeterministic conclusions of my old letter to your *Journal* on the question of the moral world.[11] I thought I might have gone too far. At any rate, what I say in these later pages seems practically the most important thing.

I have sent you lately a paper "On Some Hegelisms" of which I flattered myself that the positive parts would please you more than anything I have yet written. They are an attempt to formulate your pluralism and empiricism in a shorter and more popular way than I have met with elsewhere; and I should hope the formulation might make some impression on the students of the English and Scotch Universities if any read the article.

Hodgson is a monist by temperament and volition. I don't believe that you will ever come any closer together by continuing discussion. To your incorruptible insistence on the few essential points he will always be able to oppose ever new and more ingenious distinctions. His fertility and flexibility seem to me wonderful. But I find all the good he does me is from details, — it is strange how little his

[11] The "Quelques Considérations, etc.," *Critique philos.*, 1878, II.

determinism, for example, *imposes*. He is a man of beautiful character, however; though perhaps a little over sensitive and fastidious in small things, as you seem to hint with regard to your treatment of his text.

It seems very likely now that I shall spend next winter in Europe. I may possibly sail for Genoa in August. If you are likely to be at Avignon during that month (which I doubt), I should be tempted to stop at Marseilles for the sake of paying you a visit. Won't you kindly write and inform me, so far as it is possible, of your summer program? My poor physical condition still restricts my work to the point of making me sometimes feel quite desperate — your *Science de la morale, e.g.*, still remains unread, but I hope that a year with no lecturing will help me, to some degree, to cover my arrears. As ever, gratefully yours,

WM. JAMES

P.S. Won't you express your opinion in the *Critique* on Delbœuf's recent essays on indeterminism? [12] I am afraid they are not very important, but only a mathematician like yourself is a competent critic. He is a charmingly ingenious and original writer.

La Verdette, May 28, 1882

My dear Mr. James, —

I am glad to learn that you are arranging to spend next winter in Europe, and I hope eagerly to have the pleasure of a meeting with you somewhere. All that I on my side can say of my plans at present is that I expect to be stopping at the watering-place of Vals-les-Bains (Ardèche) with my friends M. and Mme. Pillon during the months of July and August. The heat makes La Verdette intolerable to me during these summer months, and Pillon every year has to take a cure of bicarbonate of soda, so I accompany him, looking out a little for my own health too, were it only a case of *pelliculam curare meam*. In September we shall return together to La Verdette, from which I do not usually stir again all winter. Possibly, however, I might this year go to Paris in November or December and stay there some months. Perhaps this would be most favorable to our meeting? It would be most kind of you, dear Monsieur, if you would inform

[12] Three articles on "Déterminisme et liberté," by J. Delbœuf, *Revue philos.*, XIII, XIV (1882).

me as to your designs and detailed plans as soon as they are fixed. A few words addressed to La Verdette will always reach me.

You are much too modest in your estimate of your philosophical productions. They are *lively* and living in conception and style, but not *light* — far from it. Your thinking springs from a source that is original and profound, and bears the stamp of what you yourself feel — of something that comes, indeed, from your very self. I so much like your ideas and the way in which you deliver them, that my embarrassment as translator comes not from any scruples that I might feel at Frenchifying them freely in my own fashion — since you have given me permission to do this — but rather from the desire to adhere closely to your own expressions, and from the fear of committing blunders just because of wishing to translate too literally. However, I shall do my best, with Pillon's help.

I received your article on the Hegelian sophistries and thank you for sending it. I congratulate you heartily on the way you have executed, on this great sophist's back, that which in France, in the slang of the day, we call an *éreintement* of the first order. If you could only restore some of the youth who have been led astray by this anti-scientific and anti-philosophical philosophy of vain conceit. I am busy at the moment replying to the notes which M. Hodgson sent me on the psychological part of our dispute. You will see that among the quite indisputable intellectual resources of this philosopher one cannot count either the aptitude for entering completely into another's ideas, or the capacity to focus the argument upon decisive points instead of *beating about the bush.* I recognize perfectly his worth as a thinker, which is considerable, but I fear that his education and the influences which have moulded him were of a sort too little mathematical.

I am in the act of treating fundamentally in the *Critique philosophique* the question of the conservation of energy in relation to that of freedom.[18] After reviewing the opinions of Du Bois-Reymond, de Cournot, Saint-Venant and Boussinesq on this curious subject, I shall deal with Delbœuf, if there is space; but his study has not yet reached a conclusion, and I do not see just where he is coming out, for he is ingenious and often interesting, but prolix. He certainly has all the mathematics which the question requires, but I wonder if

[18] "De Quelques Opinions récentes sur la conciliation du libre arbitre avec le mécanisme physique," *Critique philos.*, 1882, I.

he does not lack rather the critical powers necessary to avoid confusing mathematical abstractions and absolutes with the real laws of phenomena, and mistaking the bold inductions drawn from scientific truths for conclusions entitled to the name of *science*. As for me, that which settles the question is just this: that it is not proved, and is impossible that it ever should be proved, that the *absolute* conservation of energy is a *real* law of nature. But it is proved that the *greatest* physical effects of freedom, if it exists, only require of the sum of actually given forces alterations less than those which are observable, and, in a word, *as small as one likes to suppose them.* I do not believe that the thesis thus presented is open to any objection whatsoever. But speculative people, and religious people as well, are always engaged with much earnestness in persuading themselves that there is something — some single thing, matter, force, God, etc. — which is all that they are, and does all that they do, so that they are themselves responsible for nothing. The present fashion is *force and matter,* and if the religious fashion is no longer predestination as it was formerly, perhaps that is because religion has lost much of its vigor. Adieu, dear Monsieur, etc.

RENOUVIER

La Verdette, Sept. 5, 1882

My dear Mr. James, —

I congratulate you on having decided upon this extensive trip, and on having been able to carry it out.[14] I hope that it will help your general health and as a consequence that weak organ of yours, — the eyes. Take as good care as possible of them, if you put any trust in my advice. Your originality, your direct view of that which is really *to be seen,* will lose rather than gain by much reading, and especially by the reading of German philosophical books. It seems to me when I read you that you are called to found an *American philosophy.* So it would not do for you to make sacrifices to strange gods. But here am I allowing myself to give you advice! I hope that my age will serve to excuse me.

I quite understand, since the season for mountain climbing is already well advanced, that you should lose no time, and that immediately after disembarking you should prefer to go directly to the

[14] James was now at sea on his way to England, whence he proceeded almost at once to Germany.

region suited to your holiday rather than arrive too late because of stopping in the south of France. But could you not, when you leave Italy, change the order of your trip, beginning with France and ending with Berlin where you could leave for England? In this case you could, for example, go by sea from Genoa to Marseilles, and spend several days with me who live on the route from Marseilles to Paris. . . . My little house is uncomfortable enough, and all my surroundings here suffer from the notorious habits of Provence in matters of cleanliness and well-being. To this must be added my own easy-going ways — shall I call them philosophical? — which an English gentleman would find more akin to Diogenes than to Seneca! But travellers are not usually hard to please. It would make me very happy if you would do me the honor of spending some time under my humble roof. The contracted quarters of the house itself are somewhat offset by its surroundings of meadows and woods with plenty of water, which make it for me an agreeable place of residence, — in all but hot weather. I shall be here from now on, and I expect to spend the whole winter and spring here. If there were to be any change in this plan — which is possible, but not probable — it would be to go to Paris in February. . . .

I have translated your "Rationality, Activity and Faith," and we shall give it out continuously to the readers of the *Critique philosophique*. I was struck, even more than at the first reading, by the force of the argument, by the originality of the form, and by the admirable practical sense of your method. . . . I am impressed by what you say to the effect that your $M + x$ argument (as regards the extent to which the world depends on individual decisions of thought and action) is equally valid, whether one assumes the agent's freedom or universal necessity. Nevertheless it seems to me beyond doubt that your theory is inspired by the profound conviction that *the agent modifies the world by his act, and not that the world modifies itself by means of this agent and his act* — by virtue of a *fact* eternally appointed for this instant of time. Will a fatalist be willing to adopt the former of these points of view? He will object, I imagine, as follows: every phenomenon being invariably determined for the moment when it appears, there is always an equation $M + x = S$, where S is the sum of all the possible phenomena comprised between any two given instants of time; and where S has a value eternally given *in se* by the law of the world (necessary hypoth-

esis). It follows, according to the same hypothesis that $x = S - M$. Therefore, x is eternally given, despite the fact that it occurs only at its own moment of time. How can you, the fatalist will continue, propose to me a theory which treats my x in relation to the world as though by a determination of x to intervene the world could be changed, when it is from the inevitable alteration of the world that x itself results at a fixed moment of time? What reply shall we make to the proposed objection? It is clear that we shall argue from the fact that the fatalist himself, the theoretic fatalist, is obliged in practice to regard the future x as a veritable *indeterminate,* and the future of the world as consequently in some measure undetermined, and *dependent on the independent variable x.* But at this point we shall enter upon the usual controversy between necessity and freedom, and we have no right to say that we have freed our argument from either of the two hypotheses *in theory.* I believe that I can trust your thought to follow mine on this point, for I have thought terribly hard on this question of freedom! The further I go the more I am disposed to believe that all philosophy, theoretical as well as practical, hangs on it.

I am convinced that M. Hodgson has not yet looked deeply enough either into the question of what he calls *perception* (for perception in his sense implies something *in se* beyond phenomena), or into the question of the feeling of freedom, since he is unwilling to allow the philosopher to distinguish between this feeling pure and simple, this feeling as illusory, and this feeling as answering to real indeterminations. His claim to appropriate exclusively to his own way of looking at things a term which is common property, is, it seems to me, somewhat childish. As for the rest I see no evidence to indicate on his part any other notion of free choice than that of the philosophers who regard it as a *necessary illusion.* All that he does is to substitute for freedom the feeling (erroneous) of being free.

What a long letter! I should have liked at least to spare your eyes in some measure by writing a little better and larger. But for some time I have had a nervous trembling of the fingers which makes writing difficult and painful. I transmit to you, dear Monsieur, the compliments and friendly greetings of Pillon, who is by my side at this moment and who has helped me with some of the difficult places in my translation. He expects to return to Paris towards the middle of October, and to stay there all winter. . . .

He would be much delighted to know the time of your arrival in Paris, and to see you there as soon as you come. Accept . . . best wishes for the success of your European peregrinations, from your devoted

RENOUVIER

Vienna, Sept. 28, 1882

My dear Mr. Renouvier, —

I have deferred answering your letter so long because I was slowly making up my mind about the Berlin question. I think I can now say that I will almost certainly accept your very cordial invitation, and pass a couple of days with you early in November, at the Verdette. I have in fact decided for various good practical reasons (other than the one you so touchingly urge of danger to my soul from the philosophical malaria of Germany!) to give up the expedition to Berlin altogether, and to divide the few months I can spend on this old continent between Paris and London. My mountain plans have been completely broken up by the continuous rains and the inundations, and having got as far as Salzburg, I found myself obliged to come as far east as Vienna, so as to get to Venice by way of Trieste. It results in my passing my weeks of *flâneries* in large cities instead of spending them in the bosom of nature. Fortunately I can be sure of no further inundation in Venice than that to which she has always been accustomed, and on the whole I have no doubt that my present lot is as useful to me as the plan I originally formed.

I entirely agree with all you say about the $M + x$ formula having no relevancy in the indeterminism question. I only applied it to the question of optimism, if I remember rightly, and never for a moment supposed that one could do anything with it to prove free will. I believe more and more that free will, if accepted at all, must be accepted as a postulate in justification of our moral judgment that certain things already done might have been better done. This implies that something different was possible in their place. The determinist, who calls this judgment *false,* cannot consistently mean that so far as it actually was rendered, a truer judgment could have been in *its* place. Both falsity and evil are for him, in what concerns the past, entirely separated from that mental connexion with "what *might* have been" in which (to our ordinary consciousness) lies the essence of their meaning. The only way in

which he can save the rationality of the world to his own mind, is by taking refuge in an absolute optimistic faith which says the world as a whole is the richer and better for having had that error, that evil, in it at that particular place and time. Hence, an absolute justification of all past fact, and consequently an absolute indifferentism to all future fact. For as long as languages contain a future-perfect tense, it will be possible for men in looking towards the future, to think of it as something that *shall have been,* and that consequently may be treated according to the law of the past. I don't see how such a quietistic optimism as this can be denied to be a necessary corollary of determinism by such writers as Hodgson, who cling to a belief that the world is rational as well as determined. It is, in fact, the religious view, and I feel strongly the attractiveness of it myself. Religion and morality, when radically treated, seem essentially opposed, in fact. But it seems to me that history decides sufficiently clearly between the two: quietistic, fatalistic optimism leads to antinomianism of one sort or another, and some sink of corruption always lies practically at the end. So, for entirely practical reasons, I hold that we are justified in believing that both falsehood and evil to some degree *need not have been.* I wish you would examine more closely than you have done the relations of deterministic rationality with optimism, and the enervating practical fruits of every absolute (as distinguished from limited or moral) optimism.

I must now sally forth to see the picture gallery. To see this magnificent capital, one would not suppose the Austrian empire to be crumbling. I will announce to you my approach, or any possible change of intention on my part that the experience of the next month may bring about. . . . I am, as always, your grateful and faithful

WM. JAMES

Renouvier's reply, dated October 15, renewed his offer of hospitality, and announced the translation and publication of James's "Rationality, Activity and Faith."

Venice, Oct. 23, 1882

My dear Mr. Renouvier, —

Your kind letter of the 15th reached me duly. . . . I am sorry to write you that the definitive shaping of my plans carries me away

from the south of France. I leave in a few hours for Trieste, Prague, Leipzig, Berlin, and Liége, on my way to Paris. I think that I ought not to give up altogether the idea of hearing certain psychologists in those cities. But instead of settling in Berlin to work for a couple of months, which was my original intention, I shall probably spend but a week or ten days, and be in Paris certainly before the middle of November. This is a compromise which, in view of the sum total of all my interests, seems better than either extreme. It costs me a good deal of effort to give up the altogether exceptional privilege of being your guest; but as you speak of a probable visit to Paris in February, I count on seeing you there and then.

I have not seen the *Critique philosophique* since leaving home. I shall of course see it in Paris, with your translation of my precious wisdom. I will try not to let your continued distinction of me turn my head. I leave Venice earlier than I meant to, because I think the air is bad for my sleep. I left home with the hope that my chronic insomnia would improve, but it has been here as bad, or worse, than ever, notwithstanding the fact of my mind being like a stagnant pool and all outward influences somnolescent to the last degree. If you know my life, you would confess that my little stream of work runs on under great disadvantages. Venice is delicious, in spite of gloomy and rainy weather four days out of five. But if anything could make a man a fatalist it would be the sight of the inevitable decay of every art, as soon as it reaches the full bloom of maturity. Music and the novel will follow the same law, and leave, if they have not already left, a high water mark which will never be reached again. Because I think I can see why, it does not make *me* a fatalist. You will hear of me as soon as I reach Paris. Meanwhile I am, as ever, your faithful pupil

WM. JAMES

London, Dec. 6, 1882

My dear Monsieur Renouvier, —

Possibly M. Pillon will have already written to you of my arrival in Paris and of my sudden recall by a telegram announcing my father's dangerous illness. Arrived in London, I received another despatch saying the peril was not immediate and that I, at least, must not come home. My brother has sailed, and I am waiting in his

apartments until he telegraphs me on his arrival what to do. In any event, having got as far as this on my way towards home, I think it very likely that I shall not retrace my steps again to the Continent. I have already spent more than I can afford in traveling; my books and things are on the way hither, my brother's quarters are extremely comfortable; I am already in the way of making many profitable acquaintances; and finally the events at home, however they turn out, will make it desirable for me to shorten my stay abroad, and probably go back in the middle of February at the latest. The climate here, it is true, is like the inside of a coal mine, — and a coal mine in process of combustion at that; and I much regret snapping the threads of acquaintance and occupation that I was beginning to weave together so nicely in Paris. But, *c'est le train du monde!* We never finish anything here below. My intercourse with the Pillons was of the very pleasantest. I shared their hospitality several times, and we talked of all things under the sun. Here I have seen Hodgson twice. He is as much of a gentleman as ever, well and active, and very much interested in the affairs of a certain Aristotelian Society of which he is "president," and which I fancy will form the first incarnation of his "school." It will evidently help him to clearness of expression to have a lot of living youths to beat his ideas into. I suppose he has sent you his last presidential address. It seems to me a marvelously subtle performance, and to formulate his position more clearly than anything he has yet published. But I still fail to throw myself into his central attitude, from which everything looks simple. He is evidently destined to still change his formulas, and is writing a new book in which the whole matter shall be stated in a way to supersede without contradicting his former writings. He asked many questions about you, which I answered to the best of my ability, aided by some information the Pillons had given me. He expressed wonder at the indefatigable energy and fertility shown by both Pillon and yourself in the *Critique*. I told him that both he and I must now be counted as collaborators; at which he laughed.

My tour in Germany was pleasant, and from the pedagogic point of view instructive; although its chief result was to make me more satisfied than ever with our Harvard College methods of teaching, and to make me feel that in America we have perhaps a more cosmopolitan post of observation than is elsewhere to be found. At

Liége I spent two delightful days with Delbœuf, the best and most vivacious of men. He is evidently desirous that you should say your say about his papers on indeterminism. We talked a good deal about them without my ideas being fully cleared up. Defining discontinuous movements as he does, I see that we must have such a movement whenever a force hitherto inactive begins to act; and I think I see that the existence of *apparent* discontinuity cannot be explained away by an appeal to absolute motion in which the discontinuity shall disappear; for there must be *some* action *ex abrupto* even in the absolute movement to cause the *appearance* of discontinuity in the relative movement. But whether all this means the same thing as indeterminism I can't tell. I hope you will write something about it. After all, pluralism and indeterminism seem to be but two ways of stating the same thing. I hope you will excuse the execrable writing of this machine, — it was so knocked about on its journey as to get all out of order, and I had to tinker it up as best I could. I will write to you again in case of further movements and am meanwhile, as ever, faithfully yours,

WM. JAMES

P.S. The status of peregrination I find to be wholly incompatible with work. I hoped to begin writing about Nov. 1st; but I find I have written as yet but *six pages* of the Psychology I am supposed to be at work upon!

The name of Delbœuf has already appeared in these letters. James's attention had first been attracted to Delbœuf in the field of psychology, where he represented the new tendency to ally psychology with physics and physiology. In 1879 James had quoted him and alluded to his "brilliancy."[15] He was later struck by Delbœuf's article, "Le Sommeil et les rêves," from which he gleaned a vivid passage on the irrevocability of the past and "the everlasting coming of concrete novelty."[16] In spite of his predilection for a scientific psychology, Delbœuf was a highly speculative philosopher — too speculative for Renouvier, and even for James, who liked a bold and original mind. In 1882 he published a series of articles in the *Revue philosophique* on "Determinism and Liberty."

[15] *Jour. of Specul. Philos.*, XIII (1879), 82. Delbœuf's influence on James's psychology will be considered below, 56, 92.
[16] *S.P.P.*, 148–9.

His views on this subject having already been broached in a critical review of "The Feeling of Effort," [17] he now wrote to James to explain the review and its relation to the articles. He acknowledged his great indebtedness, and in particular on the point which James so much stressed, namely, that determinism is inconsistent with judgments of *regret*.[18] "Reading your 'Feeling of Effort,' " he continued, "had stirred me to a high pitch of enthusiasm. I asked everybody I met: 'Have you read the monograph of M. James? Read it!' Just to think! Something new on that ancient question; new from one end to the other. It was not to be believed." [19]

James visted Delbœuf in Liége, November 20, 1882, pronouncing him "an angel, and much the best teacher" he had ever seen.[20] Delbœuf was not unlike James in the warmth and liveliness of his temperament, and there was an instant affection which led to many years of friendly correspondence. The following letter from Delbœuf to James marks their fast-ripening intimacy: —

Liége, Dec. 19, 1882

Dear Friend, —

For it is by this name that I want henceforth to call you — your post-card, which I awaited with the keenest impatience, was delivered to me today on my return from a mission (to Huy this time — in the interval I have also been to Namur). . . . I get a quite objective amusement from people's surprise. I enjoyed two whole weeks when upon receiving your question, What do you teach? I replied as you know (namely, "Greek and Latin philology, at the University of Liége" and "Greek grammar at the École Normale des Humanités"). I followed my reply in my fancy; I travelled on the ship which carried it. Finally it arrived in Boston. You open the letter; then behold! at its bare mention of "Greek" and "Latin" you drop your arms and sit plunged in an abyss of reflection. I do not know whether this is the way it happened; but it gives me pleasure to imagine it so. You must think me very prolix for so busy a man!

[17] It was this criticism on which Hodgson had commented in his letter of Jan. 26, 1882 (above, 621).

[18] Delbœuf cites James as saying (apparently in a recent letter) that it would be "supremely unreasonable to suppose that in a whole where nothing has been left to chance or to liberty one part should find that another part was out of place." *Revue philos.*, XIII (1882), 612.

[19] Translated from a letter of May 5, 1882. The French texts of this and other extracts from Delbœuf's letters will be found below, Appendix IV. The loss of James's letters to Delbœuf is most regrettable.

[20] *L.W.J.*, I, 217–8.

It is one of my rare distractions thus to let my pen follow in a letter the current of my nimbly vagrant thought.

My wife and my children vividly cherish your memory. We shall never forget the sympathetic face of him who left a place so far away, to come and sit at our table; and we entertain ourselves with the hope of seeing him again one day with his wife, and a child, perhaps. The same hospitality, even more cordial if possible, awaits them. . . . Your affectionate

J. DELBŒUF

Meanwhile, in May, June, and August, Delbœuf had published his three articles on "Determinism and Liberty," which formed the sequel to his review of James and in which he advanced his own radical views. Believing that determinism was logically irrefutable, while freedom was psychologically self-evident and morally necessary, the crux of the matter for him was the verdict of physical science. Hence he launched upon cosmological speculations in which he insisted upon the occurrence of *discontinuities* in nature, which he thought freedom could alone explain. He advanced the ingenious idea, James's "Delbovine hypothesis," that freedom is consistent with the principle of the conservation of energy because the free agent does not introduce a new quantity of energy, but only chooses *the time* when existing energies shall intervene. It can accelerate or retard. He also distinguished between the real time of natural processes, in which their inward "affinities" and satisfactions occur, and the schematic, homogeneous time of science — all in a manner strongly suggesting Bergson. These views he developed not only in the articles published in the *Revue philosophique* but also in his letters to James, and especially in the long letter of December 19, 1882, from which extracts have been cited above.[21] This letter was sent through Pillon to Renouvier, who acknowledged it in his reply to James's letter of December 6: —

La Verdette, Dec. 28, 1882

My dear Mr. James, —

I have learned from our friend Pillon, who was kind enough also to send me your letter, the sad news of your father's death. I send

[21] *Cf.* below, Appendix IV. In 1886 James looked back to these articles and to this correspondence as playing an important part in his dissatisfaction with the automaton theory. *Cf.* his letter to C. A. Strong, Oct. 21 [1889], below, II, 26.

you my sympathy, recurring naturally to my own like occasions of bereavement, to vivid memories of sorrow scattered through a life already long. I see from your letter to Pillon that you have made up your mind to return again to Paris for a little while, before embarking for "home." He is very happy about it, and I much envy him. But when I consider my strength I find that I really have not the courage to abandon, during the winter, my corner by the fire and the habits of an old man — who is more valetudinarian than his friends are willing to believe, and consequently a little pathological.

The items which you give me about M. Hodgson interest me very much. In the course of translating new fragments of his *Philosophy of Reflection* I am learning more and more to appreciate his great worth; but, but . . . in short, he is an absolutist, and from my own point of view, being more and more confirmed in my adherence to the practical spirit in philosophy and in my rejection of *systems,* this makes an even greater difference between us than the difference regarding *concept* and *percept.*

To me your expression that *indeterminism and pluralism are the same thing* is very profound. Such being the case, I cannot hesitate. I am not capable of any other choice. *At bottom* my principal reason is that I cannot and will not accept the thesis which says, in theological language, that *God is the author of evil.* And there can be no doubt that the world *is* badly arranged.

Continuity (or infinity of composition, and, in consequence, of action) and necessity or solidarity, are, again, for me the same thing; just as freedom and discontinuity belong together, as you have so well said. It seems to me, as it does to you, that the appearance of discontinuity would be inexplicable in a system of continuity. . . . What seems to me especially feeble in the deterministic thesis, is the fact that *force, action,* and *cause* are words which signify precisely nothing for the determinist who is logical and capable of grasping the inner meaning of his own idea. . . . So I would not say with Delbœuf that determinism is "an irrefutable logical system." . . .

I should have liked, in order to please you, to deal with the ideas of Delbœuf in the *Critique philosophique,* but I feel myself incapable of doing it owing to my inability to grasp them well or to find any precise formulation of them. . . . As to the chief point

of his thesis, I do not understand how he can say that the law of the conservation of energy remains intact and absolute, provided only the agent disposes freely of time — in choosing his moment of action. Is it not always necessary that, at the moment when he decides to intervene, he should introduce in the system of given motions whatever new motion is necessary to change their actual relations? No, I can make nothing of it. . . .

No more do I understand what is said of time in the letter from Delbœuf which Pillon sends me. For me, time is the law of succession of changes of every sort, and a uniform velocity which should serve as a measure of time is to me as clear an idea as that of metrical unity or the numerical unity which composes 3, 4, 5, etc. I do not know (other than that) what can be meant by "affinities" more or less rapidly satisfied. It is time which measures the velocity of the satisfactions and not the reverse. In short, to speak quite freely between ourselves, this philosopher strikes me as a bungler. It is for you, my dear Mr. James, to tell me your understanding of these ideas: then I too shall certainly understand them.

I judge that my letter will find you still in London, or that in any case it will be forwarded to you in Paris. As the new year approaches I offer you, after our French custom, my keenest wishes for your health and your physical and moral contentment for the next year and those to come; and I close by signing myself, if you will permit me in this kindly matter to follow the example of Delbœuf, *Votre parfaitement acquis ami,*

C. RENOUVIER

P.S. I must apologize for my hand as you do for your eyes. I have the greatest difficulty in guiding my hand without nervous tremors and it is very painful to me to write. Where will it end? I have received M. Hodgson's *brochure* and shall write and thank him for it without delay.

Spring's opinion on the cut cord of the sling surprises me.[22] It is a mixed problem of mechanics, physiology and physics, in a world where for the determinist the realities proceed to infinity in space and in time. But for the determinist it should be exactly the same with the simplest questions.

[22] *Cf.* Delbœuf's letter to W.J., Dec. 19, 1882, Appendix IV.

London, Jan. 11 [1883]

My dear Monsieur Renouvier, —

Your very interesting letter was received a good many days ago. I must limit myself now to a very few lines of reply. My eyes have grown so bad here in the light or rather the darkness of London, and my correspondence has within a few weeks been so large, that I have found no time for philosophic study, and I feel that it *must* be made to stop, even at the price of stopping my correspondence altogether. Hodgson has just returned from a three weeks' absence in the country, and yesterday I sent him the first page of your letter, which had reference to him. I have not seen him since. He is a wonderful creature, as charming and modest a human being as you ever met. I am striving to get at the root of his mental attitude, and hope to make some progress still; but his diagnosis is a difficult one, and I may never attain an "arrested" opinion. As regards Delbœuf, I hardly think you do him quite justice yet. But Heaven forbid that I should add to my other undone tasks now, that of being his champion. I prefer to let him fight his battles out himself, as he will probably continue to do in the *Revue philosophique*. What he calls his "Empedoclism" of course gets into mysticism, and I imagine he will not insist much thereupon. But it seems to me that the rest of his theory amounts to an hypothesis about *facts* which we have as yet no evidence for deciding, and perhaps never shall have. First, the analysis of real motions shows an apparent "discontinuity" which it is true can be infinitely reduced by reinstating all the full plenitude of real elements and so taking the matter out of its first schematic shape; — but this does not annihilate it. Now, is the *time* when one molecule of the brain shall obey the impulse given by another so indeterminate, that such discontinuity may be found in the motions of these molecules, and consequently in other motions of which they are remote effects? This does not seem to me an irrational question. Delbœuf himself admits that the question is one of molecular happenings. But enough! I am already violating my resolution, and if you answer, must not reply again.

I see you are beginning an important work in the *Critique religieuse*. Woe is me! that I can't yet devour it. The former instalment I had not seen, since it was sent to America after my departure. I am very sorry for what you say of your fingers. The printing machine

I use was invented chiefly for the use of those afflicted with the writer's cramp.[23] It works beautifully in such cases. I find it now infinitely less troublesome than the pen and would always far rather write with it. . . . I should unconditionally recommend you to try it did I not know how hard it is at your age to learn new habits and muscular coördinations. . . . I shall *probably* leave for America on February 10th. With most cordial good wishes, I remain as ever, faithfully yours,

WM. JAMES

In his reply to the above letter Renouvier enclosed a *"Note complémentaire,"* in which he resumed the argument with Delbœuf, rejecting the latter's attempted compromise between freedom and the conservation of energy. This note was sent on to Delbœuf, who transmitted another note in reply. James had thus become the intermediary in a controversy in which he had ceased to be an active participant. Writing to Renouvier from London in February, he said, *"Suave, mari magno* to sit safely on the cliff and enjoy the spectacle of big steamers colliding." The "big steamers" were evidently Renouvier and Delbœuf — the rest was Lucretius.[24] In the same letter James had evidently communicated to Renouvier the impressions of the English that appear in his other letters of the period — their lack of light and reason, their sturdiness and sanity.

La Verdette, Feb. 11, 1883

My dear Mr. James, —

I am still writing to you at London assuming that my letter will be forwarded if you have already left, and not knowing where else to address you. You will find enclosed a photograph which I am happy to offer to you in the hope of receiving one of yours (I have one which is now pretty old), if by chance you have had any new ones taken. I was struck by your lively comments on the English people and on their luck — one chance in a million — in arriving at such a resultant as we see before us after with difficulty surviving the many hard crises of their history. The French people are more in danger of turning out badly in the end, because

[23] The first part of this letter was typewritten, the last part written by hand.

[24] *"Suave, mari magno turbantibus aequora ventis,*
e terra magnum alterius spectare laborem." (*De Rerum Natura*, II, 1–2.)

of their continental location (requiring a standing army), and that lack of patience which you speak of, which will perhaps make them incapable of keeping up the experiment which they are now so gayly making — the experiment of allowing individuals complete liberty to *excite themselves against one another,* by calumnies, threats, etc. People say that you bear these things remarkably well in America. . . .

There is really too much modesty in your figure of the steamers and your *Suave, mari magno.* I hope that you will reach a reasoned conclusion — and that it will be in my favor! I shall for the moment make only a slight comment on M. Delbœuf's note. I do not find that he conducts the discussion rigorously enough. It would be a real undertaking to reargue the whole of it. It is not at all my thesis that freedom is a power to begin (or to end) motions, but rather that it has absolutely nothing to do with motions properly so-called, and that in mechanics there are neither *forces* nor *causes:* — only given motions which *could* be transformed (notably by disturbances of equilibrium) without any change in the sum of the *vis viva,* and this by the sole fact that a force (mental, since there are no others) supervenes. . . . It is a matter of correspondence of phenomena. . . . I quite realize that all this would require a fuller explanation. But long *articles* have also their inconveniences, and you are one of those who gather a great deal from a few words. Always, etc.,

C. RENOUVIER

XLIII

RENOUVIER: AGREEMENTS AND DIFFERENCES (1883–1898)

Keene Valley, Aug. 5, 1883[1]

My dear Monsieur Renouvier, —

My silence has been so protracted that I fear you must have wondered what its reasons could be. Only the old ones! — much to do, and little power to do it, obliging procrastination. You will doubtless have heard from the Pillons of my safe return home. I have spent the interval in the house of my mother-in-law in Cambridge, trying to do some work in the way of psychologic writing before the fatal day should arrive when the College bell, summoning *me* as well as my colleagues to the lecture-room, should make literary work almost impossible. Although my bodily condition, thanks to my winter abroad, has been better than in many years at a corresponding period, what I succeeded in accomplishing was well-nigh zero. I floundered round in the morasses of the theory of cognition, — the Object and the Ego, — tore up almost each day what I had written the day before, and although I am inwardly, of course, more aware than I was before of where the difficulties of the subject lie, outwardly I have hardly any manuscript to show for my pains. Your unparalleled literary fecundity is a perfect wonder to me. You should return pious thanks to the one or many gods who had a hand in your production, not only for endowing you with so clear a head, but for giving you so admirable a working temperament.

The most rapid piece of literary work I ever did was completed ten days ago, and sent to *Mind,* where it will doubtless soon appear. I had promised to give three lectures at a rather absurd little "Summer School of Philosophy," which has flourished for four or five years past in the little town of Concord near Boston, and which has an audience of from twenty to fifty persons, including the lecturers themselves; and, finding at the last moment that I could do nothing

[1] *L.W.J.*, I, 229–33.

with my much meditated subject of the Object and the Ego, I turned round and lectured "On Some Omissions of Introspective Psychology," [2] and wrote the substance of the lectures out immediately after giving them — the whole occupying six days. I hope you may read the paper some time and approve it — though it is out of the current of your own favorite topics and consequently hardly a proper candidate for the honors of translation in the *Critique*.

I understand now why no really good classical manual of psychology exists; why all that do exist only treat of particular points and chapters with any thoroughness. It is impossible to write one at present, so infinitely more numerous are the difficulties of the task than the means of their solution. Every chapter bristles with obstructions that refer one to the next ten years of work for their mitigation.

With all this I have done very little consecutive reading. I have not yet got at your historic survey in the *Critique religieuse*, for which my brain nevertheless itches. But I have read your articles apropos of Fouillée,[3] and found them — the latest one especially — admirable for clearness and completeness of statement. Surely nothing like them has ever been written — no such stripping of the question down to its naked essentials. . . .

I find myself counting the years till my next visit to Europe becomes possible. Then it shall occur under more cheerful circumstances, if possible; and I shall stay the full fifteen months instead of only six. As I look back now upon the winter, I find the strongest impression I received was that of the singularly artificial, yet deeply vital and soundly healthy, character of the English social and political system as it now exists. It is one of the most *bizarre* outbirths of time, one of the most abnormal, in certain ways, and yet one of the most successful. I know nothing that so much confirms your philosophy as this spectacle of an accumulation of individual initiatives *all preserved*. I hope both you and the Pillons are well. I shall never forget their friendliness, nor the spirit of human kindness that filled their household. I am ashamed to ask for letters from you, when after so long a silence I can myself give you so little

[2] Published in *Mind*, IX (1884).

[3] A. Fouillée had written an article entitled "Les Nouveaux Expédients en faveur du libre arbitre," in the *Revue philos.*, XIV (1882), 585. Renouvier replied in two articles, both appearing in the *Critique philos.* for 1882, II, under the titles of "Les Nouvelles Chicanes contre la possibilité du libre arbitre," and "Les Objections de M. Fouillée contre la conciliation du libre arbitre avec les lois du mouvement."

that is of philosophic interest. But we must take long views; and, if life be granted, I shall do something yet, both in the way of reading and writing. Ever truly yours.

WM. JAMES

Paris, Sept. 11, 1884

Dear Mr. James, —

I do not know whether you are acquainted with the mental disease of *epistolary procrastination.* If you are, we shall be companions in misery. If not, I beg you to make a psychological effort to understand this state and to forgive my long silence. I have thought of you and had my mind full of you, — of your labors, and of the recollection of our all-too-short interview, and of what Pillon has reported of his conversations with you, more favored as they were by circumstance — a hundred times as long as it would have taken to write you many letters! Once more, forgive me.

I received the three things you kindly sent me. I am going to take up the translation of your "Dilemma of Determinism" for the *Critique philosophique,* if you see no objection, and I shall do it with very great pleasure, despite the difficulty of correctly rendering some of the familiar or picturesque terms. I need not tell you that I have been struck as always with the originality and life which you put into the expression of ideas, which with you cease to be disagreeably abstract without losing anything of their generality and scope. This time, furthermore, the ideas are common to us both, as you have had the kindness to remark. As you yourself no doubt have conjectured, I cannot say that I am disposed to follow you in your views on the *omissions of psychology* any more than on the *definition of emotion.*[4] On this last point, I am sorry that you have not made your thought clearer and more complete, at least for me, by developing the ideas of general teleology and of reflex psychical action which, unless I am mistaken, I suppose you to hold. Limiting myself to what you explicitly set forth, I cannot understand how emotion as such and specifically, can consist in a physical, mechanical impression with which it has by definition no kinship, — or be a way of translating the perception we have of that impression. When I try to grasp what this means I am forced back to the principle of

[4] "The Dilemma of Determinism" appeared in the *Unitarian Rev.,* XXII (1884); and "What Is an Emotion?" in *Mind,* IX (1884).

former theories such as Cartesian occasionalism, for I cannot rationally think that *fear*, for example, *is* the perception of a certain molecular vibration.

As to your streams of thought, your attempt to enter into the τὸ ἄπειρον [5] and the continuity of successive states is certainly interesting. My objection would be that the human, psychical function is rational only by virtue of groupings of phenomena under different categorical functions, which bring order and classification into the manifold of these impressions and ideas — forming, as they do, an apparent infinity. There, it seems to me, are the file-leaders which guide the sensible phenomena, as they are the stakes and surveyor's marks for the understanding. How can we classify and create science in psychology, without recognizing an intellectual basis for such general terms as *where, who, when, what, for what, by what,* etc.? Pardon the excessive brevity of these remarks if they do not suffice to convey to you the sense of my objection to your ingenious innovations. But perhaps they will suffice. Our friend Pillon will write you soon and meanwhile charges me to convey his affectionate greetings. . . . Your etc.,

C. RENOUVIER

Cambridge, Sept. 30 [1884]

My dear Monsieur Renouvier. —

Your welcome letter arrived a week ago. I am glad you judge my discourse on "the Dilemma etc.," worthy of translation. I cannot say I am surprised after experience of your past treatment. In fact the topic of this last production of mine made me rather expect that it would appear sooner or later in your pages. Pray deal with it as freely as you can. It was composed to be spoken, which accounts for many peculiarities in the form. I give you *carte blanche* to paraphrase, omit, expand, invert, — do whatever you please. My yoking of Renan with Zola may sound lacking in delicacy to French ears, but as a Yankee backwoodsman it gave me a malicious pleasure, and at *bottom* it is the true *rapprochement,* for Renan now is nothing but an artist playing with effects. And we can now also see that he never was anything else.

I thank you for your criticisms on my "Omissions" and my "Emotions." I am truly sorry, but not greatly surprised at your

[5] The unlimited or indeterminate.

not agreeing to the doctrines I propose. From what you say I fear you may not have caught the precise meaning of my emotion theory. I don't mean that the emotion is the *perception* of bodily changes *as such,* but only that the bodily changes give us a feeling, which is the emotion. We can, it is true, partly analyze this feeling; if we could totally analzye it into local bodily feelings its emotional character would probably change. After all, what my theory has in view is only the determination of the particular nerve process which emotion accompanies. We are bound to suppose that there is *some* such nerve process accompanying every emotion. Now all I say is that the nerve process is the incoming currents, produced by the reflex movements which the perception of the exciting cause engenders. I feel sure that some part of our emotions is covered by this account; whether the *whole* of them is so covered is a question about which I am still doubtful.

I don't wish to inflict upon you a defense of all my heresies, so in reply to your criticism of my "Introspective Psychology" article I will only say one thing. You accuse me of bringing τὸ ἄπειρον into the mind, whose functions are essentially discrete. The categoric concepts you speak of are concepts of *objects.* Any given state of consciousness which we make into an object by reflection, appears to us as a discrete object, — hence the English psychology of "ideas" and their association. But before it is reflected on, consciousness is *felt,* and as such is continuous, that is, it potentially allows us to make sections anywhere in it, and treat the included portion as a unit. It is continuous, as space and time are. And I am willing to admit that it is not a *chose en soi,* for this reason, if you like, any more than they. But as we divide *them* arbitrarily, so I say our divisions of consciousness are arbitrary results of conceptual handling of it on our part. The ordinary psychology, on the contrary, insists that it is naturally discrete and that the divisions *belong* in certain places. This seems to me like saying that space exists in cubes or pyramids, apart from our construction.

But I am too long. The academic year has begun, with favorable prospects on the whole, though the vacation has left my eyes in poor condition owing to some mysterious fever attacks. Among other things I am somewhat behindhand in my reading of the *Critique.* I have enjoyed your Amiel articles, however, as much as previously I enjoyed those on Renan. You must have had a sorry summer

with the cholera. I hope that no one dear either to you or the Pillons has been stricken.

I must not forget to tell you of Parke Godwin. He is an old gentleman, wealthy, a *ci-devant* socialist and journalist and on the whole a very influential man of letters in New York City. He began, twenty years ago, a rather ambitious history of France of which only the first volume appeared. Pray give my very best regards to the Pillons to whom I hope shortly to write, and believe me as ever, with heartiest sympathy and good wishes, truly yours,

WM. JAMES

As the years passed the intervals between letters grew longer. For the period from September 1884 to March 1888, none of James's letters remain, though it is evident that he wrote at least two. Renouvier's replies to these indicate that James continued to send on his own writings and to read and praise those of his friend. In 1885 Renouvier published his *Esquisse d'une classification systématique des doctrines philosophiques,* a work in which James is frequently cited, and which James held in the highest admiration. How closely Renouvier followed James's activity is evident from the following: —

La Verdette, Feb. 5, 1886

My dear Mr. James, —

How glad I am that my last work has seemed to you worthy of the praises which you have bestowed on it. . . . I believe I have not written you how much I was charmed by the reading, although as yet incomplete and intermittent, of the *Remains* of your father which you were kind enough to send me. I count on taking it up again more consecutively, and I would like to take it together with the ideas of Swedenborg as the subject of a study for the *Critique philosophique.* I have had the *Secret of Swedenborg* for many years, and, strange to relate! I believe, unless I have dreamed it, that the book was given to my concierge in Paris with a visiting card and the compliments of the author, who did not leave his address. Is this at all possible? [6]

[6] *The Secret of Swedenborg* appeared in July 1869. A copy may have been left at Renouvier's door by H.J.ª, who was in Paris the following winter (Jan.–Feb., 1870).

You have, then, founded with others an *American Society for Psychical Research?*[7] And the first number of its publication deals with "thought transference"? I wish the authors less credulity than I found in the articles in the February number of Ribot's *Revue*. . . . It seems to me that the observations and experiments of Richet, Beaunis and others are no more scientific, that they no more meet the conditions of verification and control, than do many of the accounts which fill the books on animal magnetism. The cunning of hysteric women often outdoes the shrewdness of the doctors. I remember that there was once one of them in the central prison of Montpellier who succeeded in convincing the house-physician that she gave birth from time to time to every sort of extraordinary object. . . .

I like very much your formula about the responsibility of the author of the "thingness" of a thing whose "whatness" is repugnant to him.[8] I shall be delighted if your present work deals again with the question of pessimism, which is becoming more and more the question of our time. . . . Believe me, etc.,

C. RENOUVIER

Royce's *Religious Aspect of Philosophy* had appeared in 1885, and James, whose mind was full of this book for many years, recommended it to all his philosophical friends. Renouvier was moved to review the book at great length in his *Critique philosophique*[9] and developed the same ideas more briefly in letters to James. His comments indicate that while he repudiated Royce's "pantheism," his philosophy was nevertheless losing something of that distinctively pluralistic and empiricist flavor which had commended it to James.

La Verdette, March 27, 1887

My dear Mr. James, —

I really cannot thank you too much for having called my attention to the fine work of your friend and colleague M. Josiah Royce, and I beg you to give the author, for me, the heartiest congratulations, with my thanks for so kindly making me a present of it. It is a

[7] Organized in Boston in the autumn of 1884. The *Revue philos.* for Feb. 1886 contained an announcement of its *Proceedings*.

[8] *I.e.*, the responsibility of one who brings into *existence* that which he finds repugnant in its *nature*.

[9] 1888, I.

long time since any philosophical book has interested and won me so completely as this, by the profundity of its thought and the originality of the execution. I have so far read only the second part. . . . But it is of this part that you spoke in your kind letter, and I did not want to wait any longer before telling you what I thought of it.

I have come during these last years (as you can see from the passages in my last work which deal with the monotheistic hypothesis) to draw from a deepened reflection on the requirements of idealism, this conclusion: that there is a universal consciousness, without which the relations of *space, time* and *cause* would lack unity, order and control, and would prevent individual consciousnesses, with their private spacial, temporal and causal modifications, from establishing communication and agreement with one another. . . . Now that I am acquainted with your friend's attempted proofs drawn from the *possibility of error,* I may say that the proof of idealism that I have just indicated is a proof drawn from the *possibility of truth.* . . . I conclude that the *possibility of truth* implies the existence of a single and universal view of all connections, since otherwise, with each consciousness going its own way, there would be neither agreement nor verification; but that the *possibility of error* implies the separate and free generation of certain representations which can either conform or not conform to the real connections which they take as their objects. I distinguish, therefore, as does common sense, between God's universal view of things, and God's production of all the things that there are *to view* and of all the thoughts about them. I quite understand that M. Josiah Royce refuses to regard God as a *cause.* Nevertheless, if all possible thoughts are his thoughts, he must be their cause in the same sense in which we say that we are the cause of ours (free causes or caused causes, it does n't matter), and in that case it is only a question of words to refuse to speak of him as a universal cause and single power. . . .

I should like very much to speak to you about the last psychological work which you were so kind as to send me.[10] I am only waiting until I have been able to get a complete idea of it after a more attentive reading. My Kantian habits of mind make this reading, and the understanding of your processes of thought and your

[10] Probably "The Perception of Space," *Mind,* XII (1887).

language, more difficult than I should like. Besides I have been for some months less satisfied with my health, and work fatigues me. Yours etc.,

C. RENOUVIER

La Verdette, March 12, 1888

Dear Mr. James, —

How much I thank you for kindly sending me your fine article, "What the Will Effects." My pleasure in reading it was all the greater because of my having for a long time been wedded to a belief in the exclusively mental character of will, properly so-called. And, as always, I admired its great clearness and ingenuity. Will you allow me to publish a translation in the *Critique philosophique?* . . . I must confess that I have not yet been able to read your last *Mind* articles, which you also had the goodness to send me. It is a good deal of work for me, having as I do much difficulty in seeing these questions of perception and cognition from your point of view; and my health, which is not good, and my advanced age, much reduce the time at my disposal for abstruse reading.

I should very much like to know your opinion of my critical examination of the interesting work the knowledge of which I owe to you, *The Religious Aspect,* etc.; and particularly of my considerations relating to the proof of a unity of origin, drawn from the unity of understanding. I like to believe that your colleague M. Royce will not have been shocked by any part of my very frank criticism. I should be very sorry indeed if he were. Accept, etc.,

C. RENOUVIER

Cambridge, March 29, 1888

My dear Monsieur Renouvier, —

Your kind letter of the 12th reached me two days ago, and gave me great pleasure. Of course it will only put me under still farther obligations to you, if you see fit to translate my article on "What the Will Effects." It amounts to little more than what you said long ago in your *Psychologie rationnelle.* But it is in popular form, and it has surprised me to find how many persons here have read it and been struck by it. It has been mentioned to me by readers, more, I think, than all my other articles put together. . . .

I got your letter long ago about Royce, and should have answered it. But I groan under an excessive number of different duties, very small power of work, and excessively slow literary composition. You would hardly credit it as possible were I to tell you of the number of weeks it took me to write that *Scribner* article or of the number of pages of "copy" that went into the wastepaper-basket, for every page that survived. However, now that you have served up Royce so handsomely in print, I must write a word about the matter. I should have done so this week anyhow, even if your letter had not come.

To go straight to the point, either I have misunderstood you, or you have failed to grasp the full force of his argument from "error" for an absolute mind. I believe the latter; for I find that very few persons grasp it, and I myself should not have grasped the depth and importance of it without many an oral discussion with Royce himself — who, by the way, is a regular little Socrates, enjoying life at every pore, but off on a sea voyage at present, his head quite broken down with too much work — no vacation for three years, an absurd amount of teaching, a history of California and a novel published during that time as well as this philosophic book, and no end of book reviewing, pecuniary anxiety and bad cerebral hygiene! I have to be his champion whilst he 's away. He saw your first article about him, but left for Australia before the second one arrived.

It seems to me that you understand the absolute mind to be needed for the sake of *ascertaining* the error, of *verifying* the truth of the judgments which the finite individual's mind may make. Of course all *verification* must take place in another consciousness (another act of consciousness at least) from that whose deliverances are on trial. But that is not what Royce means. He means that a superior consciousness to the one on trial is needed to *constitute* as well as to verify the truth or error of the latter's judgments.

Suppose (to take Spinoza's example) I have a vision of a winged horse, and say "the horse is winged." Well, *that* horse *is* winged! The wings, the horse, and the horse's place, are coördinate and consubstantial things, things in my vision, all of them. For my judgment to be wrong, the horse of the vision must represent *another* horse, existing *aliunde* and not winged. How can it *represent* another horse? Is this relation of represented and representation one

of those whose objective "reality" M. Paulhan defends?[11] It is impossible to see how it can be so; for suppose there *is* a horse without wings in the world, as well as my representation of one with wings; and suppose that these two things constitute the entire world; *which* then will be in error, the representation for not conforming to the horse, or the horse for not conforming to the representation? There is no criterion, nor any real ground as yet for saying that either is in error. They are just two separate things which happen not to *resemble*. The representation can only be *wrong,* if *meant* to resemble that wingless horse. But how can it be meant, intended, designed, to resemble something beyond itself? Evidently it can't intend this of *itself,* for then the thing beyond would have entered into the representation, and of this newer representation, with its richer content, the same problem might recur. No, a thought can only be *of* something else, if it be *used* by some power which *owns* both it and the object, and *applies* one to the other, *meaning* that the thought *shall stand* for the object. *Then,* of course, the thought can represent, either rightly or wrongly, the object which it stands for. Otherwise there can be no question of error or of truth.

And now comes the last step: if you put this "power" *outside* of both the thought and the object, you don't effect the end in view. For then the power represents a thought and represents an object and says the former stands for the latter; but what warrant is there that it represents *that* thought and *that* object? The same reasoning recurs. Another thought, *using it as a sign* of those, must be invoked; and so on, either *in infinitum,* or else stopping in an ultimate thought of which *both* my vision of the horse, *and* the real horse (to go back to the first example), *and* their relation of representer and represented, are *objects*. This alone is the "power" required. And this, you will see, being an ultimate fact, is not subject to error (or, you may say to truth, either!) for it *stands for* nothing outside of itself. All objects and all thoughts are within it; and error pertains to the relation *which it thinks* of some of those thoughts to some of those objects. It does not (as you will see), simply *verify* a relation of representation between my horse and the real horse, which relation already exists independently. It *makes* that relation by think-

[11] The reference is to F. Paulhan's article, "La Réalité des rapports," and letter headed "A propos du Rapport de ressemblance," *Critique philos.,* I, 1885, referred to in Renouvier's review of Royce, *ibid.,* I, 1888.

ing it. And it cannot make the relation by thinking it, without also making its terms by thinking *them*. In short, it makes everything, so far as anything has relation to truth or error; and since both our thoughts and the things we think of have such relation, this Absolute Thought which is involved in the idea of their relation, may also be called the ground of their being.

As I write this, it seems (in the words of the vulgar English proverb) that I must be "teaching my grandmother to suck eggs." It seems as if Royce ought to have made himself as clear as I can make him. And it seems as if whatever misunderstanding there is, were more likely to be by me of your text, than by you of his. However, I send what I 've written, and you will be indulgent if it is I who have erred.

To me the argument seems irresistible, so long as we take the relation of really *intending* an object, *au sérieux*. But the farther implications of the theory are by no means clear in my mind. Royce himself thinks the Absolute Thought must be monistic and total. Of that I cannot fully convince myself, and here your system of relations *de proche en proche* would come in. Royce, moreover, thinks that indeterminism is not incompatible with this monistic Absolute Thought, and is at present much interested in a line of reasoning which points to this. I cannot follow him clearly in this. And the whole notion of a thought which makes us exist by making us its objects, leads to the old difficulties, of how we can then exist otherwise than as *its* objects (namely as our own objects, since we think ourselves so differently from the way in which it thinks us), or (if our ways of thinking ourselves are but *parts* of its way) how these parts can fuse into its total consequences. These difficulties in the consequences of the theory seem so great that they make me hesitate to accept the reasoning on which the theory bases itself.

Your own remarks about the moral and religious part of the book strike me as being profound and to the point. I will not make this letter any longer by saying anything about them. I have been reading again (during the past few days) in your *Esquisse d'une classification*. That will be hereafter reckoned, if I mistake not, one of the few very great and fundamental works in philosophy. Thanking you for your letter again, and wishing you health and strength to keep up the fight, I remain, always faithfully yours,

WM. JAMES

Chocorua, July 26, 1888

Dear Monsieur Renouvier, —

I have to thank you once more for your indefatigableness in doing me the honor of translation [12] and giving me a reputation in Europe much more considerable than any I am likely to enjoy in my native land. Once more, I think you might have taken more liberties with my text and smoothed it a little for French ears — but you are the best judge of what they can tolerate or enjoy in the way of foreign flavor. The Germans used to be considered the great swallowers of foreign matter; I think the French have now caught up with them. The great activity shown in France in the way of translating and reviewing foreign books has no parallel in England or this country, though I think there is more of it here than in England.

I sent you a letter awhile ago about Royce's book which I trust that you may have received. Your review of him and Martineau's notice of him in his *Philosophy of Religion* (a work, by the way, you have probably received, and which I think you will find deserving of attention), will *launch* him and attract readers. I am glad of it, for I have a particular affection and admiration for him. In fact I am in a measure his sponsor, having discovered him in California and brought him to Harvard College where my feebly burning philosophic star is far eclipsed by his luminary.

I am at my little country place, as sweet and pretty as it can be, — I wish you could sit down and take tea with us this instant. Wife and children and self all well. It is long since I have heard from Pillon — that best of men. Pray give him my warm regards, and believe me, with renewed obligations and profound affection and respect, yours faithfully,

WM. JAMES

La Verdette, Aug. 7, 1888

Dear Mr. James, —

I have more than once taken up my pen and put it down again during the three or four months that have elapsed since I received your interesting letter and your objections to my refutation of Mr. Royce's theological system. I regretfully abandoned the idea of clearing up between us the terrible question at issue, because I felt that it would require explanations too detailed for correspondence,

[12] "What the Will Effects," translated for the *Critique philos.*

and further excursions into adjacent fields of controversy, before we could succeed in clearly understanding, each of us, precisely what the author *means* by the words he uses. We are at least in agreement on the difficulty (or impossibility?) of reconciling the one all-embracing consciousness with the multiple self-consciousnesses which for the former would be consciousnesses of itself.[13] I am curious to know what course Mr. Royce expects to take at this point to arrive at a reconciliation of monism with some measure of indeterminism. I am inclined to believe that the epitome of all that reflection has brought me in the fifty-four years since I began thinking about it, is the conclusion that pure unity and complete necessity are two aspects of the same idea, — whether the form of this idea be materialistic, or idealistic, or theological. And if this idea be the truth of the matter, I shall become a Buddhist, immediately and without reserve. . . .

I have surrendered to you, in the *Critique philosophique,* "the honors" of the number. But I did not surrender the privilege of making observations, and in part objections, of my own to your theory of *will,* which is in agreement with mine on the essential point, but not throughout. I have therefore kept my remarks and reservations for another number. You will find them in the next one, the one that comes out at the end of the month. I ask your reflection on them, and, if need be, your indulgence. If our way of understanding the *will* could become general, do you know that it would be the greatest revolution in philosophy since Anaxagoras, Socrates and Pyrrho? But it will not become general because to console himself for his evil-doing, man *wishes* to believe that something rules him: *volentem ducunt.* . . .

My capacity for work is . . . much diminished, besides which my memory, never good, is rapidly weakening. It is a case of complete decay, but what else is to be expected at my age! I am very glad to learn that you are more satisfied with your health than you were some years ago, and that Madame James and the children are well too. Ah! yes, how much I should like, dear Mr. James, to take a cup of tea at your house, in the country, and to have with you in your peaceful domestic surroundings one, at least one, long talk

[13] Renouvier uses the terms "*mono*conscience," "*auto*conscience," and "*sui*-conscience." The difficulty is in supposing that many self-consciousnesses can somehow be embraced within one, since the meaning of "self" must be different in each case.

de omni re scibili et quibusdam aliis! It is an Elysian dream, for you are one of those rare persons of whom I sometimes say to myself how much I regret not having encountered them in life of my own age, and at that age when the great friendships are made — when one opens and re-opens those interminable conversations which alone are capable of establishing a mutual influence. Forgive this outpouring, which will prove to you the extent of my sympathy, to which I have never adequately testified, and believe, etc.,

C. RENOUVIER

P.S. I have not received the book by Martineau of which you speak — *Philosophy of Religion* — and I have no acquaintance with it.

No further letters from Renouvier remain, but there are two from James at intervals of four years: —

Cambridge, Feb. 4, 1892

Dear Monsieur Renouvier, —

I got your second edition of the *Principes de la Nature* a couple of weeks ago, and very glad I was to see that you were still keeping up your indomitable activity. I am particularly glad that this book is republished, — it has been so long out of print that the younger generation finds it hard to get a copy to look at. I have had no time to look at this copy myself yet, being worked to death, and with my "neurasthenic" constitution at present very badly fatigued. I shall probably take a whole year of vacation next year, when I hope to do some study in just that particular line, and shall re-read this book with care and probably review it.[14]

Alas! that the work one wishes to do should so much exceed the ability to do it. With warmest good wishes, I am, as ever, your grateful and devoted

WM. JAMES

P.S. I sent you the other day the *Briefer Course* of my *Psychology*. I have eighty *laboratory* students to take care of now — it gives me very little time for reading.

[14] The review appeared in *Philos. Rev.*, in March 1893.

Burlington, Aug. 4, 1896 [15]

Dear Mr. Renouvier, —

My wife announces to me from Cambridge the reception of two immense volumes from you on the Philosophy of History.[16] I thank you most heartily for the gift, and am more and more amazed at your intellectual and moral power — physical power, too, for the nervous energy required for your work has to be extremely great. My own nervous energy is a small teacupful, and is more than consumed by my duties of teaching, so that almost none is left over for writing. I sent you a *New World* [17] the other day, however, with an article in it called "The Will to Believe," in which (if you took the trouble to glance at it) you probably recognized how completely I am still your disciple. In this point perhaps more fully than in any other; and this point is central!

I have to lecture on general "psychology" and "morbid psychology," "the philosophy of nature" and the "philosophy of Kant," thirteen lectures a week for half the year and eight for the rest. Our University moreover inflicts a monstrous amount of routine business on one, faculty meetings and committees of every sort, so that during term-time one can do no continuous reading at all — reading of books, I mean. When vacation comes, my brain is so tired that I can read nothing serious for a month. During the past month I have only read Tolstoi's two great novels, which, strange to say, I have never attacked before. I don't like his fatalism and semi-pessimism, but for infallible veracity concerning human nature, and absolute simplicity of method, he makes all the other writers of novels and plays seem like children.

All this proves that I shall be slow in attaining to the reading of your book. . . . I hope, dear Mr. Renouvier, that the years are not weighing heavily upon you, and that this letter will find you well in body and in mind. Yours gratefully and faithfully,

WM. JAMES

This is the last of the correspondence which has been preserved. There is evidence of a letter written by James in 1897 or 1898 in the

[15] Reprinted from *L.W.J.*, II, 44–6.

[16] *Philosophie analytique de l'histoire*, 1896. James had read the work in the earlier, briefer form published in 1864 (Part IV of the *Essais de critique générale*).

[17] *New World*, V (1896).

following paragraph addressed to Pillon in the second of these years: "M. Renouvier has sent me his five enormous volumes. What a colossus he is for productive power! This I suppose may be regarded as his philosophic will and testament, since there is evidently place in them for expressing all his vital views. I am writing to him today to express my thanks, but I fear that here again the reading will take place rather slowly." [18]

There was more of despair than of admiration in James's reference to the immensity and enormousness of Renouvier's works. He could not keep up with Renouvier's fecundity, having neither the time nor the incentive. He appears not to have seen Renouvier during his later trips to Europe. In 1899 Renouvier published his *Nouvelle Monadologie,* and in 1903 *Le Personnalisme.* It was this latter work that prompted the following in a letter to Pillon: "I expect, on returning to the country, to begin the writing of a somewhat systematic book on philosophy — my humble view of the world — pluralistic, tychistic, empiricist, pragmatic, and ultra-gothic, *i.e.,* non-classic in form. Renouvier, to whom I owe so much, still remains to me too classic in the general rationalism of his procedure. But how rare to find a man renewing himself as he does, after the age of seventy, and on such a scale!"

Renouvier had grown more systematic and traditional as James had grown more inventive and audacious. In 1904, after Renouvier's death, James wrote again to Pillon: "I have left unread his last publications, except for some parts of the *Monadologie* and the *Personnalisme.* He will remain a great figure in philosophic history." [19] Renouvier had become to James an object of veneration rather than a source of light. He was already a part of "philosophic history." With Renouvier, as with Hodgson, James felt that they had "extracted each other's juice." He had long since absorbed all that Renouvier had to teach him — and, in his own way, at the bidding of his own genius, he had gone beyond.

[18] The work referred to must be the *Philosophie analytique de l'histoire,* of which James had acknowledged the earlier volumes in 1896, although this work contains four and not five volumes.

[19] *L.W.J.,* II, 204.

XLIV

THE STRUGGLE WITH KANTIAN IDEALISM

In the course of his intellectual adventures James encountered two idealisms, or two dispensations of idealism, the old and the new. The older idealism of Berkeley and Hume, revived by Mill and many of his contemporaries of the British school, won his allegiance, but did not hold it permanently. This idealism, being empirical, was consistent with James's fundamental philosophical creed. The new idealism, on the other hand, the idealism emanating from Kant and transformed by Fichte, Schopenhauer, and Hegel into a constructive metaphysics that threatened to conquer the dominion of the intellectual world, was to James profoundly alien. This was his favorite philosophical enemy, and an enemy worthy of his mettle.

James's hostility to idealism of the Kantian type was not due to any provincial prejudice on James's part. He knew and liked Germany from his youth, and read extensively and appreciatively in German literature as well as philosophy. Goethe and Schiller were among his earliest sources of inspiration; with the romantic movement he felt a lifelong sympathy. But the *a priori* method in philosophy was the one thing philosophical that could never find lodgment in his mind without his ceasing to be William James — and Kant was the archexponent of the *a priori* method.

This does not mean that James lightly dismissed idealism. On the contrary his philosophical life was a series of battles with this adversary, his respect for whom is shown by his actions, if not always by his words. First of all, as we have seen, he denied that British empiricism needed to be saved from without; rejecting the argument that experience comes in bits and needs to be put together by the mind. Against T. H. Green and his *a priori* relations, James argued that conjunctions are just as truly given as are disjunctions.[1] But a greater and more prolonged battle in James's campaign against idealism was that which he fought with Royce. This was on a par-

[1] *Cf.* above, 551.

ticular issue, relating to what James quite candidly admitted to be a difficulty. It is essential to the nature of knowledge that an idea should have a specific reference to an object beyond itself. Otherwise it could not be either true or false. Royce argued that this reference could only be understood in terms of an overlapping consciousness which possessed both the idea and its object. How James was moved by this argument and how he became its exponent in his correspondence with Renouvier and others, we have already seen. But if James for a time agreed with Royce, it was with deep misgivings — since he saw that a Universal Mind would be the logical outcome. And this would be "monism," a doctrine altogether intolerable on moral grounds as disparaging the individual and denying freedom. So, as in his earlier dealings with Berkeleyan idealism, James struggled for years, and covered many pages with notes, until eventually he saw a way of answering Royce and of escaping the peril.

James's idealistic or rationalistic friends were always, especially in early days, trying to save his soul. Thomas Davidson and George H. Howison were especially distressed at his resistance to grace. But idealistic or rationalistic evangelism only drove him to blasphemy and impish extravagances. In fact the very piety and unimpeachably good intentions of "the white-winged band" were a major part of their offending. Their "sacerdotal airs" contrasted strangely, he thought, with the "sterility" of their thought.[2] For several years his most convenient opportunity of baiting the idealists was provided by a philosophical club, where Dr. W. T. Harris (editor of the *Journal of Speculative Philosophy* and the leading American proponent of Hegel), J. Elliot Cabot,[3] Howison, Davidson, and James's colleagues Charles Carroll Everett and George Herbert Palmer, were often arrayed against him. This club may have grown out of the Metaphysical Club of the early '70s in which James was associated with Chauncey Wright and Charles Peirce. In any case James tells us that a club devoted primarily to the study of Hegel had been organized a year in advance of Davidson's arrival from St. Louis, so that it must have existed at least as early as 1874.[4]

[2] *L.W.J.*, I, 205, 208.

[3] J. E. Cabot was the biographer of Emerson, and a robust philosophical thinker, in sympathy with the Concord movement and the idealistic tendency. He had an extended correspondence on philosophical subjects with H.J.

[4] *Cf.* above, 534–6; below, 726, 732–3; *M.S.*, 81–2. These philosophical clubs

James writes in 1876: "Speaking of cobwebs reminds me that we have reorganized a metaphysical club here. It meets on Sundays, and contains some very acute heads. The difficulty we often have in understanding each other shows how difficult these subjects are, — but in spite of everything it is a pleasure to have one's ideas give a glimmering little hitch towards greater clearness, which they invariably do on these occasions." In 1879 James writes to Royce of "our philosophical club here," as "very helpful to the uprooting of weeds from one's mind as well as the detection of beams in one's neighbor's." In 1880 the club is abandoned on the ground that "we 're all rather sick of each other's voices." But in 1881 "Harris has founded a new philosophical club here. We meet every Saturday to read Hegel's *Logic*." Meanwhile James has not lost any of the zeal of combat, but is carrying the war into the open — "resisting the inroads of Hegelism," and in particular the "active propaganda" of Palmer, who is preaching the idealistic gospel with the fervor of a recent convert.[5]

Palmer's Hegelianism was by no means pure, being modified by his adherence to Congregational Christianity, by the influence of Mill, and by his emphasis on freedom and on the moral and religious significance of human personality. In 1878 he had sought out Edward Caird, of whom he had heard through Elliot Cabot, and for several years Palmer and the Cairds (Professor, Mrs., and Ding-an-Sich, the dog) spent summer holidays together, and discoursed on literature and philosophy. As judged by Caird, Palmer was a dissenter; but in Cambridge, and as judged by James, he was a Hegelian. In any case there was no doubt of his idealism. In 1880–1881, as assistant professor at Harvard, he conducted a graduate course on "Hegel's Logic and History of Philosophy"; and this course was attended by James, who gave free expression to his dissatisfaction with both the author and the teacher. It was this course, together with Palmer's suggestion that he write out his objection, that inspired the "diatribes" which appeared under the title "On Some Hegelisms."[6]

(whose precise identity and number is not wholly clear) are not to be confused with the dining club which James joined in 1870 and which was commonly referred to as "The Club" (*cf. L.W.J.*, II, 9).

[5] *L.W.J.*, I, 203, 205, 208.

[6] *Cf.* below, 728, 764; G. H. Palmer, "William James," *Harvard Graduates' Magazine*, XXIX (1920). I owe these facts in the main to Prof. Palmer's oral statement.

Shortly after, James entered another field of battle, on the other side of the Atlantic, where the same opposing forces were joined, but where he had more potent allies. Croom Robertson belonged to the same army with James, and as editor of *Mind* he held a highly strategic position. Indeed the following letters smack somewhat of a conspiracy. James has sent the manuscript of his "On Some Hegelisms," which appeared in *Mind* in 1882: —

[London], Nov. 7, 1881

My dear James, —

I have glanced through the article. Sprightly enough in all conscience, but none the worse for that — or rather so much the better in a world that is grey. As yet I have but glanced, because I am afraid there is no chance for the January number with such a host of prior claims. But on other grounds I think it well not to let you have your fling before April. You must know — or rather are now to be told — that the Hegelians are to be coming out in force in *Mind,* at last. Green himself opens in January, and I would rather not affront him just as he begins to speak. He will continue in April, but ought by that time to be more at his ease. If you have seen the last number of *Mind,* you will have noted a first plea (in the journal) for Hegel from another devotee.[7] For some months past the youthful members of the brotherhood have been making desperate attempts to get up a Hegelian journal all to themselves. They have not succeeded — did not deserve to succeed, for reasons too long now to relate — and the whole band give promise now of sailing in the ship that has been going now these six years. We shall see how they settle down with you and other shipmates! . . . I am, yours ever,

G. C. ROBERTSON

James's "sprightly" article evoked no response from the Hegelians, who evidently thought his pleasantries beneath their notice.

[London], July 24, 1882

My dear James, —

. . . I have had it for some time on my mind to say a word about your last article in the journal. I was disappointed, and I

[7] "Hegel, an Exposition and Criticism," by Andrew Seth. T. H. Green's series of articles, "Can There Be a Natural Science of Man?" began in *Mind* in Jan. 1882.

fear you too may have been, that none of the people who had most to learn from it should have set themselves to lay hold of the lesson by making as if they would reject it. Not one of them has sent in a single line to print in opposition to the article. This may partly be due to the preoccupation of some of the younger bloods with a volume of Hegelian essays they are going to bring out, but is doubtless due also to a supercilious indisposition they have to coming to close quarters with any foe. And there was such a jaunty profanity in your way of assault that they might easily persuade themselves of a duty to remain indignantly silent. When I read you in formal type, I did feel a little sorry that you took just that tone with them. You must try them another time on a more solemn tack; and they will be compelled to answer. . . . Yours ever,

G. C. ROBERTSON

In 1884 James resumed hostilities, and under the title of "Absolutism and Empiricism" contributed to *Mind* for April a criticism of J. S. Haldane's "Life and Mechanism," which had appeared in the previous number. Haldane had expounded the organismic view — the doctrine of all-relatedness and all-pervasive interdependence. James complained of two things: first, the nature of the hypothesis; second, the author's unwillingness to admit that it *was* a hypothesis. We can hope only for hypotheses, founded, in part, at least, on faith. Why not, then, candidly confess our motives?

"I frankly confess mine — I cannot but think that at bottom they are of an æsthetic and not of a logical sort. The 'through-and-through' universe seems to suffocate me with its infallible impeccable all-pervasiveness. Its necessity, with no possibilities; its relations, with no subjects, make me feel as if I had entered into a contract with no reserved rights, or rather as if I had to live in a large seaside boarding-house with no private bed-room in which I might take refuge from the society of the place. I am distinctly aware, moreover, that the old quarrel of sinner and pharisee has something to do with the matter. Certainly, to my personal knowledge, all Hegelians are not prigs, but I somehow feel as if all prigs ought to end, if developed, by becoming Hegelians. . . . The 'through-and-through' philosophy, as it actually exists . . . seems too buttoned-up and white-chokered and clean-shaven a thing to speak for the vast

slow-breathing unconscious Kosmos with its dread abysses and its unknown tides." [8]

It is a well-known fact that James believed, contrary to most academic philosophers of his time, that "the line of philosophic progress" lay "not so much *through* Kant as *round* him." [9] To a former student who had published an article on this classic author, James wrote: "Pray contribute no farther (having hereby proved your capacity) to philosophy's prison-discipline of dragging Kant around like a cannon-ball tied to its ankle." He did not, as we have seen, think that Kant was needed to answer Hume. But he reached this conclusion in his customary way, only after giving Kant a hearing and even an appeal from the first adverse judgment. He was no doubt offended by Kant's "ponderous artificialities," — his "mythological machine-shop" of forms and categories,[10] — but he did not allow this repugnance to blind him to that philosopher's solid merits. In April of 1868, while at Frau Spangenberg's in Dresden, he read Victor Cousin's *Kant,* which gave him a better opinion of the subject than of the commentator: "A most urbane and in parts eloquent book," he noted in his diary, "but it gives me a pitiful impression, — hardly of insincerity, but of heartlessness. He [Cousin] looks on philosophy from such an official point of view." Of Kant himself he wrote in the following autumn: "I began the other day Kant's *Kritik,* which is written crabbedly enough, but which strikes me so far as almost the sturdiest and *honestest* piece of work I ever saw. Whether right or wrong (and it is pretty clearly wrong in a great many details of its *Analytik* part, however the rest may be), there it stands like a great snag or mark to which everything metaphysical or psychological must be *referred.* I wish I had read it earlier. It is very slow reading and I shall only give it a couple of hours daily." [11]

This comment was probably excited by the reading of the *Prolegomena to Any Future Metaphysics.* The *Critique of Pure Reason* he also read not long afterwards and in the original German. The essence of Kantianism to James was the dependence of

[8] *Mind,* IX (1884), 285; reprinted in *E.R.E.,* 276–8.
[9] *C.E.R.,* 436–7.
[10] *Principles,* II, 275. "Kant's philosophy is a dry way of arriving at mysticism," said James.
[11] *L.W.J.,* I, 138.

knowledge, and of nature so far as known, upon *a priori* categories — principles belonging to the constitution of the mind, and imposed by it upon whatever problematical material is given from without. Kant's chief argument for this view was that otherwise our knowledge of nature could not be *necessary*. We can know what must be so, in advance of the facts, only so far as our knowing itself determines what the facts shall be. But James was unwilling to assume at the outset that our knowledge of nature *was* necessary. Suppose science to be only hypothetical or probable, and the argument fails. James did not, as we know, deny that the mind intervenes actively in knowledge, but held that its intervention was *tentative*. The mind's predispositions may prove illuminating, but there is no guarantee that they will, since in order to do so they have to satisfy facts that are beyond their control. According to James's notes it is this *discrepancy* between the mind and experience, not their perfect agreement, which proves the mind to have a structure of its own.[12] Kant might himself have employed this argument, since he recognizes that experience of a sort (for example, inner experience) is possible without the categories. "Outward experience," in Kant's sense, is not really the least possible experience, but an elaborately defined system, based on the assumptions of mathematics, causality, and matter. It is a hypothesis and not a necessity.

In 1896–1897 James gave a seminary on Kant, and reread the *Kritik der reinen Vernunft* in the original as well as much of Adickes's *Kant Studien*.[13] His fundamental attitude remained the same as in former years. With Kant's view that the mind played an active rôle in knowledge James was of course sympathetic; but Kant's notion that such activity was "transcendental" contradicted a still profounder motive in James's philosophy — his empiricism. Kant neglects the real and observable activities of mind and substitutes fictitious ones. This point is made in a note on the Tran-

[12] *Principles*, II, 662, 664, notes; above, 477–8.

[13] In his *German Kantian Bibliography* (*Philos. Rev.*, Supplement, I, II [1895–6], 595 pp.), Adickes had collected some 2800 titles of works on Kant. James speaks of the "paradoxical contradiction between Adickes's scholarly function and his intellectual function in regard to Kant: by the one he binds him more immensely on our backs, by the other he proves his worthlessness." The text which James used in 1896–7, Adickes's edition of 1889, is interleaved and profusely annotated, affording impressive visible evidence of the painstaking quality of his repeated studies of Kant.

scendental Æsthetic: "How different are Kant's 'transcendental' syntheses . . . from the simple empirical syntheses which consciousness recognizes! The latter are comparisons of materials already there, classings, noticings of relations of position, associations, etc. They start from a given material and without dropping it, add to it, or discriminate within it, and result from stage to stage in a knowledge that grows gradually richer and less vague. . . . The synthesis involved in Kant's *Anschauung* starts, on the contrary, from a manifold of which the empirical consciousness is wholly unaware, and combines it at one miraculous stroke into two absolutely completed products, time and space, with the whole of mathematics stowed away inside of them. Transcendental synthesis and empirical synthesis are thus two absolutely diverse conceptions."

In notes made at this time for an article on Kant which he never wrote, James says: "Make clear my own position between *pure* empiricism . . . and Kant's. There is mental structure, but the congruence of nature with it is a painfully attained compromise in which much mental structure has to be thrown away. The most *essential* features of our mental structure, *viz.*, grammar and logic, *violate* the order of nature as on reflexion we believe it to exist. . . . For Hume the understanding was a mere copying press. Show how Hume mistook about this, without Kant being true. If Kant's significance is limited to the vindication of *some* active part played by the higher mind in the construction of experience, then of course he has refuted Hume. But if you hold to his description of the active part, then, that being entirely false, you can ascribe to him very little merit, and must admit that the truth can be built up much better by simply extending Locke's and Hume's lines."

Furthermore, Kant leaves the linkages of nature — its substances and causes — as meaningless as Hume. With both philosophers they are merely ways of externally combining the disconnected elements of raw experience. For Hume they are habits, for Kant rules which he mistakenly supposes to be necessary. James proposed to regard them as hypotheses. But he believed that they were more than that, since if we give sufficient attention to the "felt unities" of experience, — its transitions, overlappings, and identities, — something of the true inwardness of nature is revealed. Kant, because he accepted Hume's view of the unrelatedness of primitive experience, was obliged to introduce a unifying *deus ex machina*, and this paved

the way for James's pet aversion, the Absolute of later idealism.[14]

There was a second major issue which James associated with Kant, and on which he felt the force of the Kantian argument, confirmed as it was by the semi-Kantianism of Renouvier. He was for a time converted to the view that the "antinomies," or contradictions of finiteness and infinity, proved the subjectivity of space and time; and, though he frequently revised his opinions on this vexatious question, they never wholly lost their Kantian coloring.

James read Kant's ethical writings with care at least twice, and the *Critique of Judgment* at least once. But it is evident that Kant's views on these matters, on art, morals, and religion, affected him but little.

A letter to Professor A. O. Lovejoy gives a summary estimate of Kant, as James saw him in retrospect: —

Cambridge, May 27, 1906

Dear Lovejoy, —

I have just read your extraordinarily clear and convincing paper on Kant's Second Analogy.[15] I was ignorant of Wolff's anticipation of him, and that *ought* to make some impression on the Kantian Church; but I fear it won't and that the cry "Back to Kant! Kant forever!" will resound as loud as ever. The fact is that his defects are his good fortune. He is so muddled that one can spend a lifetime lecturing on him, and such a man as that is one that philosophy professors won't willingly let drop.

I think your argumentation and divisions most lucid. Of course Kant never left Hume's position. "Follow according to a *rule!*" Whom does the rule bind? Not *the succeeding phenomenon,* for in that case you are back in dynamic causation, and the single case suffices — no "rule" applies. *Not the observer,* for the *sensation* binds *him,* whether it be of a causal or of a merely accidental succession. *Not future cases;* for there may be none such. It only binds (or suggests) his *expectation* of a similar future succession — which is Hume's position literally.

[14] *S.P.P.*, 51, note, 128–9, 200; *P.U.*, 241; *Principles,* I, 360–4. Kant also afforded a conspicuous example of bad psychology, as in his *a priori* view of space (*Principles,* II, 272).

[15] "On Kant's Reply to Hume," *Archiv für Geschichte der Philosophie,* XIX (1906). The "Second Analogy of Experience" is that part of Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason* which deals with the category of causation. For a criticism of it by W.J., *cf. S.P.P.*, 201.

But I don't want to philosophize, only to applaud your capital bit of work. Always truly yours,

WILLIAM JAMES

Two years later James added the following, to the same correspondent and again on Kant: "A delightful old *crackle* about his mind; but the only thing that ever seemed to me to have any permanent value in his system was his argument for idealism based on the antinomies, and now you show that that was anticipated by an Englishman. Hurrah!" [16]

[16] "Kant and the English Platonists," from *Essays in Honor of William James*, 1908. James adds: "Of course Kant developed the idea more thoroughly with his pun on *gegeben* and *aufgegeben*"; or, as James elsewhere expresses it, "*Gabe* and *Aufgabe*" (*P.U.*, 238–9). Kant says that the infinity in space, time, etc., of the natural world is not *geben* — *i.e.*, on hand as a *fait accompli*; but *aufgegeben* — *i.e.*, submitted or proposed as a project or operation. This is the only sort of actuality which a space-time world would possess.

XLV

SCHOPENHAUER AND HEGEL

THERE were for James two Schopenhauers, the moral pessimist and the idealistic metaphysician. Writing of the year 1858, when he and James were contemporaries at Newport, Thomas Sergeant Perry says: "We fished in various waters, and I well remember when W. J. brought home a volume of Schopenhauer and showed us with delight the ugly mug of the philosopher and read us amusing specimens of his delightful pessimism." [1] In the early '70s — during the period of those first struggles with the issue between idealism and realism, when Masson and Bailey were his texts, and when he filled notebooks with his experimental thinking — James read Schopenhauer's *Fourfold Root of the Principles of Sufficient Reason,* with special reference to what is and is not given in immediate conscious perception. He contended (against Schopenhauer) that sensation is not a simple datum for thought to work upon, but rather an element arrived at by the analysis of a more complex process with which consciousness begins.[2] In 1877 when he was writing "The Sentiment of Rationality," he was reading Schopenhauer's *World As Will and Idea,* applauding the author's emphasis on the intuitive grasp of essentials as constituting the highest wisdom, and citing him in support of the ultimate irrationality of existence.[3]

It will readily be surmised that it was Schopenhauer's pessimism rather than his theoretical metaphysics which excited James's liveliest interest and heartiest condemnation. He credited Schopenhauer with being the first among philosophers to speak "the concrete truth about the ills of life." [4] But though evil was thus to be realistically and vividly felt, it could not, in James's view of life, be *accepted.* Philosophical pessimism confirms man's fears, and conspires with his weakness; it is inevitable, therefore, that it should share with these

[1] Quoted in *L.H.J.*, I, 7.

[2] James made important allusions to this book in his *Principles,* as illustrating the false idea that sensations were located in the body and afterwards projected outward, and the artificialities of the Kantian view of the *a priori* machinery of the mind. (*Cf.* II, 33, 273.)

[3] *C.E.R.*, 88, 127; *cf. S.P.P.*, 38. James had acquired this book in Paris in 1868.

[4] *S.P.P.*, 26.

the condemnation of every heroic resolve. Pessimism cannot be proved, and, if the matter is left to dogmatism or faith, why should one prefer the belief which is by definition contrary to one's hopes? Only, James thought, from a moral flabbiness or perversity. The following note was written in Florence in 1873: —

"A pamphlet today in the bookstore, a defense of pessimism against its present 'attackers,' which seemed to me a ludicrous thing. Why? Because there is something self-contradictory in making evil one's good and in cold blood trying to establish it — evil called so by you. But apart from that, how is pessimism logically legitimate? As an assertion that there is no good upshot to the whole, that the good empirically existing is accidental and desultory, and not part of a system: and that it is useless to try to fix it or develop it. . . . Pessimism must then be fatalism. As optimism to be logical must also refer only to the general upshot, and not to the details, part of which are empirically bad. It may be either fatalistic or hypothetic, basing itself in the latter case on the condition: *if* we assist by faith and act."

In 1875 James wrote to the *Nation* a review of Edmund Pfleiderer's *Modern Pessimisms,* in which he developed the same theme, at the expense of both Schopenhauer and Von Hartmann. Pessimism, he says, is a species of fatalism, in the worst sense: not a resignation to the inevitable, but an abandonment of the better possibility from sheer inaction.[5] This being James's philosophy of pessimism, it was inevitable that Schopenhauer should be a symbol of iniquity — an enemy to be fought and slain by the moral will. Hence the tone of this extraordinary letter to Karl Hillebrand,[6] who had invited him to join a committee formed for the purpose of erecting a monument to Schopenhauer in Frankfurt: —

Keene Valley, Aug. 10, 1883[7]

Dear Mr. Hillebrand, —

Woe is me! What shall I say to your note? Let me say first how glad I am to see your handwriting after the distressing ac-

[5] *C.E.R.,* 18.

[6] K. Hillebrand (whose wife was a translator of Schopenhauer's works) was a German refugee of 1848, afterwards a naturalized citizen and professor of literature in France. In 1870 he removed to Florence, where W.J. and H.J.[3] became intimate with him in 1873 or earlier, and where he died in 1884.

[7] Most of this letter has been published in the one-volume edition of *L.W.J.,* 1926, Appendix III. Only an unsigned copy is extant. It is possible that the letter was not sent in this form.

counts my brother had given me of your illness. You give no very reassuring account of yourself, but I take the mission in behalf of which you write as a sign that neither the spirit nor the flesh in you is yet reduced to the bare keeping of body and soul together, and I hope that more important labors than this will soon be in your power.

As for what you propose, what could be more tempting to an obscure chicken like myself than to see his name printed in the company of the Illustrious whom you enumerate. But is there no other man than Schopenhauer on whom we can combine? I really *must* decline to stir a finger for the glory of one who studiously lived for no other purpose than to spit upon the lives of the like of me and all those I care for. Is n't there something rather immoral in *publicly* doing homage to one whose writings, if the public could but understand and heed them, would undo whatever of simple kindliness and hope keeps its life sweet? And is n't there something inwardly farcical in getting up a mundane celebration and signing an "uproar," and what vanity more I know not, for the personal magnification of one, the burden of whose song — however little his life may have consisted with it — was the annihilation of personal selfhood? Is n't it like offering a fur overcoat to a sweating equatorial African? And won't Schopenhauer's spirit, looking down from the Isles of the Blest, make gibes at the Committee more drastic than any of those to be found in his printed works? It seems to me that the indiscriminate newspaper optimism of our day rather overshoots the mark when it takes to hurrahing for pessimism itself. It is as if the Parisians should raise a monument to Bismarck or the Count de Chambord to Robespierre, because, "after all, they are good fellows too."

There *are* intellectual distinctions; why should scholars, of all men, be called on to wipe them out? If the citizens of Frankfort want to embellish their town by monuments to the celebrated men who lived there, merely because they were celebrated, for the country people to gape at, without knowing which is which — well and good, that 's all included in the great popular, country-fair, animal-spirit, side of life, which Schopenhauer so much loathed. But if there be any kernel of truth in Schopenhauer's system (and it seems to me there is a deep one) it ought to be celebrated in silence and in secret, by the inner lives of those to whom it speaks: taking some

things seriously is incompatible with "celebrating" them! As for Schopenhauer himself, personally, his loud-mouthed pessimism was that of a dog who would rather see the world ten times worse than it is, than lose his chance of barking at it, and whom nothing would have unsuited so completely as the removal of cause for complaint. There are pathetic pessimists and cantankerous pessimists. Schopenhauer was not pathetic — Leopardi was. Then as for his metaphysics, they seem to me to unite every bad quality. He carried Kant's *Schnorkelwerk,* and machine-shop way of representing things, to an extreme where they became simply ludicrous; he ignored most all the really fruitful tendencies of his time; his only merits were his racy and pithy style, and his refusal to "take stock" in a platitudinarian optimism. Candidly, does n't the monument-plan savor the least bit in the world of the latter beatific *Weltanschauung?* I know you will be more amused than offended by these *Auslassungen* of mine. I wish they might induce you to change your own mind; but conversions are not so easily made!

The American who seems to me most fit to be on the Committee, if he would consent to join it, is Professor Francis Bowen of Harvard University, one of our oldest and ablest writers on philosophy, who for many years has made Schopenhauer's *Hauptwerk* the text of one of his college courses, and whose name would carry great weight and influence with it here. I shall take the liberty, since there is so little time, of sending your letter to him, and asking him to communicate directly with you. In case he also declines, the best man for you is unquestionably Professor Charles Eliot Norton of Harvard, whom I think you may know, and who will no doubt gladly accept. He is now in Europe, and Professor Bowen will send you his address.

In one of James's many comparisons between empiricism and rationalism he says of the latter that "its theories are usually optimistic, supplementing the experienced world by clear and pure ideal construction"; and he adds, "Aristotle and Plato, the Scholastics, Descartes, Spinoza, Leibnitz, Kant and Hegel are examples of this" — in the "noble architecture" of their systems, for which they "claimed absolute finality." [8] With the philosophers of this group

[8] *S.P.P.*, 36.

other than Kant and Hegel James concerned himself comparatively little. He was by no means ignorant of them,[9] and he occasionally alluded to them on this or that particular point. In 1890–1891 he gave a course on Descartes, Spinoza, and Leibnitz, and some of his notes for this course are extant. He remarked apropos of Descartes, "The *lumière intérieure* is like *la grâce divine*. All who have it are sure, but not all who are sure have it." Of Spinoza he said, "Reject Spinoza — *unless* mysticism!" In Leibnitz he applauded the pluralism, but rejected the monism: "The great thing with Leibnitz's principles is to keep *at least* his elements of reality, and to do without his superfluities. The former seem the monads. The latter seems the unity."

But these philosophers belonged as a group to the camp of the enemy which had now superseded the materialism, nihilism, positivism, and "juxtapositionism" of his earlier polemic period. Hegel was the most living and formidable representative of this hostile army, and he felt that in overcoming him he overcame it wholly. Hence "Hegel," "Hegelian," and "the Hegelians" became to James symbols of the great rival way of philosophizing, — of determinism, intellectualism, absolutism, — in short, of that "monistic superstition" under which he had "grown up" and from which he had been delivered by the true gospel of pluralism.[10]

James was reading Hegel's *Aesthetik* in Dresden in 1867 and was chiefly impressed by his "truly monstrous sentences." [11] The whole lesson of "Kantian and post-Kantian speculation," it seemed to James in after years, "is the lesson of simplicity." "With Kant, complication both of thought and statement was an inborn infirmity, en-

[9] Plato he read in Jowett's translation, together with the commentaries of J. A. Stewart, and E. Zeller. Aristotle he read extensively in the French translation of S. Hilaire, and in English translations by Grant, Wallace, and Grote. His knowledge of modern Continental philosophy seems to have been obtained largely from the study of Kuno Fischer's encyclopædic *Geschichte der neuern Philosophie*, but here also he read the sources extensively. All of Descartes's major works he studied in the original; Spinoza, in the translation by E. Saisset, 1861; Leibnitz in the edition of P. Janet, 1866. Fichte cannot be said to have interested James greatly or to have made any mark upon him, though (apparently in the early '80s) he carefully studied the *Wissenschaftslehre*, the *Bestimmung des Menschen*, and other writings contained in the second volume of the 1845 (Berlin) edition of Fichte's *Werke*.

[10] *S.P.P.*, Dedication. It should be remembered that while James's father attacked Hegel with characteristic vigor (*cf.* his review of Stirling's *Secret of Hegel*, *North Amer. Rev.*, CII, 1866), his philosophy, in its dialectic movement and in its assimilation of partial evil to total good, was not dissimilar to that of Hegel.

[11] *L.W.J.*, I, 87.

hanced by the musty academicism of his Königsberg existence. With Hegel it was a raging fever." [12] Even in his last and, on the whole, admiring comment, he cannot withhold allusion to Hegel's "abominable habits of speech." [13] Despite this early and lasting dislike of its form James continued his study of the Hegelian philosophy intermittently throughout his life, with what was on the whole an increasing respect. In the '70s and early '80s he was reading the translations and expositions of Hegel published in the *Journal of Speculative Philosophy* by W. T. Harris, "our foremost American Hegelian." [14] At the same time one or more of the philosophical clubs to which he belonged were devoted to the study of Hegel and especially of the *Logik*.[15] At first he was concerned with Hegel as the one philosopher of modern times who professed to explain existence-in-general. "Only the Anselmian proof" can rid philosophy of "that abstract, opaque, unmediated, external, irrational, irresponsible monster, known to the vulgar as bare Fact." Hegel had "reëdited" the Anselmian proof,[16] and though James could not assimilate his reëditings, he thought them deserving of emphasis as keeping alive one of the great philosophical alternatives. Hegel's most important variation of the Anselmian proof consisted in his establishing a logical relation between being and non-being. All other philosophies have to confess that it is quite impossible to explain the world as a whole, because they admit the alternative of there being no world at all. If confronted with the question, "Why being rather than non-being?" they cannot answer. Hegel, having brought being and non-being *into* his system, leaves no alternative outside. The world is necessary because no alternative is even conceivable.[17]

[12] *Principles*, I, 365–6.
[13] *P.U.*, 87.
[14] *W.B.*, 282.
[15] *Cf.* above, 534–6, 712–3, and below, 732–3. Through these clubs he became acquainted with H. C. Brokmeyer's translation of the *Logik* and perhaps of the *Phänomenologie* (*M.S.*, 82; *Jour. of Specul. Philos.*, II, 94 ff.). But he also read the German original — the *Wissenschaft der Logik* in the edition of 1841. The logical part of the *Encyklopädie* he read in W. Wallace's translation, *Logic of Hegel*, 1874, James having acquired this book in 1876.
[16] The so-called Anselmian (or "ontological") proof sought to *deduce* God's existence from the idea of his perfection.
[17] The passages cited above were written in 1884 (*Mind*, IX, 283), but James formulated this view of Hegel at least as early as 1877, when he *wrote* "The Sentiment of Rationality" (*cf. C.E.R.*, 127). His failure to assimilate the doctrine is partially set forth in *Principles*, I, 265, where he points out that "being" and "non-being" are identical for Hegel because as he treats them neither of them has any meaning.

But when during the early '80s James was vigorously "resisting the inroads of Hegelism" [18] at Harvard and elsewhere, and characterizing it as sterile, sanctimonious, rotten, and charlatanish, it was not because of its imperfect logic. It was because he felt that this doctrine paralyzed the moral will. It encouraged men to *see* the world good rather than to *make* it good. It was the latest and best known form of that "gnosticism" which was the inversion of his moral activism.[19] There is a letter to Xenos Clark, "a philosopher who died young at Amherst in the '80s" and who, like Benjamin Paul Blood, another of James's correspondents, was an exponent of the mystical insight induced by anæsthetics: —

Cambridge, Dec. 12, 1880

My dear Mr. Clark, —

Your interesting letter reached me some time ago, but bad eyes, a fit of sickness, moving and all the other ills attendant on humanity have delayed my reply. To speak to you with entire frankness I don't much expect that you will get any farther in your attempts at formulating "Ø" than you have got already. By your confession it is something ineffable and the attempt to state even its ineffability only leads to metaphors and epigrams which, witty and striking and perspective-suggesting as they often are, in your hands as well as in those of Blood, may be in danger of having the changes rung on them too long. Is n't it probable that the hypnotic trance of Indian fakirs . . . induced by the syllable *om* produced your "Ø" in their minds? Is it not a method strictly limited to the individual and incapable of progress? Is n't its result simply the assurance that Being is all right, so we need not fash ourselves about it? And, this result ascertained, is not concrete activity the next proper thing? When you say, "the secret is all at the point of this pen, or nowhere," I read, "the secret is in my smallest act, or nowhere." In concrete action I am dealing with the universe more adequately than in any formulation. I recollect writing a notice of Blood's book, when it appeared, for the *Atlantic,* in which I said something about the intoxication of moral volition having more of gnosis in it than any other.[20] . . .

[18] *L.W.J.*, I, 208.
[19] *W.B.*, 139, 169.
[20] In the notice of Blood's *Anæsthetic Revelation* (1874) here referred to James had written: "What blunts the mind and weakens the will is no full channel for

The Hegelian wave which seems to me only another desperate attempt to make a short cut to paradise, is deluging the College this year; and will, if I am not mistaken, completely sterilize its votaries. I hope in speaking frankly out my fears that your present pursuit may prove morbid, I have not said anything which can give you offense, for believe that no one has a higher opinion or better hopes of you than, yours always truly,

WM. JAMES

James's criticism of Hegelianism was thus edged with moral feeling and he felt entitled to weaken its prestige by whatever weapons might prove effective. He wanted, if possible, to exorcise the spell which this, as he thought, false and dangerous doctrine worked upon the youth of his day. Hence the light-hearted and derisive tone of the "On Some Hegelisms" of 1882 — the "bagatelle diatribes" which shocked but did not convince. On the positive side the article contains much sober argument for what he alludes to as Renouvier's "pluralism and empiricism" presented in a "popular way." But it was followed by a note in which the author likened the Hegelian insight to Blood's nitrous-oxide intoxication, and to "the immense sense of *reconciliation* which characterizes the 'maudlin' stage of alcoholic drunkenness." [21] James was not the man to think any the less of the Hegelian insight because of these scandalous family resemblances, but other people might, and he was evidently not unwilling that they should — his aim here being to deflate Hegelianism rather than to refute it.

In the *Principles* (1890), James continued to deal rather flippantly with Hegel. Thus he likened the Hegelian dialectic to the "pantomime state of mind," in which "all common things are represented to happen in impossible ways, people jump down each other's throats, houses turn inside out, old women become young men, everything 'passes into its opposite' with inconceivable celerity and skill; and this, so far from producing perplexity, brings rapture to the beholder's mind." [22] In considering the problem of the unity of consciousness James rejected the "Hegelizers' " view that the solu-

truth, even if it assist us to a view of a certain aspect of it; and mysticism *versus* mysticism, the faith that comes of willing, the intoxication of moral volition, has a million times better credentials." *Atlantic*, XXXIV (1874), 628.

[21] *W.B.*, 294–5. James had taken nitrous-oxide gas himself and describes his experience. The experiment had been suggested by his reading of Blood's *Anæsthetic Revelation*.

[22] *Principles*, I, 369, note.

tion lay in the very presence of the contradictions which he, James, was trying to avoid. "With this intellectual temper," he said, "I confess that I cannot contend. As in striking at some unresisting gossamer with a club, one but overreaches one's self, and the thing one aims at gets no harm." [23]

But James was undoubtedly haunted by the rhythm of the Hegelian dialectic and felt that it revealed a genuine aspect of reality. Hegelianism had, in short, its intuitive essence, separable from its verbalism, and from its pretentious claim of logical coerciveness. To this intuitive essence James recurs in 1902 in his *Varieties of Religious Experience,* where he suggests that Hegel's "sense of a perfected Being with all its otherness soaked up into itself" came originally from a mystical feeling and was afterwards rationalized by his intellect. James thought the rationalization sophistical, but he respected the feeling, and was willing to concede that it might be one of the avenues to truth.[24] "Ontological emotion, however stumbled on," he once said, "has something authoritative for the individual who feels it." [25]

The Hegelian insight ascribed by James first to nitrous-oxide-gas intoxication, and then to religious mysticism, tends in James's later thought to be secularized. It becomes a sober philosophical alternative or hypothesis, based on an undeniable aspect of experience. One of the Hibbert Lectures of 1908, which became a chapter in the *Pluralistic Universe,* was devoted to "Hegel and His Method." In preparation for it James worked through two thirds of the *Phänomenologie des Geistes,*[26] and he had already read Kuno Fischer's great commentary.[27] In the final and published draft of this lecture, there is no further allusion to the "anæsthetic revelation," or even to mysticism. But an earlier draft contains the following account of "transcendency" reminiscent of his earlier approach: "There is a certain formal scheme of thought familiar to transcendental idealists which can be described as the capture by one species of a genus, of the opposite species, in the name of the

[23] *Ibid.,* 163.
[24] *V.R.E.,* 389, note.
[25] *Atlantic,* XXXIV (1874), 628.
[26] Edition of 1840. I date his reading of it from the frequent appearances of Bergson's name in the margin, once as "poor Bergson!"
[27] Forming Vol. VIII, 1901, of the *Geschichte der neuern Philosophie.* In Sept. 1900, he wrote: "I can read philosophy now, and have just read the first three *Lieferungen* of K. Fischer's 'Hegel.' I must say I prefer the original text. Fischer's paraphrases always flatten and dry things out; and he gives no rich sauce of his own to compensate." (*L.W.J.,* II, 138.)

entire genus, with which thenceforward the capturing species identifies itself. It is a form of thought evidently very active in the anæsthetic revelation. It carries with it a strong intellectual elation, as if one had now been everywhere, and surrounded all possibilities, included one's own other, and by ascending to a higher region altogether possessed all the region below, and saw through and transcended its oppositions. 'Transcendency' is in fact the very word to describe the consciousness in question: 'Death once dead, there 's no more dying then.' " [28]

Hegel is, of course, singled out as the arch-exponent of rationalism in James's monistic sense — of the philosophy which explains parts by wholes. But the tone of the comment is one of respectful and admiring dissent. Having found himself and having no fears of Hegelianism, he is now magnanimous. Hegelianism "agrees with countless facts," and describes certain "paradoxical" aspects of life. As a reporter of certain "empirical aspects of the actual, Hegel . . . is great and true." These are, at least in part, the same aspects of the actual which James himself is at such pains to set forth in his descriptions of the continuity and overlapping of experience. The intellectualistic Hegel, who sought to prove his thesis by conceptual dialectic, was, James thought, not successful. But even this overambitious Hegelianism has an undeniable sublimity. And James balances the account: "I do not therefore take Hegel's technical apparatus seriously at all. I regard him rather as one of those numerous original seers who can never learn how to articulate. His would-be coercive logic counts for nothing in my eyes; but that does not in the least impugn the philosophic importance of his conception of the absolute, if we take it merely hypothetically as one of the great types of cosmic vision." [29]

[28] The above paragraph is followed by the following list of "examples": "(1) The sceptic's self-contradiction. Scepticism = dogmatism. (2) 'Many' means one; is noun of unity. Many as such is unified. (3) 'Object and subject.' Both objects to higher subject. Royce; Hodgson, *Metaphysic of Experience*, I, 303. (4) Guilt leads to virtue. (5) Innominate artery. The unrelated is negatively related. (6) Ignorance *as such* implies omniscience. Bradley, *Appearance and Reality*, 1893, 516. (7) Chaos is one kind of order. (8) 'Finite' implies bound, *i.e.*, infinite. (9) In morals: heap coals of fire on enemy's head. (10) Higher synthesis of hunting animals. (11) Pascal's *Roseau* [*Cf.* Pensées, edited by L. Brunschvicg, 1921, Sect. VI, §§347–8]. (12) Way to certainty lies through radical doubt ('death once dead,' etc.). (13) Royce's idealistic argument: say absolute does n't exist or does n't know, etc. (14) Expecting the unexpected." [*Cf.* also, *P.U.*, 98–9.]

[29] *P.U.*, 98–100, 104, 107–8.

XLVI

THOMAS DAVIDSON: EARLY COMPANIONSHIP (1880–1882)

JAMES had a great gift for the memorial essay. This was one of his ways of substituting the pen for that paintbrush he had laid down so many years before. Perhaps the finest of these memorial essays was dedicated to the uprooted Scotchman, Thomas Davidson — "a knight-errant," he calls him, "of the intellectual life"; a man of his own age, a boon companion, with an endearing mixture of traits, homely and ennobling. Royce refers in his diary to "that noisy fellow, — Davidson." James speaks of his "broad brow, his big chest, his bright blue eyes, his volubility in talk and laughter" that "told a tale of vitality far beyond the common." He was a man to be out of doors with, in that Adirondack wilderness which both men loved so well. But he was as tender as he was irascible, and as sensitive as he was robust: dictatorial, aggressive, but profoundly human — altogether a man of "massive" proportions.[1]

Although Davidson held no academic post and despised "academicism," he was a man of vast erudition and of strong intellectual enthusiasms. His philosophical relations with James may be appropriately introduced in the present context because, though he detested Hegel, he attached himself to the Continental rather than the British tradition. He revered Kant and had a low opinion of Spencer and Mill. He belonged, broadly speaking, to James's hostile camp of the rationalists. "Even if a philosophy were true," writes James of Davidson, "he could easily fail to relish it unless it showed a certain formal nobility and dogmatic pretension to finality."[2] This is a description of precisely what James rejected — softened by friendly affection and by the artist's enjoyment of the wholeness and self-consistency of his portrait. Davidson, like Howison and Royce, was one of James's *good* rationalists. For

[1] *M.S.*, 76–7.
[2] *Ibid.*, 80.

while James abominated rationalism in principle he often loved rationalists in the concrete. In the case of these three men there was a further and specifically doctrinal bond. They were all men, especially Davidson and Howison, with a strong individualistic emphasis. It was the *monism* of rationalism and of its most recent idealistic version to which James was most irreconcilable; and while he felt that all rationalism was monistic in its logical implications, he recognized in these three rationalistic friends the mitigating effect of an individualistic temperament. Davidson has been described as a "pluralistic idealist" and a "moral rigorist."[3] That he was not conventionally anything, and that every orthodoxy was strained through the medium of his own spontaneity, is illustrated by the scandal which he created in linking together the names of Jesus and Zola in his Concord lecture of 1886.[4]

Davidson had come to Boston in 1875, and it was not long after his arrival that he associated himself with William James's fortunes by introducing him to the Alice Gibbens who afterwards became Mrs. William James. In St. Louis, where he had taught Greek in the high school, Davidson had participated in the so-called "St. Louis Movement." This remarkable cultural manifestation was the result of the association in that city of two unusual men, Henry C. Brokmeyer and William T. Harris. The former, an extraordinary blend of the scholar, the reformer, the soldier, the artisan, the adventurer, and the politician, migrated from Germany in 1844. He succeeded in obtaining an education, settled in St. Louis, launched upon a political career during the Civil War, and eventually became lieutenant governor and acting governor of the state (1875–1877). Meanwhile, however, he had been spreading the gospel of Hegel. William T. Harris (afterwards United States Commissioner of Education) had come to St. Louis in 1857, as a teacher in the public schools. He at once met Brokmeyer and placed himself under his instruction. In 1866 the two men organized the so-called St. Louis Philosophical Society, of which Thomas Davidson and George H. Howison became members. Harris, Davidson, and Howison all came afterwards to Boston and thus transplanted Hegelianism from west to east. But James tells us that two offshoots from this group, young men from Illinois, had already come

[3] C. M. Bakewell, *Dict. of Amer. Biog.*, art. "Davidson."
[4] *Cf.* above, 602.

to the Harvard Law School in 1874, a year before Davidson's arrival, and brought with them "three big folios of Hegelian manuscript" — presumably Brokmeyer's translation of the *Logik*. This manuscript formed for a time the text of that local philosophical club whose fortunes we have traced, and of which Davidson now became an active member.[5]

His Hegelian studies having weaned him from positivism, Davidson turned back to antiquity, first to Plato and then to Aristotle. Then, in about 1878, during one of his many sojourns abroad, he became interested in the teachings of the philosopher-priest, Rosmini, who, having played an active part in the liberation of Italy and in papal politics during the period of the *Risorgimento,* had founded the order of the so-called "Rosminians" to perpetuate his discipline of contemplation and service.[6] In philosophy Rosmini was the learned and monumentally productive exponent of a new scholastic philosophy, opposed equally to the British empirical school and to Hegelianism: an intellectualistic realism, having as its central doctrine the intuitive contemplation of being. In 1882 Davidson brought out a volume of translated selections under the title of *Rosmini's Philosophical System,* and for a number of years he spent much of his time at Domodossola, where the Rosminian order had been founded and where one of its principal novitiates still flourished. Catholicism Davidson totally rejected, but with the spirit of charity which distinguished the Rosminian order he was profoundly in sympathy; and in the Rosminian philosophy he found a modernization of the Platonic and Aristotelian doctrines to which he had already given his allegiance.

Out of love for Davidson James read his *Rosmini* with care and gave it a friendly notice in the *Nation.*[7] But though he drew some solace from Rosmini's attack on Kant and Hegel, and believed him

[5] *M.S.*, 82; above, 534–6, 712–3, 726. Brokmeyer's translation of the *Logik,* which the St. Louis circle used to keep locked up in a fireproof box like a sacred relic, is now preserved in the archives of the Missouri Historical Society. A bibliography of "The St. Louis Movement" will be found in *Dict. of Amer. Biog.,* III, 65. To it should be added C. M. Perry, *The St. Louis Movement in Philosophy,* and G. H. Howison, "St. Louis Reminiscences," delivered Jan. 6, 1916, and preserved in manuscript in the University of California Library. According to the latter, Brokmeyer also translated Hegel's *Phänomenologie,* but this cannot be verified. Both Emerson and Alcott were attracted to the St. Louis and the former once delivered his essay on "Inspiration" under its auspices.

[6] Antonio Rosmini-Serbati (1797–1855); the proper name of the order was "Institute of the Brethren of Charity."

[7] XXXV (1882).

to be "closer" than these "to the actual facts," on the whole his method was too abstract to serve any truly Jamesian purpose. The correspondence begins with a letter from James, who is on his Swiss holiday of 1880: —

Andermatt, Aug. 1, 1880

Beloved Davidson, —

. . . My wife seems to believe that you are going to pass the evening of your days as a Rosminian father in the Alps and asks me to "think" of you in that situation. If you 'll set up a chapter or section or lodge, or whatever they call them, in Boston, I may join it — think of Cabot and Howison and Wendell Holmes and all of us there together! Does n't it tempt you? Good-bye. Affectionately,

W. J.

Boston, Sept. 27, 1880

My dear Davidson, —

Your letter of the 11th from London has swept over my heart-strings! I feel as if the world were still young. I wish I had been with you both at Domodossola and Szalabér. Whether I can join you intellectually the future only can decide, but your condition has my heartiest personal sympathy, and I may say, envy, for I am tired of the position of a dried-up critic and doubter. The believer is the true full man. But as Hegel is the true prophet to Harris and Palmer, and Rosmini to you, I may have ears for neither; however, I promise they will be open to the evangelist Davidson when he comes to Boston. I shall be curious to hear what you make of Hodgson. . . . Always your friend,

Wm. James

James's "Reflex Action and Theism," in which he had argued for theistic belief as a working hypothesis,—holding it to be peculiarly consistent with the physiological doctrine that thinking is the middle term between sensation and action, — had appeared in November 1881, and had been sent to Davidson.

London, Dec. 14, 1881

My dear James, —

I write to scold you about your "Reflex Action and Theism." I read it, I need not say, with almost breathless interest; but I am

compelled to dissent from its chief positions. Indeed, it seems to me to contain a confusion of thought, of which I never before knew you to be guilty — a confusion of the ideal with the real. It may be "essential that God be conceived as the deepest power in the universe; and, second, he must be conceived under the form of a mental personality," although I do not see what *essential* here means.[8] Essential for what? For human comfort? In any case, it does not follow that such a god really exists, which, for your purpose, was the only point worth proving. . . .

Of a *real* God we know absolutely nothing, and we are only yielding to an inveterate prejudice and repeating a popular watch-word when we say we do. I find, moreover, plenty and more than plenty of aim in the universe, to call out my best efforts, and keep aflame my deepest enthusiasms, without the aid of any such popular idol. Blessedness for myself and others, blessedness for myself through others, and for others through me — that is more than any heaven that an omnipotent God could give. I am eternal, without beginning or end: that is as clear to me today as the fact that I am at this instant. For my highest blessedness I am dependent upon the concurrence of all other *I*'s, in whatever stage of development, whether reciprocally cancelled as matter, or instinct with pure energy, as all-sympathetic spirits. In one sense the positivists are right. Humanity is God; humanity alone, so far as we know, "makes for righteousness" — at least, consciously. But the whole universe is moving toward blessedness; for the most part blindly; in good men, seeingly. God is love, in the strictest sense of the term. Evil is the result of blindness and narrowness, mere false combination, mere disharmony. When we have done away with God and shifted the responsibility for the well-being of the world upon our own shoulders, where it belongs, we shall begin to feel the duties of consciousness to the universe. Not till then! Your "Quelques Considérations sur la méthode subjective" was immeasurably in advance of your last pious effort.

Fetterangus, Scotland, Dec. 24, 1881

Since the above was written, I have been moving about considerably. Finally I came here last night, to spend Christmas in my native place, among old, familiar places and faces. I am as much

[8] *W.B.*, 122.

out of the world here as if I were in the Ural Mountains. The weather and surroundings are dreary enough (only five hours of sunlight), but there is a certain indescribable restfulness among the things which recall the innocent, unconscious years of boyhood. Alas! how much there is that cannot be recalled!

In London I saw a good deal of Hodgson and his club, Dr. Burns-Gibson, Mr. Whale. . . . Hodgson is the most confused thinker I have ever met and Burns-Gibson one of the clearest. The latter gentleman said he had read over your Hegel paper with roars of delighted laughter. Robertson is to print it without curtailment. *Bravissimo!* There is a good blast against Hegel in my coming book.[9] In the last number of *Journal of Speculative Philosophy* there are evidences that Harris is falling from the faith as it is in Hegel and going over to objectivism. So, on all hands the Hegelian system is receding. But I shall be disappointed if such recession leads only to the restoration of that last remnant of mythology and scholasticism, *viz.*, theism and a block-universe.[10]

Of all the countries I have recently lived in, England is the most unsatisfactory and unhappy. Indeed, I am convinced that it is on the eve of a tremendous crisis, so great is everywhere the discontent, and, I must likewise add, the injustice. Have you seen a recent book by a Californian, Henry George, called *Progress and Poverty?* If not, do read it, and give it to Mrs. James to read. You will care much for it. The author, like yourself, is inclined to harbor the respectable tendency toward theism, not aware, apparently, that theism is the root of all unjust authority and much misery; nevertheless, his book is a good one. Don't mind my scolding. Rather profit by it, and keep theism for moments of atavistic enthusiasm. With kindest regards to Mrs. James, I am, ever yours truly,

THOMAS DAVIDSON

Cambridge, Jan. 8, 1882

My dear Davidson, —

Your letter, just received, makes glad my heart. Next to a good theist, give me a good atheist; and that you seem to have become,

[9] J. Burns-Gibson contributed articles and critical notices to *Mind*. George Whale was a solicitor, and one of the founders of the Omar Khayyam and Pepys Clubs. The "coming book" is presumably *Rosmini's Philosophical System; cf.* 141–58.

[10] Was this the original of W.J.'s "block universe"? Harris's article was "Faith and Knowledge: Kant's Refutation of the Ontological Proof of the Being of God," XV (1881).

whether in spite or in consequence of Rosmini, ignorance prevents me from deciding. To speak seriously, your blame is more agreeable to me than most all the praise I 've got for that "address." The latter left me with my bad conscience increased; for the address was a curious composition on my part, the conclusions I believed in being forced by arguments which I cared little about, and which were used merely on account of their availability and *ad captandum* power. I wanted to show that physiology could send out an anti-materialistic blast as well as she had been supposed to emit materialistic ones. I wanted, too, to give popular form to my hobby of the ubiquitousness of emotional interests in the mind's operations. So I rather deliberately sacrificed accuracy to effectiveness in taking the reflex triad ready made from the physiologists, as if it were a truly *mental* analysis, — and I reaped my reward in much applause. I have felt constrained to explain my errors to such correspondents as Hodgson and Renouvier. But you don't attack me for them, but for my conclusions, which I hold to.

It is a curious thing, this matter of God! I can sympathize perfectly with the most rabid hater of him and the idea of him, when I think of the use that has been made of him in history and philosophy as a *starting-point,* or premise for grounding deductions. But as an ideal to attain and make probable, I find myself less and less able to do without him. He need not be an *all*-including "subjective unity of the universe," as you suppose. In fact there is nothing I clasp hands with you so heartily in, as in defying the superstition of such a unity. It is only one possible hypothesis amid many and becomes (d——n my eyes, I must call my wife to write for me!) a pure superstition the moment it is treated dogmatically. All I mean is that there must be *some* subjective unity in the universe which has purposes commensurable with my own, and which is at the same time large enough to be, among all the powers that may be there, the strongest. I simply refuse to accept the notion of there being *no* purpose in the objective world. On the other hand, I cannot represent the existence of purpose except as based in a mind. The not-me, therefore, so far as it contains purpose, must spring from a mind; but not necessarily a *one and only* mind. In saying "God exists" all I imply is that my purposes are cared for by a mind so powerful as on the whole to control the drift of the universe. This is as much polytheism as monotheism. As a matter of fact it is neither, for it is hardly a speculative position at all, but a merely

practical and emotional faith which I fancy even your Promethean *Gemüth* shares.

The only difficulties of theism are the moral difficulties and meannesses; and they have always seemed to me to flow from the gratuitous dogma of God being the all-exclusive reality. Once think possible a primordial pluralism of which he may be one member and which may have no single subjective synthesis, and piety forthwith ceases to be incompatible with manliness, and religious "faith" with intellectual rectitude. In short, the only theism I defend is that of simple unphilosophic mankind, to which numerical mysteries are added corruptions. If there be a God, how the devil can we know what difficulties he may have had to contend with? (This last remark is from my amanuensis spouse!) *Darauf kommt es an!* Possible difficulties! they save everything. But what are they but limitations to the all-inclusiveness of any single being?

Jan. 9th. Since last night we have finished reading aloud your article on Rosmini [11] which we began some days back. It amuses me to find how some of your phrases at the end agree with those I have used in this letter. It is a strong article both in style and matter, and ought to produce an impression; but what will your Rosminian friends think of you after reading your *Auslassungen* against their religion? I wish I could get a glimpse of the meaning of Rosmini's system. Not a line of the *Psicologia* I hoped to read this winter, has been looked at yet. So runs the world away!

What news can I tell you? Nothing in the College, where the old routine prevails. Harris has founded a weekly Saturday afternoon Hegel Club where he expounds the third volume of the *Logik* to ten of us, Palmer, Cabot, Hall, Everett, Emery [12] and some others. I am much won by his innocence and apostolic disposition, but not a word has he said that has any magic for me. I rather shrink from hurting his feelings by my squib on Hegel, and have left the decision in the hands of Robertson.[13] I am sorry you find Hodgson confused. To not many of us is it granted to be confused on such a scale! Dr. Burns-Gibson, who I think must have been a rather big, modest, silent, bearded man with whom I dined at Hodgson's

[11] "Antonio Rosmini," *Fortnightly Rev.*, XXXVI (1881).

[12] S. H. Emery, Jr., was director of the Concord School of Philosophy. He had been a pupil of Dr. William T. Harris. Hall is G. Stanley Hall; *cf.* below, II, 6 ff.

[13] The reference is, of course, to the notorious "On Some Hegelisms."

one day, I supposed to be himself an Hegelian from the manner of his review of Sully's *Illusions*[14] in Harris's *Journal*.

Addio, Davidson *mio.* If there *is* a God, where will you be on the day of judgment? The immortality of which you are so certain will keep you forever exposed to his wrath. Write again soon to yours ever,

WM. JAMES

Fetterangus, Jan. 26, 1882

My dear James, —

Your letter is delightful. I am really greatly consoled to know that your theism is not of the dangerous kind. So many people, like poor, abused Frothingham,[15] are, from mere weakness and want of insight, carried away by the theistic delusion, that it really distressed me to think that you should form one of the number. If absolute, healthy honesty were to do such things, what might we expect from the trimmers?

The fact is, you are just as much an atheist as I am. Your dominant individual is by no means a god. And yet I see no ground for belief that there is any such individual. That there are powers besides me, working towards the same ends as myself, and, therefore, furthering my actions and purposes, is most true; but that these are all subordinated to one overseer is a groundless statement. These powers my unifying intelligence may unite and name, calling the result God or anything else I like, and, if I am of a romantic or timorous disposition, I may fall down and worship my own creation. An idol is none the less an idol that it is throned only in the imagination. God is only an ungraven image, which we must get rid of. Until we do so, we shall never be able to lay the foundation of true freedom, or to usher in the new glad civilization that shall be. Existence is an infinite multiplicity of feelings, capable of modifying each other and becoming objects to each other. It is all folly to talk of atoms and force as ultimate: feeling and being alone are ultimate: atoms and force are objectified feelings. If they were not, we should know nothing about them. The problem of

[14] "Idols and Factitious Unities," *Jour. of Specul. Philos.,* XVI (1882).

[15] The reference is to Rev. Octavius Brooks Frothingham of New York, who was interviewed by the *Evening Post* on Nov. 12, 1881, after his resignation of the presidency of the Free Religious Assoc. The publication of this interview, in which Frothingham said that "the drift of free-thought teaching is unquestionably toward a dead materialism," led to a lively controversy in press and pulpit.

problems is to discover how a feeling, such as I am, must be related to other feelings, so as to be modified by them, that is, so as to be conscious of an external world. *That* is the final problem of psychology as well as of physiology.

Gefühl ist alles
Name ist Schall und Rauch
Umnebelnd Himmelsgluth.

How true that is, in a sense far wider than Faust meant! The name with which we have darkened the glow of Heaven is — God! Do, for pity's sake, let that name and that idol alone. The real alone is real, alone concerns us. If there is no God (and there is none), where will you be?

A couple of weeks ago, I wrote a letter of the above tenor to the *N. Y. Evening Post,* anent the Frothingham case. If they print it (and I fear they will not), it will horrify most of my friends. However, I cannot help it. Somebody must take the obloquy of telling the truth, and I probably shall suffer as little as most. The Rosminians do not at all relish my *Auslassungen* against their religion; but I cannot help that. I have as good a right to preach as they have, and it is everyone's duty to expose error, superstition and obscurantism. My article has done good. There is another in print. It will probably appear in the February *Fortnightly.* My book on Rosmini is nearly printed, my archæological book[16] is just started. Of the former I shall send you an early copy, so that you may get at the bottom of Rosmini's system, and fight Hegel.

I am interested in Harris's class and still more in your relation to it. "Innocence and apostolic disposition" is good. Harris is a capital fellow; but he does not think logically. He is a born mystic. At Cambridge they told me that the English Hegelians thought "his heart was in the right place, but he did not understand Hegel." That latter remark is, in my view, rather complimentary than otherwise. I have done with all the philosophies that believe in God or self-moving ideas. They are mere scholasticisms of mythology. It has taken me some time and trouble to arrive

[16] This article, on "Philosophy in the Roman Church," appeared in the *Fortnightly* for July 1882. The "archæological book" is presumably "The Parthenon Frieze, and Other Essays," 1882.

at this conclusion; but it is clear and final. Burns-Gibson a Hegelian! *Das muss ich ihm doch sagen! Er wird sich hoffentlich bedanken.*

They have made both Harris and me members of Hodgson's Aristotelian Club.

Your wife's interpolation in your letter is delicious. You are all safe from the perversions of theism, so long as you have her. Give her my warmest thanks.

And my excellent friend, Mr. Goddard,[17] has gone to other conditions, his visible-making garment rudely and suddenly blown away from him. Seldom have I grieved more deeply for anyone. As a noble character, he has left few equals. Since I came here, I have lost an aunt, and three weeks before an uncle. It seems as if this mild winter were carrying off everyone. Five weeks of genial spring weather in December and January! And I am in my native place, among the scenes of my boyhood. Greet the philosophers most kindly from me, and tell them, when they have found Hegel out, to betake themselves to Rosmini. Yours truly, outside of Hegel and Theism,

THOMAS DAVIDSON

Domodossola, March 29, 1882

My dear James, —

You owe me a letter; but I cannot help sending you a line to testify my sympathy with you in your recent loss, which I learnt from Robertson.[18] Death has come very near me three times this winter, and I am, therefore, better able to realize your state of feeling. What can I say to you? Only that I do not believe in death. We shall not die; for we *are*.

Robertson is coming here on Tuesday to spend a few days with me. I shall then probably accompany him a short distance on his way toward Venice. While I was in London, he showed me your appendix to the Hegel article, and, as you may imagine, I had a good chuckle over it. What *will* Harris say to you and me? I have hit Hegel very hard in my book. But Harris is a saint of the old style, and forgives everything. In a couple of weeks a copy

[17] Delano A. Goddard was a journalist and editor, and twice served as member of the Massachusetts House of Representatives.

[18] James's mother had died on Jan. 29.

of my book [19] will be sent to you, and I wish you to read it through. I hope you will like it, in spite of the fact that it does not emphasize reflex action, to which Cabot thinks you and Hall are given over. Reprobates that ye are! Will you notice my book for the *Nation?* How should you like to use it as a text-book for one session? I believe it is well adapted for that. But you will be able to form your own judgment about that when you see it. I should like to have the book well received. Will you do what you can for it in that way?

I had a good winter in England and Scotland, saw many pleasant people and discussed many subjects. Philosophy does not seem to flourish in England. Robertson is genial and unprejudiced and T. H. Green, whom I did not see, appears to be solid and thorough; but the rest are nowhere. Hodgson is incredibly confused and illogical. In these respects he beats even the Hegelians. Sully I liked very much and believe in; but he has not found his path. Carveth Read is handsome enough to afford lack of profundity. And so on, and so on. Write a word to let me know that you have n't altogether forgotten me. Salute your wife and her mother and sisters most kindly from me, and believe me, ever yours truly,

THOMAS DAVIDSON

Cambridge, April 16, 1882

My dear Davidson, —

Many thanks for your sympathy in my filial loss. It has been a severe blow to all of us, but Father and my sister, the two who presumably might suffer the most from it, are bearing it very well. I shall read your book with eagerness and do what I can in the way of noticing it. I cannot swear in advance to puff it, but will strain things as far as possible in that direction! Trust me! What mean your attacks on Hodgson? I can't get the full orbit of his thought — perhaps he can't get it himself yet — but the texture of his details and his power of analysis seem to me superior to any contemporary English author. I have been enjoying my class in Mill's *Logic* immensely. Our Saturday Hegel Club proves very dull, — Harris rather tedious. He revolves like a squirrel in a cage in one circle of ideas; all openings presently lead into that circle, and then the monotonous whirring begins. The College has been in an uproar

[19] *The Philosophical System of Antonio Rosmini-Serbati,* 1882.

lately with Palmer's invitation to California to fill a newly endowed professorship. He has however just decided not to go, having been offered a full professorship here. He and I don't fuse any more than we did.

Now for more important matters. I shall almost certainly take my leave of absence next year and probably sail *solus* in August for Italy, my idea being to stay south of the Alps say, till December, loafing a good deal, then to go to two or three German towns until February, spend February and March in Paris, and return home after two or three months more in England. Can't you tell me immediately in what part of this itinerary I may hope to be with you? What are your own plans for next year? With my bad eyes and the conservation of energy between them and my bad legs, so that when I tramp I can't read, and when I read I can't tramp, I rather dread going abroad alone, and like to cast anchor near a friendly forum like yours. Please answer promptly, and believe me always yours,

WM. JAMES

Cambridge, July 16, 1882

My dear Davidson, —

I write to tell you that I have decided to sail for Liverpool about the first of September. . . . I have been dispelling the winter's fag by loafing and visiting on the sea shore for the past three weeks; and have consequently abstained from all serious reading, including that of your book. . . . I shall recommence Rosmini tomorrow, and finish it promptly, — I have already got half through; but don't be disappointed if I write a hostile review. Whatever it is, it will at any rate be conscientious. So far it seems to me as if Rosmini had done nothing but rename factors of experience already discriminated by other philosophers. The "essence of being" business I can understand no otherwise than as a new way of expressing the fact that the form of *all* representation is cognitive. The fertility of this principle would constitute its importance. But so far the only fertility I can see is the negative one of vetoing any pretended attempt to deduce the function of cognition from any thing different from itself. Of course that is a service, — how great a one I cannot yet tell. But wait for the end!

I saw Cabot day before yesterday. He is very busy sifting the

enormously bulky correspondence of Emerson. He told me he had made nothing of your book, but agreed with me in praising the style in which you had done your editorial duties. But enough for the present! more soon. Always truly yours,

WM. JAMES

XLVII

THOMAS DAVIDSON: FRIENDSHIP VERSUS PHILOSOPHY (1882–1900)

In October 1882, Davidson published in *Mind* an article on "Perception," ponderous, formalistic, Rosminian — in which he argued that perception is a feeling somehow converted into a cognition (intuitive) by the principle of being. James's reply is indulgent: —

London, Dec. 24–26, 1882

My dear Davidson, —

I have been in London near two weeks. . . . I came to London for a pretty sad reason. A telegram told us that my poor father was very ill. . . . Harry sailed alone but Father died before he landed. . . . Yesterday I got your article and read it. Up to the bottom of p. 505, weighty and masterly, leading one to expect everything; — after that, to my mind, nothing but obscurity, gratuitously introduced ideas, and apparently contradictoriness! You must go at it again! With me it ends as it begins, with the brute fact of cognition, out of which I don't see how you can deduce as elements anything further than what in any given case of it seems empirically given. I accept the fact, and regard attempts to justify it by such notions as activity, intuition, principle, entity, subject, object, modification; reality, term, etc., as both inadequate and superfluous. I don't deny that taking the bald fact one's imagination may not be relieved by these dramatic ways of accounting for it, but there seems to me nothing coercive about them. Still they interest me as you present them, and each of your presentations gets so much clearer than the last, that I hope you won't stop. . . .

Hoping this will find you well, I remain, ever truly yours,

Wm. James

Rome, Dec. 29, 1882

My dear James, —

. . . What can I say about your father's departure? He has gone in good company. The last two years have left the earth poor

in good and great men. It seems as if an angel had come and called away the few righteous before the great calamity. I can well imagine your feelings in regard to his loss. But it is well with him.

I have had a hard time for the last few months. My mother's illness, my own poor health, and sundry other depressing things have given me plenty of chance for patience and resignation; and I hope I have learnt them. I feel as if I had. I am still far from well; but, I am much better than I was in London. I am very busy, all the more that my many acquaintances make considerable demands on my time. Today Cardinal Hohenlohe offered me Liszt's apartment in the Villa d'Este at Tivoli, and perhaps I shall go out there for a while. You know the Villa d'Este is the finest in Italy.

You are right about my article on "Perception." It was written when I was suffering from a slight congestion of the brain and could hardly work or think. I told Robertson so, and asked him to overlook its shortcomings. I shall do better yet, I am sure; for the theory is true and right, and worthy of all devotion.

No one thinks of claiming that there is anything more in cognition than what is empirically given. The question, however, remains: What is given? Cognition is a very compound thing, and the *what* of it can be reached only by a painful analysis. . . . The peculiarity of cognition is that all cases of it contain two elements which remain absolutely identical, and without which no cognition would be possible. . . . It is the failure to see this that makes you and Hodgson talk about consciousness as if it were a "cluster of feelings," or as if it were a "brute fact." It is neither the one nor the other. The fact can be analysed; but when it is so, it does not become a cluster of feelings or of anything else, but a series of transient acts all depending upon one immanent act. The trouble with both of you lies in this, that you have never grasped the nature of an immanent act, an ἐνέργεια.[1] You must really both take to the reviled Schoolmen for a while. But enough! I would give a great deal to have a month's talk with you. And this leads me to the main object of my letter. I want you, instead of going home or to Paris, to come here, to the light and the mild atmosphere of Rome. I will introduce you to more philosophers, and philosophers of a higher order, than you can meet either in Paris or London — Mamiani, Ferri, Turbiglio, Bonghi etc. etc.[2] I will insure you a

[1] Actuality.

[2] Mamiani della Rovere was a poet, philosopher, and politician. In 1870 he had

few most delightful months. And we can go out and stay together at the Villa d'Este. Do come! There 's a good fellow! You must absolutely come: I will not have "no" for an answer! Now mind! . . . Remember me most kindly to [Burns-Gibson], to Hodgson, to Robertson and the rest and believe me, very truly yours,

THOMAS DAVIDSON

London, Jan. 2, 1883

My blessed old Davidson, —

Your letter of the 29th came yesterday and was most welcome. I am sorry your nervous system plays you such pranks, in spite of your cannibalistic appearance of vigor. But it is not yet as bad as mine by a long chalk: the darkness and phenomenal softness of this London air have completely spoilt my eyes and my sleep so that I have n't done a stroke of reading or writing (except letters) for a fortnight.

Jan. 4. You see how it goes.

Jan. 6 *noch a mal!* Can you wonder at a man's being homesick when this is [his] normal rate of writing letters? Even my "calligraph" has gone back on me — last surviving link of attachment to my home — and it has taken nearly a week of tinkering and of screwing and unscrewing to bring it back to this momentary pitch of perfection. For two days past, however, I have had a youth to come and read to me aloud, have passed two quiet evenings in consequence, and life begins to have a rosy look again. I have n't had a great deal of society since I have been here. I have seen more of the Robertson household than of any other. They have been very friendly to me, and I like them both extremely. Hodgson has been out of town for a fortnight, and so has Sully. Burns-Gibson I 've seen only the one time I wrote you about. Pollock I 've seen twice, and Leslie Stephen twice. But I think I shall have the persistence to worry it out for a month longer, and go home with a better conscience of duty performed. I ought to be writing all this time and should be, were I at home. But what with my eyes and the desire to read up Pollock, Gurney, Stephen, and Hodgson's *Theory of Practice,* whilst basking in the light of the respective

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founded the review *Filosofia delle scuole italiane.* Luigi Ferri was professor of theoretical philosophy in the University of Rome. Sebastiano Turbiglio was professor of the history of philosophy in the Ennio Quirino Visconti Lyceum in Rome. Ruggiero Bonghi was a journalist, writer, philosophical scholar, and patriot.

author's presence, it has been postponed, and sorra a line has come upon the paper.

But enough of groans! To your letter! All I can say is that the nature of an immanent act shall become the topic of my meditations by day and by night until I think I understand it, and you tell me I don't. I sincerely hope you will go on writing and clarifying us all, not excluding yourself from the benefits of the process. Robertson tells me you have begun a translation of Rosmini's psychology. *Bravissimo!* Now we shall perhaps understand. I hope you will annotate it, of course not on so large a scale as with the other book. Robertson's own article in *Mind*[8] has rather disappointed me. I could have wished for something a little more conclusive touching this wonderful double function of the mental facts, now products, now producers, of their own objects. The mind wants above all something stable to settle down on; and this see-sawing and slippery bed won't definitively serve the purpose. But it is good to see how all these men are beginning to work on the same lines, and how this very paradox is coming more and more into the focus of attention and distinct examination.

The tone of the English race strikes me as funny. One is alternately impatient and reverent towards it. They seem to be voluntarily clogging their lives with so many superfluities that one would suppose to stand in the way, and do stand in the way, of pure intellection. They drag down through the centuries, smeared with the fog and the smoke, their great muffler of respectabilities, insisting on keeping the amateurish attitude, and not talking after the manner of professionals about anything; they give one so little *aggregate* sense of keenness and light and rationality, such as one gets the very instant he sets foot in either Germany or France, or even, strange to say, in America; and yet, out from the blanket of apparent dullness and stupidity fail not perennially to come the sanest, safest, deepest bits of insight. It is a fascinating miracle. But it has not prevented me from wishing many a time during the past December that I had not been snatched away so soon from the incarnate intelligence and good sense and taste made visible, of my Paris abode.

Now for your invitation, which sounds too good to be true. But much as in the abstract it tempts, and much as I should like to

[8] "Psychology and Philosophy," VIII (1883).

see a lot of you, it is quite impossible to accept it. I can afford no more traveling; the air of Italy both times I have tried it has thoroughly disagreed with me; and the next move I make must *unbedingt* be in the direction of home. I don't know at this rate when we are likely to see each other again, unless you revert next year to America. Is n't it getting to be time to dip yourself again in the crystal springs of freedom? My sister-in-law Margaret is at Castellammare with Professor Greenough and his wife of Cambridge.[4] Later they will be in Rome and I hope you will not miss each other. . . . Always your friend,

WM. JAMES

Rome, Jan. 12 [1883]

My dear Fellow, —

I can't let you off so easily as that, nor allow you to run off home, as Harris did, from mere homesickness and dislike of London smoke, in mid winter. I know how it is: London always tempts one to commit suicide, so depressing is its omnipresent ugliness, so harrowing are its *rues suintantes.* But here all is light and beauty, and there is none of that enervating atmosphere from which one suffers in summer. You would be another man, if you would come down here, not to say that you would learn more that is valuable and fresh in thought than you can ever do from all the prejudiced, subjectivist Hodgsons, Pollocks and Stephens in the world. *En passant,* let me express my wonder that a clear-headed man like you, with a poet's sense of the real, ever gets bothered with the theories of these people at all. Just read Hodgson's last address to the Aristotelian Society![5] What atom of valuable, life-giving thought can ever come from a system like that? And what can anyone do with such inanities as Stephen's "social tissue," or Pollock's Spinoza-Cliffordian "mind-stuff"?[6] Philosophies built upon pure figments of ill-regulated imaginations! But enough! Come away down to Italy and get rid of the depressing gloom and ugliness of such systems. Living here is cheap and you will find plenty of congenial society, not to say that you can practise your Italian. Come and remain here till April: we will then go to the north of Italy,

[4] Margaret Gibbens, afterwards Mrs. Leigh R. Gregor; and Prof. and Mrs. James Bradstreet Greenough.

[5] "The Method of Philosophy," delivered on Oct. 9, 1882.

[6] *Cf.* Leslie Stephen: *Science of Ethics,* 1882; and Frederick Pollock's *Spinoza: His Life and Philosophy.*

and then you can send for your wife and we will make a little ménage together in some lovely spot for the summer. . . . Keep on writing, and believe me ever yours,

THOMAS DAVIDSON

[London], Jan. 18 [1883]

Avaunt, Satan!

Italy thoroughly disagrees with my loathsome nervous system; but even did it not, I could not afford to travel thither now again. The furthest retrogression my conscience will let me make is Paris. And I don't know about that. Hurrah for your translation! Have you seen Vol. I of the "new essay," now out?[7] I 'm getting into the thick of philosophic society here, and feel as if I were beginning to see daylight through Hodgson's system. Robertson has made himself a sort of guardian angel of me. He is far from well. Last night I spent at Burns-Gibson's. I do no work and know not when I shall get at it. Will write you of my movements. Yours,

WM. JAMES

[London], Feb. 12, 1883

I 'm at last off for Paris without further postponement. I confess that I hanker for confabulation so with you as almost to feel like going part way to Rome if you would come part way thence. Would you meet me at Florence if I got thus far, *solely for the sake of seeing you?* I ween not — for I remember the way you served me three summers agone! However, answer me at Paris, care of *Hottinguer et Cie.* I am just back from Oxford, two delightful days with James Bryce, who spoke warmly of you.

W. J.

Rome, Feb. 17, 1883

If you will on no account come to Rome and see the Italian philosophers, *I will certainly come and meet you in Florence.* At the same time, I am sure I could make you enjoy a visit to Rome, and we might be able to lay plans for the future. I want very much to see you and have a good talk. Chubb[8] tells me about your

[7] The reference is to *The Origin of Ideas*, Vol. I of the English translation of Rosmini's *Nuovo Saggio;* reviewed by Burns-Gibson in *Mind*, VIII (1883).

[8] This is presumably Percival Chubb, English educator and writer.

standpoint in reference to Hodgson and Renouvier. It seems most hopeful, — from my point of view! Does Renouvier know Rosmini? If not, call his attention to him. If you come to Rome I will read to you my translation of Vol. I of the *Psychology*. Could n't we contrive to be together with Robertson and Sidgwick for a time? Sidgwick is now in Naples; but goes later to Florence. Robertson says he will probably come down here in a month from now. Could n't we have a little σχολή,[9] including Mamiani, Ferri, etc.? Warmly,

T. D.

Paris, March 1 [1883]

My dear Davidson, —

Jacta est alea! home I go, and the immortal consequences to philosophy from our proposed interview will *ausbleiben*. To tell the truth I 'm sick of travel and vagrancy, and the *only* reason I had for going south was to see you; but the more I 've thought of it the less do I seem able to afford it, and the more desirable does it seem to get back to the bosom of my family. I 've got all the good of being abroad in the way of mental refreshment, and a longer stay simply hinders my work, which *désormais* should be one of concentration and production, not diffusion and reception. I do hope and trust that you will be able to come over to us next fall, as you have told your English friends you should. And I hope you will also send me the *proofs* of the Rosmini as fast as they are printed. It will save me many slow hours over the Italian. You will have heard from Robertson about his new sufferings and his inability to get away. I hear excellent accounts of you from my sister Margaret. Adieu! and good luck. Yours always,

Wm. James

[London], March 12 [1883]

My dear old Davidson, —

. . . I am weary to death of the migratory state, and every mile I make towards home seems to me a mile towards safety and peace and power of undistracted work. To such a point can the yoke of matrimony bow down the proud spirit of a freeman, or of one who once was such! The smell of London was most delicious

[9] Conference.

to my greeting nostril last night, and made me feel as if I were almost already on the threshold of my native land.

I wanted to talk to you about various matters connected with the question of objective cognition and the ego. I imagine that from your present heights you could help me "considerable" to clear my ideas, and that I might possibly be of service to you — at any rate we might at least agree about a vocabulary, if we did nothing better. What you say about feeling and consciousness in your letter [10] seems to come pretty near to certain late lines of thought of my own, but the different vocabulary stands in the way of my being sure. . . . My own thoughts, however, have not preoccupied themselves much with the question of eternity on which you lay such stress.

I am excessively interested, I might almost say flattered, at what you say about America being the true place to work. You are surely in a better position than anyone for making a comparative judgment, and that it strikes you as it does, is surely significant. That I in my position should feel so about it myself, is of course to be expected; but I had never dared to generalize, as your example will now encourage me to do. I would give anything to see you settled in a good professorship in America, but you know as well or better than I do what the chances there are, how few the places, and how safe mediocrity is almost sure to carry off the palm in all. I promise you to keep my eyes open and to do the best I can both in the way of notifying and of recommending you if the chances occur. . . . I am sure all of Margaret Gibbens' family, including myself, are as much obliged to you, if possible, as she is for all your kindness. She writes me that the best things she has seen have been those to which you have helped her. Always truly your friend,

WM. JAMES

Cambridge, May 2, 1883

My dear Davidson, —

I have waited before writing to you till I should have got *sot* a little into my surroundings and also for some photographs which I enclose. As regards the latter, I should be glad to "exchange," as I have no effigy of your expressive countenance.

[10] A missing letter of March 6.

I need not say that I found America screeching with white luminosity and a little raw-looking to my London-blunted vision. I have not, however, an instant regretted returning when I did: the time had come that I should *ranger* myself. I have done more work in the month since my return than in the previous six, and feel in a very different state of vigor than ever before at this time of year. The Hegel Club still exists. I heard an excellent paper on Lange read there ten days ago by Howison. He is much improved by his trip abroad, and seems to me a broader man than formerly. Harris is to me simply preposterous, albeit a holy man. Cabot I have n't seen, as he sticks tight to his trunks-full of Emerson letters. . . . I have half engaged to give some lectures at the Concord School, — Jonah among the prophets. I send you a bill of fare which may interest you. My own subject must be something in the way of an analysis of consciousness into its factors, object, ego, and stream of feelings, but my own thoughts are all muddled and clotted. And if I can't work them into lecturable shape, it is agreed that I shall back out.[11] Adieu, my dear old fellow, I don't write as good, especially not as philosophical, letters as yours. The fault is with the powers, low or high, who have so sat upon my means and opportunities of expression. Always affectionately yours,

WM. JAMES

In accordance with his promise James made an energetic effort to obtain an appointment for Davidson. Of the failure of this effort he afterwards wrote: "I believe that in this case, as in one or two others like it, which I might mention, Harvard University lost a great opportunity." [12]

Cambridge, Dec. 20 [1883]

Tomasino mio!

Yours of London of Sept. 14 was duly received, and I have been on the *verge* of writing you ever since. But my minutes have been so chock-full of the perishing duties of each day this year, that immortals like yourself have had to be postponed. I was awfully sorry to learn, I forget from whom, that you 'd gone back to Rome instead of coming here, and your letter but confirmed it. I write

[11] James's lecture was given in July, "On Some Omissions in Introspective Psychology."

[12] *M.S.*, 84. Was Charles Peirce one of the cases?

now in great haste to tell you this: Sophocles [18] died three days ago, and the day after, I went to the President and told him that if that made a new opening, I wished he would consider your claims, saying that "Ancient Philosophy" was a thing you would like to take care of as much as anything. He told me at first that the salary Sophocles had been drawing had latterly been very small, not enough to be used for a new working man. But he seemed struck by what I said of you, and meeting me again today in the street recurred to the subject and took the names of others who know you. It may be he has some plan in mind. I suppose it would do no harm for you to write to the President *and Fellows* a short note expressing your desire to be considered a candidate in case of a place to be filled. Greenough will fight in your favor — *ditto* Margaret Gibbens — but I can not disguise the fact, you rambustious old eternal individual, that the President and Fellows will hear many head-shakings as to your *safety* as a *character*. Indiscretion, immoderation, lack of tact, quarrelsomeness, dogmatism, conceit, general red-hotness, will be among the sins of which you will be accused, and will make them doubt, whatever your learning and intellect may be, whether you ought to be set down in such a happy family as the College Faculty. I hear such accusations already often when I mention your name, and they all sum themselves up into this one, that whether you be right or wrong in any particular case, you do, as a matter of fact, succeed in strewing your path with enemies, and that is, of course, considered a point against you. In vain I say that those enemies know you superficially, and that if they knew you as I did, they would all end by rather preferring you to their own selves. Their mere existence acts as a warning, and is a label "beware" put upon you. I judge it best to talk to you thus frankly, as it makes you acquainted with the direction of the danger you most have to fear, and *may* help you to meet it. I hope to Heaven something may come of this, but am not too sanguine. Don't you be so either. I and others will "work" all we can for you, and do you be very dignified and grandisonian. The disease the College is dying of is the lack of a few men like you in it, but what is one to do in a country in which "safety" is the one principle used to settle intellectual matters?

I am well, so are wife and babes. . . . I am pegging away at

[18] Evangelinus Apostolides Sophocles, tutor and professor of Greek at Harvard, 1842–83.

College work and find it an almost complete stopper to study and production, a sad contrast to my paradisaic state last spring after my return. Royce is a great success. Palmer is correcting the proofs of the Odyssey — where he is, or what going to do, I know not. When I saw him in July, he said he hated to think of going abroad, but thought he would have to. I would give much to be wi' you in Rome or anywhere this winter, — I am tougher than I was last, can walk more, see better, and sleep better. I sent off today a sort of a squib to *Mind,* to prove that we are sorry because we cry, angry because we strike, etc., instead of *vice versa.*[14] But where, oh where, are the proofs of Uncle Rosmini's psychology which you promised to send me? I expected them to support me through the rigors of the winter. It takes me a quarter of an hour to read a page of the Italian. By the way, did Edinburgh L.L.D. you? Or was it a case of Butler again?[15] If she did, it would be a "pint" to urge in your favor here. Ever your friend,

WM. JAMES

P.S. I 've not seen Cabot for more than a year. Howison, *Gottlob!* is installed in the philosophic chair at Ann Arbor for this winter. It was a shame to keep him idle.

James's recommendation of Davidson was ineffectual, and he wrote on January 12, 1884: "I am very sorry, for as I told Eliot, the disease the College is dying of is the lack of such men as you. He would n't admit there was any disease about it. I advise you to think no more of the matter for the present."

The years that follow tell the usual story of a friendship that outlives intellectual sympathy. "The more I knew him," said James, "the fonder I grew of him"; he would not have said, "the more I agreed with him." Each had taken his own way of thinking and must find his philosophical companionship there. Meanwhile the old love remained, slightly reminiscent in flavor, but showing itself unabated when major events such as books or sickness overtook either of them. The appearance of James's *Principles of Psychology* in 1890 evoked the following from Davidson, — "My dear ruffian: I hear your two solid volumes have reached my New York address. I thank you very much for them, and meanwhile

[14] "What Is an Emotion?" published in *Mind* the following April.

[15] Referring presumably to the charge of popery brought against the famous Joseph Butler, Bishop of Durham.

I am whetting my teeth for a feast and a growl. As soon as I finish your work, you shall hear from me again." When Davidson did write his comment on the *Principles,* it was ironically to welcome James as an unconscious Aristotelian.

Davidson could scarcely have been expected to sympathize with the naturalistic emphasis of the *Principles.* The only philosophical bond between the two men was the moral individualism which formed the central theme of James's *Will to Believe.* But when, in 1897, Davidson read that volume, he saw, in sorrow but not in anger, what a gulf divided them even there: —

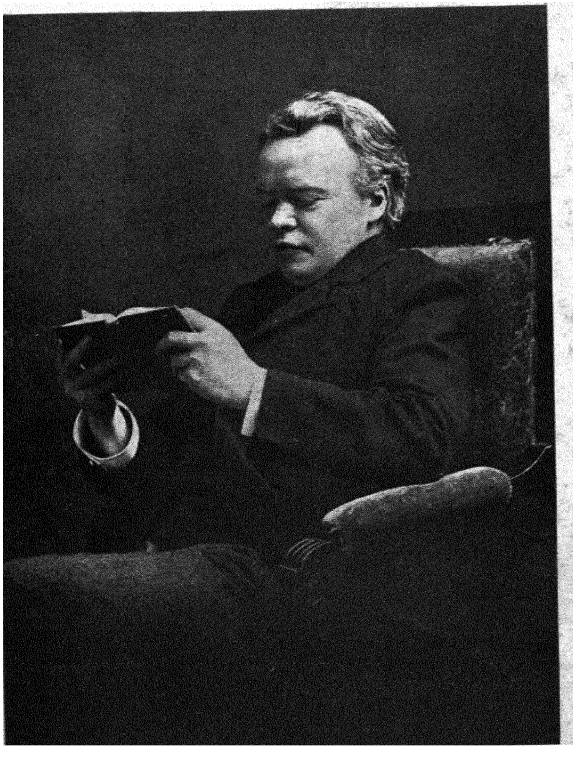
Brooklyn, March 29, 1897

Dear William, —

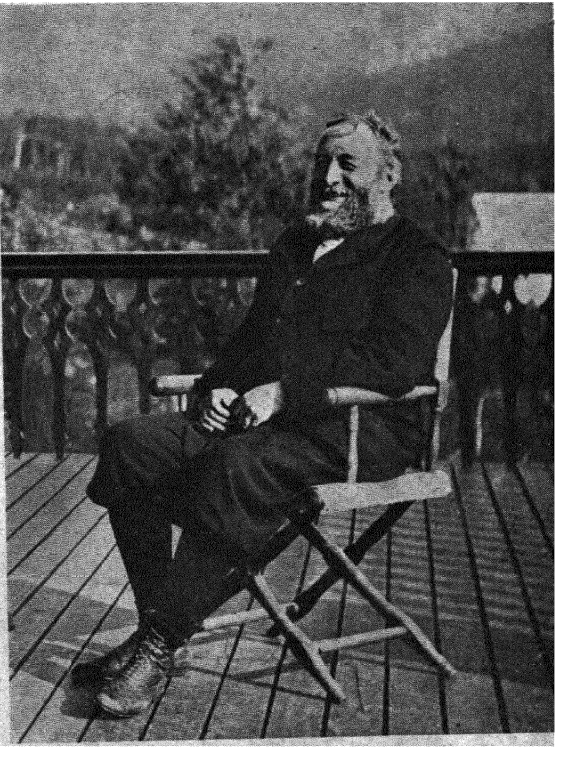
I was greatly pleased this morning when I found your very handsome volume lying outside of my door, before I got dressed. It was very kind of you to think of me. I am familiar with all the papers in the volume, except the last, and that I shall read in a day or two, when my packing is done: I am now in the very thick of it.

You know I greatly admire all your work, as far as form and style are concerned. I have always a "good time" when I read you. But when I come to think over your matter, I always find myself, greatly to my sorrow, in disagreement with you. When your world was created, God said, "Let there be light," and there was — no light! Then he went on creating all the same — sun, moon, stars, beasts, man, woman, everything; but the pre-solar light, which illuminates some worlds, never shone on these. As John Fidanza [16] put it, you fail to see the light in which all things are seen, the light which gives them all the unity and meaning they have. Hence, of course, your world is many, without being one. In avoiding the monism of the Hegelians and others, you fall into the opposite extreme, and find a world without any unifying intent; practically a chaos, in which, of course, no moral life is possible, — nothing but a happy-go-lucky Stevensonian adventuresomeness. You take your stand upon experience, and therein you are right; but you unfairly limit experience, leaving out of sight just those experiences which form the conditions of all others. In your contention for the plurality of agents in the world, and for its in-

[16] Giovanni Fidanza (1221–74), called Saint Bonaventura.



JOSIAH ROYCE, ABOUT 1900



THOMAS DAVIDSON, ABOUT 1894

definite determinability, I am altogether with you; but when you assume that the result is chaos, in which no spiritual intent is visible, then I can only say that what is most obvious to me is non-existent for you. Like Faust, I must say "In deinem Nichts hoff' ich das All zu finden" — and there *he* finds it. But I am very grateful to you for the book, and shall, no doubt, often have to refer to it.

I shall leave here on Saturday night, to spend some ten days in your neighborhood. If I do not find it easy to get out to Medford on Sunday morning, you may find me at your door, like a tramp, asking for breakfast, and declaring that it is not permitted to saw wood on the Lord's day. . . .

I have had three terrible weeks in the "grippe," but am now nearly over it, I trust. With love to you all, I am, always cordially yours,

T. D.

James and Davidson exchanged views on psychical research, on practical ethics, and on religion. The latter settled in New York, where, in 1899, he organized a class in "Social and Historic Science," and from this sprang the school unofficially known as the "Breadwinner's College." [17] In 1889 he had established a "Summer School for Cultural Sciences" at his place called "Glenmore," on East Hill, Hurricane, New York, in the Adirondack wilderness near Keene Valley. James continued to have frequent contacts with him both in New York and at Glenmore, where he visited and occasionally lectured.[18] At the time of Davidson's death in 1900 James was abroad, himself desperately ill and despondent. In the closing letters of their correspondence the two men are united both by the lengthening of their common past and by the shortening of their perspective toward the future. The first letter was written by James on the eve of his departure for Europe: —

Cambridge, July 14, 1899

Good-bye, dear old T. D.!

No time for more than this word. I hope that a year hence when we meet again (either you in Europe or I in America) your trouble

[17] Davidson's work and memory were continued after his death by the "Thomas Davidson Society," which is still in existence.

[18] It was here, in 1903, that he gave his important lectures on "Radical Empiricism."

may be entirely relieved by operation, and you on your old solid God-defying basis again. You see when he strikes you in this way, you cannot strike back in just the same place. But he is always taking those mean advantages, due to his being pure Spirit. Don't care whether the school keeps or not this summer. I hope that Sheldon and you will get on well together, and that you won't make him regret the day he was born.[19]

We have had an almost incredible amount of work, peeling our house clean for the tenant! Good-bye once more! Yours as ever,

W. J.

Davidson's acknowledgment of this note contains the following comment on one of his summer lecturers: "His mind is utter chaos and confusion. He contradicts himself scores of times, without being aware of it. Words mean nothing to him. His moral theories are utterly reprehensible, being expressible in the injunction: Live like the beasts. I gave him some good advice, which he accepted gratefully, before he left." There is a note of gentle admonition in James's reply: —

London, Nov. 2, 1899[20]

Dear old T. D., —

A recent letter from Margaret Gibbens says that you have gone to New York in order to undergo a "most radical operation." I need not say that my thoughts have been with you, ever since. . . . It has always seemed to me that, were I in a similar plight, I should choose a kill-or-cure operation rather than anything merely palliative, so poisonous to one's whole mental and moral being is the irritation and worry of the complaint. It would truly be a spectacle for the Gods to see you rising like a phœnix from your ashes again, and shaking off even the memory of disaster like dew-drops from a lion's mane; and I hope the spectacle will be vouchsafed to us men also, and that you will be presiding over Glenmore as if nothing had happened, different from the first years, save a certain softening of your native ferocity of heart, and gentleness towards the shortcomings of weaker people. Dear old East Hill!

[19] Walter L. Sheldon was founder of the Ethical Society of St. Louis, and was presumably a visitor at Glenmore.

[20] Reprinted, with omissions, from *L.W.J.*, II, 106–8.

I shall never forget the beauty of the morning (it had rained the night before) when I took my bath in the brook, before driving down to Westport one day last June. We got your letter at Nauheim, a sweet safe little place, made for invalids, to which it took long to reconcile me on that account. But *nous en avons vu bien d'autres depuis,* and from my present retirement in my brother's still unlet flat (he living at Rye) Nauheim seems to me like New York for bustle and energy. My heart, in short, has gone back upon me badly since I was there. . . . Provided I can only get safely out of the Gifford scrape, the deluge has leave to come. Write, dear old T. D., and tell how you are, and let it be good news if possible. . . . Believe me always affectionately yours,

WM. JAMES

P.S. The woman thou gavest unto me comes out strong as a nurse, and treats me much better than I deserve.

Carqueiranne, Feb. 16, 1900

Darling old T. D., —

I wrote to you from London in November, to ask for news of your condition; and since I get no reply I am afraid that the condition is not cheerful. . . . I can only say that I am *deeply* grieved. . . . I hope, howe'er it goes, that your *work* has n't stopped. That book must get itself published ere you depart. I feel the same way about my precious Gifford book, on which work, I may say, has not begun; but I am getting so much stronger nervously, that I am hoping in a few days to make a gentle start. One can meet mortal (or would-be mortal) disease either by gentlemanly levity, by high-minded stoicism, or by religious enthusiasm. I advise you, old T. D., to follow my example and try a playful *durcheinander* of all three, taking each in turn *pro re nata.*[21] I don't compare my case with yours, for in everything but the stopping of all work on my part, your case is far the more wearing and hard to bear. I do desire to learn some more about it, so pray write. What are the prospects for Glenmore next summer? Shall you be able to open the School? I hope so.

We are here for six weeks, along with F. W. H. Myers and fam-

[21] As occasion may require.

ily, in Charles Richet's[22] empty château, between Toulon and Hyères, most hospitably lent us by C. R. The climate is glorious, and the conditions excellent for nerve rest. . . . I was *very* low in England until January. Acute nervous prostration on top of the heart trouble. Of course the latter is the serious thing. . . . Best love from us both, dear old T. D. I do hope that you can still be made well. Yours ever affectionately,

WM. JAMES

New York, May 4, 1900

My dear William, —

In failing to answer your brotherly letters, I have been behaving very badly; but the fact is, I have gone through such a siege of suffering that I have hardly written to anyone this year. Three operations in five months are no joke. Having little good to tell, I thought it better to be silent. I am getting well now.

I need not tell you, my dear fellow, that I am deeply grieved at your condition. It seems more serious than mine, which is not threatening to life. But I am sure you are taking yours too seriously. You will yet be strong, and able to continue your work, if you will give yourself rest and refrain from brooding. That is what I am doing. I don't for a moment think of leaving this blessed life, and even if I knew I had to do so, it would not worry me. I came near dying of hemorrhage in the hospital, and it did not disturb me one bit. Death means to me little more than going into the next room. I have all my life been quite at home with death. . . .

My book on the *History of Education* is finished and will appear in a few days. My class on the "East Side" is a great success and promises to be a greater. It now numbers nearly two hundred souls. It is soon to have a home all to itself with library, etc. It is my chief joy. I agree with your estimate of Royce's book.[23] How does a man of such ability get so far off the track? Scholasticism is not dead yet. I am glad you are going to champion individualism, if you will only make clear what individuates, and show the relation between Darwin and Kant in the individual's development.

[22] The bond uniting Myers, Richet, and James was their common interest in psychical research.

[23] *World and the Individual*, First Series.

It will be no use setting out with a non-self-penetrative individual. That can only land us in agnosticism. . . . Affectionately yours,

T. D.

Davidson was well enough to go to Glenmore again shortly after this last and hopeful letter was written. But the following September James learned of his sudden death — "One September day in 1900, at the 'Kurhaus' at Nauheim, I took up a copy of the Paris *New York Herald,* and read in capitals: 'Death of Professor Thomas Davidson.' I had well known how ill he was, yet such was his vitality that the shock was wholly unexpected. I did not realize till that moment how much that free companionship with him every spring and autumn, surrounded by that beautiful nature, had signified to me, or how big a piece would be subtracted from my life by its cessation." [24]

[24] *M.S.*, 87–8.

XLVIII

GEORGE HOWISON (1881–1906)

ALTHOUGH George Holmes Howison was James's senior in age by eight years, they were philosophical contemporaries. Only a year before James began his teaching at Harvard, Howison, who had completed a course in theology and taught mathematics and political economy in the Middle West, became professor of logic and the philosophy of science at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology in Boston. In 1879–1880 he lectured for a year at Harvard, after which he studied abroad for two years before resuming his academic career at Michigan. He became Mills Professor of Philosophy at the University of California in 1884, a year before James obtained his first professorship at Harvard. Thus during the '70s, which for both men constituted the most formative period of their development, they were neighbors and friends; and in the early '80s they were both, along with Davidson, adventuring in Europe. Howison made his fortune as a thinker and a teacher on the Pacific Coast, where generations of California students were impressed by the strength of his conviction and stirred by his moral earnestness. What little he wrote appeared late in his life, and exerted no influence at all comparable with that of his character and spoken word. Despite their wide separation James and Howison continued their friendship until the year of the former's death. Their correspondence bears largely upon matters that will be treated in later chapters of this book. When Howison faced the question of developing a laboratory of psychology at Berkeley, he wrote to James for advice. It was at Berkeley, and upon Howison's invitation, that James delivered the famous lecture on "Philosophical Conceptions and Practical Results," which was the first explicit formulation of his pragmatistic creed. Later, when James was at work upon his final metaphysical synthesis, the two men were again drawn together by their common adherence to individualistic and pluralistic principles. Howison, like Davidson, was a friend in the enemy camp; a ration-

alist,— open, even, to the charge of being a Hegelian, — but nevertheless a staunch adherent of freedom and of the irreducible finality of the moral person.[1]

During his residence in Boston Howison belonged to the circle of those who, like James, Davidson, and Palmer, were studying Hegel, stimulated if not converted by Harris's sectarian zeal. They were all *discovering* Hegel and, each in his own way, coming to terms with him. The terms of Howison's settlement are disclosed in the following exchange of letters, the first of which he wrote from Europe: —

Rome, May 12, 1881

My dear James, —

Your kind and welcome letter of 24th February reached me in Dresden on the 11th of March, just as I was beginning to get into a whirl of discussion, followed immediately by preparation, upon the *pros* and *cons* of coming to Italy this spring instead of next fall. I said to myself, when it came to hand, "I will not be so long in replying to this," but the "many things" that *quondam* bothered Martha quite bewildered me, and the subsequent whirlwind of journeying hither and seeing the sights of this 'Turnal City (in both senses) have brought me to this date before my purpose begins to be accomplished. I had noted, with satisfaction, what you had mentioned about Davidson's probable location on the Continent at this season, and though I had not had a syllable from him since his departure from America some eighteen months ago, I looked with some hope to the pleasure of meeting him somewhere on this journey. When I reached Rome on the 19th of April, I asked immediately at his former bankers for his address, but they could n't give it. I walked out of their office with a dull feeling that I might never see him again, but had hardly taken a hundred steps when he rose, as it seemed, directly out of the ground before me. At any rate, there he was, in high colour and full dress and much elated. He has been at his best here, but has now gone off to Domodossola, where he has taken a delightful cottage on the mountain-side, and writes in the most jubilant spirits. He is in the ring with the

[1] For further correspondence between James and Howison, bearing on these later topics, *cf.* below, II, 115–7, 207, 217–21. *Cf.* also the memoir entitled *George Holmes Howison, Philosopher and Teacher,* edited by G. M. Stratton and J. W. Buckham, 1934.

Rosminian Brothers; they make much of him, and he is happy in an extended acquaintance and companionship that seems every way to his mind.

He told me a good deal about the Palmer class in Hegel,[2] and was freer in expressing his dissatisfaction with the misty German than I had ever known him to be. But it does n't scare me, much, if any. According to his account, you and he had rare fun in making mincemeat of Hegel for the amusement of the boys at Harvard, and I don't much envy Palmer the times he must occasionally have had in his class, judging by an incident or two that Davidson reports. I hear that Palmer bore the war with commendable grace and fortitude but that our friend Emery was moved to a pitch of wrath. At this distance, I manage to possess my soul in a tolerable patience, and venture to think that Hegel and Hegel's friends "can stand it." Some of your own talk in your letter, my dear fellow, is pretty tall, and I foresee that, if ever you and T. D. and I stand together on American soil again, we shall spend perhaps a not unimportant portion of our time before the public in slicing each other up into bits; when we retire behind the curtain, all will of course be right, and we shall in our private capacity, I hope, be as good friends as ever. The fun about it all, in my eye, is that, with all Davidson's pounding about Aristotle and Rosmini, I can't yet discover that he pounds out one essential result that is not just the essential matter in Hegel's product. And Davidson tells me that this is exactly what everybody else not a professed anti-Hegelian has said to him too. Great, he assures me, is the blindness of us all; and he bewails his own inadequacy of statement. . . .

Seriously, though, I feel quite sad at your outcome with Hegel. Not that I care particularly for him personally, or for his peculiar way of expounding things (which I consider far from useful or commendable or skilful), but I was in hopes that your gifts would be enlisted in behalf of what seem to me the real interests of reason and depth and clearness; and I feel that, so long as you remain in your present frame of mind, you will be their foe rather than friend. I tried to induce Davidson to agree to a more moderate tone in discussion; or rather, to adopt the tone *of* discussion, instead of abuse and derision. . . . I assure you that I am not the least fuddled or obscure when I say that, among many others, who, I am sure, value

[2] *Cf.* above, 713

clearness and precision as much as anybody, I am confident that the so-called "Hegelian" view is substantially rational, and the most rational, and is capable of a perfectly lucid and non-fallacious statement.

You see, one odd trouble is, that those who oppose it insist on violating one of the plainest rules of discussion. They pretend to overthrow Hegel by shows of convicting him of "ambiguous middles" and "secundum quids," when the use of these is simply the carrying out of his own principle of the limitation of the principle of identity. Nothing can be done with Hegel (or, I may say, with Aristotle as *metaphysician*) at all, until a man gets to where he cannot help seeing the futility of making the canon of ambiguous middle so rigid as to exclude the community there always must be among resembling notions; on the plane of such researches as make the substance of the *Logik,* the mind must, to be rational, take just as real account of the community or identity underlying distinguished notions as of the distinction. . . .

I wish I could have seen Hodgson as you did. Davidson tells me delightful things about him. I hope by this time, your eyes are quite well. With kind regards to Mrs. James, believe me always, cordially yours,

G. H. Howison

Cambridge, Sept. 30, 1881

My dear Howison, —

After meaning to answer your letter all summer I have just taken it up and re-read it with roars of laughter of the most affectionate and appreciative kind. Davidson's *viva voce* utterances about Hegel, on top of my written ones (I being as soft in speech as I am sympathetic in writing), must have given you the impression that the truth's path in America was not unsprinkled with obstructions. I wish you had been or now were here to *talk* over Hegel. My quarrel with him is entirely apropos of the problem of identity; I think all his other faults derivative from that, and it surprises me that in your letter you should, as an Hegelian, speak of the mind being *forced to take as real an account of the community or identity underlying distinguished notions, as of the distinction.* My principal objection to Hegel is his pertinaciously refusing to make any such stable separation between the identical parts and the differ-

ent parts in resembling notions. He takes them in a lump and says "they are both identical and different, *i.e.*, self-contradictory." The other treatment abolishes the contradiction, which most of us want to do but he does not. But you will see better what I mean when the paper I read in Palmer's class appears in print as it possibly will. I have just brushed it up a little and sent it to the *International Review*, and will send you a copy as soon as it comes out.[8] I wish you might reply to it. I think with the Concord School of Philosophy and all the rest of you expanding away here and in Great Britain, a little public opposition will be no unhealthy thing. My article only touches upon points which have been made popular by the teachings of Green, the Cairds and Palmer. The latter, I must say, treated both me and Davidson very handsomely; and Emery, too, was extremely good-natured. But now a truce to all this vile philosophizing!

We have had a poor summer, with heat, smoke, etc., in the mountains and I start the year's work with no superabundance of animal spirits. There is no particular news to tell you of, collegiate or other. You know, of course, of General Walker's being President of the Technological [Institute]. As you are to be in Berlin I suppose you are lamenting Lotze's loss. He seems to me the most exquisite of contemporary minds. Of Rosmini I know next to nothing as yet, nor can I gain much from Davidson's exposition. I envy you immensely these years in Europe, but hope they will lead you into a professorship on your return. I have some reason to expect leave of absence for next year, — I sorely need it to make myself a little fitter for my duties here at home. I would give you news of Mr. Cabot but I have hardly seen him in the last eighteen months. C. C. Everett is extremely well and thriving in his Divinity School work. . . . My wife sends you her best *Grüsse,* in which I join with the attachment we can only feel for our metaphysical *Gegner.* Always yours,

WM. JAMES

Berlin, Nov. 13, 1881

My dear James, —

. . . Now, before I reply directly to any part of your letter, I want to deliver a trifle of news, which I hope won't prove disagree-

[8] The article, published in *Mind* in 1882 under the title of "On Some Hegelisms," must have first been offered to the *International Review.*

able. I have stumbled on a splendid young fellow here at the University, a "Privatus," *Namens* Dr. H. Ebbinghaus, who lectures this semester on Psychophysik, on Schopenhauer's philosophy, and on Kant's Transcendental Dialectic.[4] He strikes me as altogether the most gifted man I have seen at the University at all, although his "standpoint" is quite at variance with what I can hold for true. Now, the first thing he said to me, almost, when I called on him the other day, was: "Is n't there a *Dr. James* at Boston? Author of a brochure on 'The Feeling of Effort'? I have seen some account of that, and I am interested by it, and I would like very much to get hold of it." I said I had the honor of knowing you a little, and that I believed it was not impossible you might be prevailed upon to send him a copy of it. Now I appeal to you, not to let my venture at a conjecture prove a vain one. Do you get a copy from your abundant stores (there I 've slipped! Of course every copy is exhausted long since), and send it across the briny by post without delay. . . .

For that Hegel article, I shall look with eager and curious expectancy. Send it along, as you have promised. Ah! *would n't* you like to ensnare me into attempting to answer it offhand? But I 'm a wary and very aged bird now, and have determined not to be caught in any more traps by any of those Jameses. I remember once in my callower day being drawn into a newspaper *"battel wager"* with James the Sire; and I have n't yet forgotten the "metaphysical bumboat shooting out of some obscure hiding place on the coasts of cut and dried philosophising" — or words to that effect — with which he managed to demolish me before an assembled Boston universe. *Auch hat der Sohn ganz stechende Witze,* and I misdoubt me if, with the manifold traps that have withstood Palmer's fire, this Hegel-crushing *mitrailleuse* be not a dangerous thing for a man to approach and take hold of, except with the best prearrangements — such as are quite impossible to secure in time to make the return shots effectual while the public interest is still at proper heat. You see, you should have sent me the document long ago, the answer should have been duly prepared, both should have gone to the *International* editor together, and been published in

[4] The distinguished psychologist, afterwards professor of psychology at the University of Berlin, author of *Ueber das Gedächtnis, Grundzüge der Psychologie,* etc.

successive numbers of the magazine. . . . I am, as always, yours heartily,

G. H. Howison

This newspaper battle alluded to in the above letter had taken place in the *Christian Register.* Howison reviewed the elder James's *Society the Redeemed Form of Man* in the issue for July 12, 1879, adopting James as a good idealist — Hegelian despite his professions to the contrary. James replied in a three-column letter in the issue of July 26, in which, at the same time that he attacked the pantheistic view of nature and the subjective view of being, he repudiated the whole "scholastic" attempt to substitute thought for faith. The revelation of spiritual truths is constantly being defeated: "for it is scarcely published to the world before some scholastic bumboat, armed and equipped by the current theology and philosophy, paddles out of its obscure harborage, to affix some conventionally opprobrious designation upon the adventurous and unsuspecting stranger-craft; and this at once dissipates all curiosity concerning it, and qualifies every intellectual jackanapes in the parish to sink it out of sight whenever he will." Howison returned to the attack on August 16, and James's final rebuttal appeared on August 30. None of the projectiles exchanged in this battle measured less than 2500 words.

Having returned from Europe in 1882, Howison continued to follow James's philosophical irregularities with a genuine solicitude only imperfectly concealed by its tone of affectionate banter. Writing of the essay on "Rationality, Activity and Faith," he said: —

"It 's now more than a week since I received your *Princeton Review* article, and I 'm ashamed, or rather sorry, to have to say I have n't yet really read it. . . . But I *mean* to read this thing of yours, as well as one or two others I have here by me, and that thoroughly; for I do want to get definitely at what your whole standpoint is, if I 've got the knowledge and head to do it. *Scraps* of you — more especially your frenzies against serene and sober old Hegel — I 'm well in possession of; but I want to know the whole out of which they arise, and which, making them possible, may yet explain *their compatibility with sanity,* you know!"

To which James replied as follows: —

Cambridge, Aug. 27, 1882

My dear Howison, —

Your letter was most welcome. I called a couple of weeks ago at Ashburton Place and found you had gone to Bangor. I am sorry that my philosophy lies so heavy on your stomach. Perhaps you are trying to find *"midi à quatorze heures"* in your earnest search for coherency in a mind that is but a jumble of fragments. Your attention is, however, my perhaps most flattering experience. As for the serene and *sober* Hegel, did n't you mean to write drunk? — drunk with divinity you might say, but *sober,* never. How can sobriety consist with the belief that one has superseded the laws of identity, contradiction, and excluded middle?

Seriously, it is a painful thing to me, and casts a "lurid light" on the finite reason, that men like you and me, and Harris and Palmer, should be so unable to talk each other's language, considering that in practical matters we should almost always agree and that we are devoted to the same things. I shall rest in no philosophy that is not universally acceptable. . . .

My teaching will be done by Josiah Royce, late of California, some of whose articles you may have noticed. I hope you and he will know each other. . . . I sail on the 2d from Quebec. . . . Yours always,

WM. JAMES

The next letter deals with James's lecture on "The Dilemma of Determinism" delivered before the Harvard Divinity School. It is written from Berkeley, where Howison has gone to take up his new post at the University of California.

Berkeley, Nov. 30, 1884

My dear James, —

. . . I 've had your charming lecture to the divinity students, — which seems to me the best thing I 've ever known of your doing, — which is saying a great deal indeed. My wife and I both read it eagerly on its first arrival, and I twice afterwards. There is no place or time for due discussion here in this scrawl of a note. I will only say that *I* am quite overwhelmed by your power of statement as shown in that lecture. It is rich and deep and acute and

clear, and puts what still seems to me as the one-sided or abstract notion of freedom with greater force than I remember to have seen it put by anybody else at all. And what a magnificent episode, in the way of criticism both of individual writers and of a whole *Zeitgeist,* have you got in there, *apropos* of subjectivism and MM. Renan and Zola. They both richly deserve all you 've given them; I should have felt like throwing my hat clear to the ceiling, and getting up and cheering aloud, had I been there to hear it, when you came along to that passage.

Still, my dear fellow, as you so regularly have to say at the end of reading my doings, I can't give in to a satisfying conviction on the main matter under discussion, — which I understand to be the vindication of moral freedom against physical necessitation. Fact is, you 've said, to my mind, all that can possibly *be* said, on the side of caprice as the conception of such freedom; and you 're frank and clear enough (which most of 'em are not) in calling it, outright, just *chance.* And like a man, you whack out at the end with the square acknowledgment that your doctrine is atheistic — or, what amounts to the same thing, that it makes the so-called First Principle of things, subject to *time* in Its consciousness. Now, I think we need to save the sovereign eternity of God, even in order to save a real (moral) freedom, and that there 's no real freedom of man at all, unless one that takes up the whole force of the deterministic argument into itself bodily. The thing is, to get such a view of the divine nature, and of human nature, and of external nature, as to secure the foreseen inevitable along with the self-decision (*i.e.,* decision in the light of self-seen motives) of the individual person. It seems to me that the dilemma comes wholly from setting God and man off against each other in a sort of mutual separate self-existence — a very natural view, to be sure, and one irreducible so long as any dualistic philosophy is kept up; irreducible, in fact, except by an *absolute* idealism — not a subjective or visionary one.

I was the more surprised, in contrast with your hearty and wholesome moral thunder at Renan and Zola, at your fixing your "dilemma" between "subjectivism" and "pessimism." There's a solvent alternative, namely, moral objective *activity;* the getting up in the indignation at wrong, and in fiery love of righteousness, and *doing* something — ay, getting this infernal devil of a mere fact-world set something nearer straight. That 's just the "Vocation

of Man," as Fichte strikingly calls it. 'T is in power to obey such summons, and in power to realize it, conditioned absolutely on the sovereign pre-certitude of the divine coöperation from all eternity, and in that alone, that human freedom consists. Say, why did you not think of that when you came along to that dilemma so seeming inevitable? . . .

I 've started in here as well as I could reasonably hope. . . . I send you my program of work and eke a scrap on Hume and Kant,[5] of which you heard the first lecture a year or more ago at Concord. I send you my German copy, thinking you 'd be interested in seeing it. I 've only given bare bones, and main stadia; the connections and filling are *vorhanden, wenn man dieselben wünscht.*[6] I made the *Deutsch* for my *Collegen* in Germany, and have done it into English for my students here, some of whom are pretty bright. . . . Yours always,

G. H. Howison

Cambridge, Feb. 5, 1885[7]

My dear Howison, —

I 've just re-read (for the fourth time, I believe) your letter of the 30th November. I need not say how tickled I am at your too generous words about my Divinity school address on Determinism. Sweet are the praises of an enemy. There is, thank Heaven! a plane below all formulas and below enmities due to formulas, where men occasionally meet each other moving, and recognize each other as brothers inhabiting the *same depths.* Such is this depth of the *problem* of determinism — howe'er we solve it, we are brothers if we know it to be a *problem.* No man on either side awakens any sense of intellectual respect in me who regards the solution as a cock-sure and immediately given thing, and wonders that anyone should hesitate to choose his party. You find fault with my deterministic disjunction, "pessimism or subjectivism," and ask why I forgot the third way of "objective moral activity," etc. (You probably remember.) I did n't forget it. It entered for me into pessimism, for, since such activity has failed to be universally realized, it was (deterministically) *impossible from eternity,* and the uni-

[5] "Umriss von vier Vorträgen über Hume und Kant," 1884.
[6] Are at hand if anybody wants them.
[7] Reprinted from *L.W.J.*, I, 237–9. Howison did not answer this letter until Sept. 16, 1888; *cf.* below, II, 92.

verse in so far forth not an object of pure worship, not an Absolute. My trouble, you see, lies with monism. Determinism = monism; and a monism like this world can't be an object of pure optimistic contemplation. By pessimism I simply mean *ultimate* non-optimism. The ideal is only a part of this world. Make the world a pluralism, and you forthwith have an object of worship. Make it a unit, on the other hand, and worship and abhorrence are equally one-sided and equally legitimate reactions. *Indifferentism* is the true condition of such a world, and turn the matter how you will, I don't see how any philosophy of the Absolute can ever escape from that capricious alternation of mysticism and satanism in the treatment of its great Idol, which history has always shown. Reverence is an accidental personal mood in such a philosophy, and has naught to do with the essentials of the system. At least, so it seems to me; and in view of that, I prefer to stick in the wooden finitude of an ultimate pluralism, because that at least gives me something definite to worship and fight for.

However, I know I have n't exhausted all wisdom, and am too well aware that this position, like everything else, is a *parti pris* and a *pis aller, — faute de mieux, —* to continue the Gallic idiom. Your predecessor Royce thinks he 's got the thing at last. It is too soon for me to criticize his book; but I must say it seems to me one of the very freshest, profoundest, solidest, most human bits of philosophical work I 've seen in a long time. In fact, it makes one think of Royce as a man from whom nothing is too great to expect.

Your list of thirty lectures makes one bow down in reverence before you. I should be afraid you were overworking. Your Hume-Kant circular shall be diligently scanned when my Hume lectures come off, in about six weeks. I am better as to the eyes, which gives me much hope. Am, however, "maturing" building plans for a house, which is bad for sleep. I do hope and trust there will be no *Enttäuschung* about Berkeley, and that not only the work, but the place and the climate, may prove well adapted to both you and Mrs. Howison. Ever truly yours,

WM. JAMES

Howison continued to be shocked by James's levity *in re* Hegel. In a letter dated January 12, 1891, he complained of the comparison

which James made in the *Principles* [8] between the Hegelian dialectic as expounded by Caird and the pantomime in which things "happen in impossible ways." It was a short passage, but too much for Howison, who expostulates: "How *could* you put down in cold and permanent print the bagatelle diatribes about 'Hegelisms' and what not?" Whereupon James explained to his "poor, darling Howison" that the offensive diatribes "On Some Hegelisms" had *not* been reprinted in the *Principles,* and that his "jokes about Caird" had been forgiven by Caird himself. "I am not as low as I seem," he concluded, "and some day (*D.v.*) may get out another and a more 'metaphysical' book which will steal all your Hegelian thunder except the dialectical method, and show me to be a true child of the gospel." [9]

In a missing letter of October 1893, Howison had apparently recalled James's intention to write a "metaphysical" book, while James himself was now experiencing one of his characteristic alterations of mood: —

Cambridge, Oct. 28 [1893] [10]

My dear Howison, —

Your kind letter just arrives in the twilight, and though I am laid up with tonsillitis and feverishness, my emotions of affection are so called out that I can't help scribbling you an immediate line. How well you seem to keep it up, off there, with your "Union," [11] your Plato and all! I think of you as lonely, remote, and heroic. But I dare say that where you are, there is the centre for your own consciousness, and it is we who are "off there." Well, of course there is no absolute "here" or "there" in pure space, but to this relative "here" you ought ere long to make a visit. I have longed for years to visit California and see you and your University, but the chance never comes. I break down every two or three years and have to ruin myself by going to Europe, which each time seems a safer place for a long holiday than California. . . .

I am unutterably amused, or rather amused and saddened, by your extraordinary reference to my book on metaphysic. I have never

[8] I, 369.

[9] *Ibid.*, 304–5. The "diatribes" were, however, reprinted in *The Will to Believe,* in 1897.

[10] A portion of this letter, omitted here, will be found below, II, 115.

[11] The "Philosophical Union" is a society for philosophical discussion, instituted by Howison, and still vigorously alive.

even attained to the dream of the possibility of such a thing, much less to the execution, and I now foresee that I never shall. A curious sense of incapacity, a sere-and-yellow-leafiness, has come over me in the past year, which makes all psychologizing and philosophizing seem a nullity, and the cultivation of the soil to be a man's only honest pursuit. At any rate my intellectual higgledy-piggledyism can never lead to a system of metaphysics. That sort of a thing is for a higher order of mind than W. J.'s — yours for instance. Why don't *you,* who write so well, and who have such systematic ideas, put them down in due form? I take note of all you say of Hegel. *I* am a Hegelian in so far as the transcendency of the immediate and the principle of totality go, but I can't follow Hegel in any of his applications of detail, and his *manner* is pure literary deformity. Don't you admire Royce's chapter on Hegel in his *Spirit of Modern Philosophy?* Has Hegel really said much more than those few pages express, in all his tedious writings? But hold! All I wanted, my dear Howison, was to grasp you by the hand once more. Your faithful pupil Bakewell [12] is developing finely here — a noble fellow. Best respects to Mrs. Howison. Your faithful friend

WM. JAMES

On May 9, 1894, James wrote that the department of philosophy had accepted the Doctor's thesis of Charles M. Bakewell, describing it as "a forcible and original protest against Hegelian monism." In his reply of May 19, Howison said: "For many years now, I have been convinced that Hegel, with all his robust personal intentions to rout pantheism, never attained to any systematic view compatible with his religious and political aims. Everywhere, he, after all, plants the corporate to the logical obliteration of the individual being. In this Royce follows him apparently with hearty conscious acceptance, — something that I believe Hegel himself had no real suspicion of." A year after this comment was written, Howison and Royce met on the battlefield of the Philosophical Union and fought out this issue of the "corporate" *vs.* the individual.[13] Howison charged Royce with pantheism, to which Royce replied that Howison with his "City of God, and the True God as its Head,"

[12] Charles M. Bakewell, afterwards professor at Yale University.
[13] The discussion was published in 1897 under the title of *The Conception of God.*

might with equal reason be accused of polytheism. Thus Howison, with all his Hegelism, sometimes fought on James's side.

Of James's California lectures of 1898, including the historic address at Berkeley on "Philosophical Conceptions and Practical Results," an account will be given later.[14] Finally, on February 5, 1906, while spending a semester at Leland Stanford University, James participated with Howison in a discussion of "Reason and Faith" before the Pacific Coast Unitarian Club of San Francisco.[15] The following exchange of letters grew out of this occasion: —

Stanford University, Feb. 7, 1906

Dear Howison, —

Here I am, laid up with *gout,* a reg'lar classical attack, orthodox, not unitarian, and which I 've done nothing to merit, my only indulgence in Baccho being . . . one Harvard dinner since I 've been in California. It 's *very* inconvenient, but it enables me to cut two lectures, for which Heaven be praised. You were in great heart that night; and the way you poured damnation and endearment over *me* in your speech, so blended that I could n't tell which was stock and which was flavoring, was a unique experience. Your winding up was noble, and sure you can do *anything* with that audience — they know and love you so well. As for me, I take away one new conception of intellectualism. That our true and eternal *self* should be Kant's *system of categories* seems to me monstrous! But no matter: the world is wide. In consequence of which I wish to ask you seriously if you cannot give me *one* (or two?) of the remaining reprints of my address "Philosophical Conceptions" etc.? [Giovanni] Papini, of Florence, who is about publishing a book on *Il Pragmatismo,* has just written to me supplicating me to find him a copy. If anyone deserves it, he does — therefore pray send it hither, and deeply oblige yours affectionately,

WM. JAMES

Berkeley, Feb. 9 [1906]

Dear James, —

I 've managed the copies of the "Philosophical Conceptions and Practical Results" for you. . . . Well! — and *eheu!* Where *did*

[14] Below, II, 129, 371, 408.

[15] The publication of these addresses at the time was prevented by the earthquake. James's remarks were afterwards published in the *Jour. of Philos.,* XXIV (1927).

you get the impression that I said our "true and eternal self" was the Kantian categories? I cannot think I said so, though I did say (or mean to say) something that a careless and not qualified listener might have mistaken for that. No, my view is (and it seems to me unescapable if one is to keep on with idealism), that the entire *a priori* complex — the self-active unity of consciousness, expanding into time, space, and whatsoever other categories there may be, and the entire *powers* of perception (not the temporal and transient actual percepts), and all the *powers* of emotion and volition — constitutes the changeless self, the *real person.* I can't see anything "monstrous" in that. On the contrary, it gets from a genuine and rational idealism all the "precious things" that you are forever contending for (as well as I) — the things that I have never yet been able to see that your "radical empiricism" gets, or can get. The more radical empiricism is, the more, it seems to me, will it stop where Hume ended. He is its real high-priest. . . .

The "endearment" was the stock, and the "damnation" the mere flavor, be assured. *You* are always right, true and good; but as for your *philosophy* — "the rest is silence." Hoping I shall soon hear of your entire health. Yours always,

G. H. Howison

The following letter was written in reply to the above, as well as to a letter of February 8, in which Howison (apologizing for a public announcement which had referred to their equal "eminence") had referred to his own lack of "recognition." James had come to San Francisco to meet his wife, who was to arrive from the East on February 15: —

San Francisco, Feb. 14, 1906

Dear Howison, —

Here I am again, gout, crutches and all, to meet the good woman. In the interval, I write a line to you. . . . Of course I knew that the "endearment was the stock"! But as for the "real person," why should all that *intellectual* abstraction belong to it more than the more concrete life of personal *affection* which common sense considers more intimately there, and which, if it were the real person *par excellence,* would lead us, it seems to me, rather away from an intellectualist theory of anything fundamental. How-

ever, this be reopening discussion. If you reply, I won't retort!

As for appreciation during one's lifetime — "Harris calls it recognition" is one of the things I 've carried away from you and used since my last visit hither — what does it mean? "They laugh best who laugh last." Wait till we 're dead twenty years. Look at the way they 're now treating poor Willard Gibbs, who during his lifetime can hardly have been considered any great shakes at New Haven. With cordialest regards to you both, I am, ever yours sincerely,

WM. JAMES

Howison retired from active teaching in 1909, but he outlived James six years, dying in 1916, in the same year with Royce, at the ripe age of eighty-two. In view of his emphasis on the moral individual in his advocacy of what he called *"personal* idealism," it was surprising, and a cause of some disappointment to Howison himself, that his philosophy should have played no part in James's pluralism. The explanation lies in their different roots — James being by temperament and association a descendant of British empiricism, while the blood which flowed in Howison's veins was, however much he might quarrel with them, the blood of Kant and Hegel.

XLIX

JOSIAH ROYCE BEFRIENDED (1879–1882)

WILLIAM JAMES was attached to Josiah Royce by many bonds of love and esteem. He loved him as a friend of his youth, as a younger man whom he had found and helped, as a colleague and neighbor for thirty years, and as a gallant and high-minded companion-at-arms in the moral struggle. In philosophy he esteemed him both as opponent and as fellow partisan. For to James, Royce was sometimes the most formidable representative of the enemy philosophy — the hardly-to-be-resisted champion of monism and rationalism; at other times, the philosopher whose admirable concreteness and moral individualism went far to redeem his inconsistent and repugnant monistic professions.[1]

Royce, thirteen years younger than James, born and reared on the California frontier, educated in the public schools of San Francisco and at the University of California across the bay, had first approached philosophy through science and literature. A year of study in Germany brought him into contact with the Kantian tradition, and during his period of graduate work at Johns Hopkins University he combined his growing philosophical interest with a wide reading in German literature of the Romantic period. When, after receiving his Doctor's degree, he became an instructor in English at the University of California, he found an opportunity of teaching logic in the guise of rhetoric, thus reaffirming an early interest in rigorous methods of thought. His reading in philosophy, past and present, and in the field of science, was voluminous and the results were conserved by an exceptional memory. His musical experience was rich and profound. Royce's was thus a many-sided nature, compounded of the moralistic individualism of the American frontier, and the æsthetic universalism of the German romantics; uniting the formalism of mathematical logic with the vagrancy and concreteness of the literary imagination; a

[1] Thus, *e.g.*, James refers to his "voluntaristic-pluralistic monism"; *L.W.J.*, II, 122.

voracious mind, great in its cubic contents and abundantly stored with items of fact, and yet submitting early to the yoke of a *system* which it carried as long as it lived and wherever it went.

The precocious oddity of Royce's youth ripened into an inescapable quality of distinction, which James, among others, was quick to recognize. At the dinner held at James's house, January 18, 1910, to celebrate the completion and presentation of his portrait, Royce told something of the story of their first meeting: —

"Nothing is more characteristic of Professor James's work as a teacher and as a thinker than is his chivalrous fondness for fair play in the warfare and in the coöperation of ideas and of ideals. We all of us profess to love truth. But one of James's especial offices in the service of truth has been the love and protection and encouragement of the truth-seekers. . . . Other men talk of liberty of thought: but few men have done more to secure liberty of thought for men who were in need of fair play and of a reasonable hearing than James has done. Now I suppose that it is altogether, or almost altogether, because of James's chivalry of soul that I myself first obtained that opportunity in life which results in my being here with you at all. . . . My real acquaintance with our host began one summer day in 1877, when I first visited him in the house on Quincy Street, and was permitted to pour out my soul to somebody who really seemed to believe that a young man might rightfully devote his life to philosophy if he chose. I was then a student at the Johns Hopkins University. The opportunites for a life work in philosophy in this country were few. Most of my friends and advisers had long been telling me to let the subject alone. Perhaps, so far as I was concerned, their advice was sound; but in any case I was so far incapable of accepting that advice. Yet if somebody had not been ready to tell me that I had a right to work for truth in my own way, I should ere long have been quite discouraged. I do not know what I then could have done. James found me at once — made out what my essential interests were at our first interview, accepted me, with all my imperfections, as one of those many souls who ought to be able to find themselves in their own way, gave a patient and willing ear to just my variety of philosophical experience, and used his influence from that time on, not to win me as a follower, but to give me my chance. It was upon his responsibility that I was later led to get my first opportunities

here at Harvard. Whatever I am is in that sense due to him. . . .

"Sometimes critical people have expressed this by saying that James has always been too fond of cranks, and that the cranks have loved him. Well, I am one of James's cranks. He was good to me, and I love him. The result of my own early contact with James was to make me for years very much his disciple. I am still in large part under his spell. If I contend with him sometimes, I suppose that it is he also who through his own free spirit has in great measure taught me this liberty. I know that for years I used to tremble at the thought that James might perhaps some day find reason to put me in my place by some one of those wonderful, lightning-like epigrams, wherewith he was and is always able to characterize those opponents whose worldly position is such as to make them no longer in danger of not getting a fair hearing, and whose self-assurance has relieved him of the duty to secure for them a sympathetic attention. The time has passed, the lightning in question has often descended — never indeed on me as his friend, but often on my opinions — and has long since blasted, I hope, some at least of what is most combustible about my poor teachings. Yet I am so glad of the friendly words that still sustain me, that these occasional *segnende Blitze*, when incidentally they are sown over the earth where my opinions chance to be growing, only make me love better the cause that James . . . has so nobly served, the cause of fertilizing the human soil where our truth has to grow, — this cause, and the friend who through all these years has borne with me so kindly, and has in so many ways been my creator and my support." [2]

Royce heard James's lectures at Baltimore in 1878, and was thus "for a brief time his pupil." [3] Then, after beginning his teaching career at the University of California in the autumn of the same year, he wrote to James as follows: —

Berkeley, Jan. 14, 1879

My dear James, —

That I have not written you for so long a time is quite inexcusable, but not quite inexplicable. I have not had much to say; and

[2] For a fuller version of these remarks *cf. Harvard Graduates' Magazine*, XVIII (1910); *cf. L.W.J.*, I, 200–1. The portrait was the work of Ellen Emmet Rand and now hangs in the Faculty Room at Harvard. Royce said of it: "I see in you more Titanic features, besides those that the portrait gets. I am glad of what has been got."

[3] Royce, *William James and Other Essays*, 1911, 9. For James's lectures, *cf.* below, II, 27–8.

I was not anxious to waste breath or ink or time on telling "first impressions" about my new position out here. My first impressions have passed away now, and I have quite a settled opinion of the place and opportunities about me. . . . There is no philosophy in California — from Siskiyou to Ft. Yuma, and from the Golden Gate to the summit of the Sierras. . . . Hence the atmosphere for the study of metaphysics is bad, and I wish I were out of it. On the other hand, I am at home and so among good friends; and further, as to my work, I am entirely free to arrange my course as I please, and to put into it a little philosophy. . . . I trumped up a theory of logical concepts last term and preached it to the seniors. It was a kind of hybrid of Hume and Schopenhauer, with an odor of Kant about it. It was somewhat monstrous, and, in this wilderness with nobody to talk with about it, I have not the least idea whether it is true or not. . . .

Harris . . . was good enough to publish an article for me in his October number.[4] Now he wants me to write a short review of Shadworth Hodgson. I am willing — the flesh is, I mean — but the spirit is weak. I think the public ought to "honor" Shadworth Hodgson "with silence" (as Kant in the *Prolegomena* thanks it for having done to him), until *The Philosophy of Reflection* has been better digested. For it is no book of a day, that work, I am sure. I read your "Brute and Human Intellect" with very great interest. It had something the same effect upon me as had Lessing's *Laokoon* when I first read that work; the effect, I mean, of immediate conviction, in so far as the conclusions reached were definite. But I don't know how soon I may be ready to change the standpoint. . . . There is nothing more to say now I believe, except to beg you to write soon, just to comfort me with a metaphysical word or two. Please remember me to Professor Child. With best wishes for yourself and yours I remain, yours very truly,

J. ROYCE

Cambridge, Feb. 16 [1879][5]

My dear Royce, —

Your letter was most welcome. I had often found myself wondering how you were getting on, and your wail as the solitary

[4] "Schiller's Ethical Studies," *Jour. of Specul. Philos.*, XII (1878).
[5] Reprinted from *L.W.J.*, I, 202–3.

philosopher between Behring's Strait and Tierra del Fuego has a grand lonesome picturesqueness about it. I am sorry your surroundings are not more mentally congenial. But recollect your extreme youth and the fact that you are making a living and practising yourself in the pedagogic art, *überhaupt*. You might be forced to do something much farther away from your chosen line, and even then not make a living. I think you are a lucky youth even as matters stand. Unexpected chances are always turning up. A fortnight ago President Eliot was asked to recommend someone for a $5000 professorship of philosophy in the New York City College. One Griffin of Amherst was finally appointed. I imagine that Gilman is keeping his eye on you and only waiting for the disgrace of youth to fade from your person.

I liked your article on Schiller very much, and hope you will send more to Harris. That most villainous of editors, as I am told, has himself been to Baltimore lately as an office-seeker. But the rumor may be false. In some respects he might be a useful man for the Johns Hopkins University, but I would give no more for his judgment than for that of a Digger Indian. I hope you will write something about Hodgson. He is quite as worthy as Kant of supporting any number of parasites and partial assimilators of his substance. My sentence, I perceive, has a rather uncomplimentary sound. I meant only to say that you should not be deterred from treating him in your own way from fear of inadequacy. All his commentators must undoubtedly be inadequate for some time to come; but they will all help each other out. He seems to me the wealthiest mine of thought I ever met with. With me, save for my eyes, things are jogging along smoothly. I am writing (very slowly) what may become a textbook of psychology. A proposal from Gilman to teach in Baltimore three months yearly for the next three years had to be declined as incompatible with work here. I will send you a corrected copy of Harris's journal with my article on Space, which was printed without my seeing the proof. I suppose you subscribe to *Mind*. The only decent thing I have ever written will, I hope, appear in the July number of that sheet. The delays of publication are fearful. Most of this was written in 1877.[6] If it ever sees the light, I hope you will let me know what

[6] James refers here to his "Sentiment of Rationality," which appeared in *Mind*, IV (1879). The article on space was "The Spatial Quale," *Jour. of Specul. Philos.*, XIII (1879).

you think of it, and how it tallies with your own theory of Concept, which latter I would fain swallow and digest. I wish you belonged to our philosophic club here. It is very helpful to the uprooting of weeds from one's own mind as well as the detection of beams in one's neighbor's eyes. Write often and believe me faithfully yours,

WM. JAMES

James's "Sentiment of Rationality" had, as we have seen, grown out of his long reflection on "the motives of philosophizing." Royce was preoccupied with the same problem, and for some time this common theme obscured the profound difference in their philosophical bias.[7] The following letter, while it suggests that the two men are fellow members of a "school," at the same time raises the curtain enough to disclose the divergence of their future paths.

Berkeley, Jan. 8, 1880

My dear Professor James, —

. . . I read with interest and not without general assent the paper you published in the July number of *Mind*. I think there can be no doubt that before very long there will be enough written in the way of investigation of the structure of scientific thinking after the fashion wherein you and some others investigate it, to justify the application of that rough and cruel but natural term "school" to the style of thinking involved. . . . And the distinguishing marks of this school would be, I fancy, not so much a body of dogmas, as a disposition to inquire into two matters of which most of our scientific philosophasters never hear, *viz.:* (1) What is the inner structure, the nature, of thinking as a process of understanding things? and (2) What is the use, the inner and hidden motive, of making such assumptions as we are accustomed to make about the world of experience? Certainly the thinkers who first make molecules and then fall down in mute and holy reverence before the awful mystery of how the molecules ever could make *them,* are far from knowing what it is to cross-question consciousness with any real spirit in their questionings. If I understand you, it is such cross-questioning of consciousness which you want to have done.

[7] In the *Principles* (II, 318, note) James says that Chs. IX and X of Royce's *Religious Aspect of Philosophy* "are on the whole the clearest account of the psychology of belief with which I am acquainted."

Your Space article in the *Journal of Speculative Philosophy* was interesting if only it could have appeared in better company. For if there be anything appalling in later philosophical literature, I think it will be in the end the goodly company of opinions about the nature of space which the aforesaid journal is collecting. Opinions of California politicians about the nature of money are harmonious and consistent in comparison. . . . But in fact I know no problem so puzzling as this space-problem. The causality-problem is easy as compared to it. If Shadworth Hodgson would be good enough to express his great thoughts in better language, I am sure his last article in *Mind* . . . would give a fair account of the chief points of difficulty in the causality-problem.[8] But the space-problem, who shall master it? What is needed is, I think, this: — Some one must master the whole science of geometry in its latest forms as well as in its long history. Then this same man must have complete control over physiological psychology. Then he must master all the uses that have been made of space-science as an aid to other sciences, either directly or not directly dependent on it, and so come to see the true connection of geometry and logic, that matter on which F. A. Lange spent some of his later years (*vide* the *Logische Studien*). Then he must have control of the philosophic literature about space from Zeno of Elea to Kant and the present day. On the basis of all this he must write a special treatise, say on the "Properties of Space," which shall develop the principles of a new philosophic science — a synthesis of all the previous material, an elaborate account of what is empirical in our knowledge and application of space-properties. Give me ten years and nothing to hinder, and I will undertake that work myself. But I have neither the time nor the material.

You may want to know what I am doing in philosophic study. I am working rather slowly, to be sure, but yet a good deal. I undertook last summer vacation to do some work on a logic text-book for one of my classes. I made not much progress, becoming snarled on the principles between Lotze and some others. I have been obliged to spend some time on English literature, and have so lost some work. Meanwhile, feeling incompetent to do him philological justice, I have let my Shadworth Hodgson article lie unwritten. Getting more and more puzzled about the ways of human

[8] The article by Hodgson was "On Causation," *Mind*, IV (1879).

thinking, I have extended my study to mathematics, reviewing parts of the calculus, and dabbling in modern geometry and quaternions. Perhaps I have done some scattering, but I could not help it. These things must be understood if I am to master thought-methods. Boole's *Logic*[9] and Venn's *Logic of Chance* have come in for a share of attention. Balfour's *Defence of Philosophical Doubt* I delighted in hugely, excepting only that much did not seem quite novel enough. We can all of us write something like that too. But it is a good book. Just lately I have been reading Dühring's *Geschichte der Grundprincipien der Mechanik.* And now I am projecting a book on the *Nature of Axioms.* I am afraid that the publisher, like the book, is yet unborn.

Nobody really studies philosophy here. Metaphysically I am lonely. Socially I am well off, and am, among other things, engaged to be married. Yet for all that I know nothing that would hinder me from removing myself and all my prospects east in case I could get money enough on the other side of the continent to support myself and a home. I see no prospect of that, however, for a long time. If you think it worth while to give me good advice, I shall be thankful for it. Ought I to write on the "Nature of Axioms," or on Shadworth Hodgson, or on both, or on neither? And is it worth while to discuss at great length the nature of the relation between the knowledge of the present and the knowledge of past and future? That is, is this problem as fundamental as I persist in believing that it is? Or do you, having convinced yourself about it, hold it to be not very fundamental or important? Maybe I shall not take your advice if I get it; but it will be welcome all the same. Any further talk about the universe which may strike you as worthy of being wasted in a note to me, would be very acceptable to one as thirsty for philosophy as I am, in case you found time and inclination to write me at all. I am, very truly yours,

JOSIAH ROYCE

Cambridge, Feb. 3, 1880[10]

Beloved Royce, —

So far was I from having forgotten you that I had been revolving in my mind, on the very day when your letter came, the rhetorical

[9] George Boole, *The Mathematical Analysis of Logic*, 1847.
[10] This letter is printed, with some omissions, in *L.W.J.*, I, 204–6.

formulas of objurgation with which I was to begin a page of inquiries of you, whether you were dead and buried or had become an idiot or were sick or blind or what, that you sent no word of yourself. *I* am as blind as ever, which may excuse my silence.

First of all *Glückwünsche* as to your *Verlobung!* which, like the true philosopher that you are, you mention parenthetically and without names, dates, numbers of dollars, etc., etc. I think it shows great sense in her, and no small amount of it in you, whoe'er she be. I have found in marriage a calm and repose I never knew before, and only wish I had done the thing ten years earlier. I think the lateness of our usual marriages is a bad thing, and hope your engagement will not last very long.

It is refreshing to hear your account of philosophic work. *Macte!* Dühring's book I have found almost unreadable from the absence of all quotation and fact. He assumes too complete a knowledge of the subject. But there seems growing up a sense of form among the Germans. I think the articles in the *Vierteljahrsschrift für Philosophie* are a striking example of it. Hall writes me that C. Göring drowned himself. Neither he nor Avenarius pleases me at all.[11] It seems to be a low type, unfit to have the secrets of the Universe entrusted to its keeping. Hall is married too, and doing laboratory work in Leipzig. He writes that he finds Wundt very disappointing. Wundt certainly is no genius, but a magnificent product of education. I have bought his *Logic* today. I 'm sorry you 've given up your article on Hodgson. He *is* obscure enough, and makes me sometimes wonder whether the *ignotum* does not pass itself off for the *mirifico* in his pages. I enclose his photograph as a loan, trusting you will return it soon.

I will never write again for Harris's journal. He refused an article of mine a year ago "for lack of room," and has postponed the printing of two admirable original articles by T. Davidson and Elliot Cabot for the last ten months or more, in order to accommodate Mrs. Channing's verses and Miss [G. Garrigus's] drivel about the school of Athens, etc., etc. It is too loathesome. Harris has resigned his school position in St. Louis and will, I am told, come East to live. I know not whether he means to lay siege to the Johns Hopkins professorship. My ignorant prejudice against all

[11] James read the *Vierteljahrsschrift* with some thoroughness at this time. The Göring of whom Stanley Hall had written was Carl T. Göring, author of *System der kritischen Philosophie,* 1874–5, etc., and member of the German positivistic school.

Hegelians, except Hegel himself, grows wusser and wusser. Their sacerdotal airs! and their sterility! Contemplating their navels and the syllable *oum!* My dear friend Palmer, assistant professor of philosophy here, is already one of the white-winged band, having been made captive by Caird in two summers of vacation in Scotland. Palmer is an *extremely* able man, or rather person, in many ways, but a born prig, and such are, I suppose, all bound to be Hegelians. Caird does n't strike one as a prig, but the ineffectiveness and impotence of the ending of his work on Kant seems to me simply scandalous, after its pretentious (and able) beginning. What do you think of Carveth's essay on Shadworth?[12] I have n't read it. Our Philosophic Club here is given up for the year — I think we 're all rather sick of each other's voices.

My teaching is small in numbers, though my men are good. I 've tried Renouvier as a textbook — for the last time! His exposition offers too many difficulties. I enjoyed your rhapsody on space, and hereby pledge myself to buy two copies of your work ten years hence, and to devote the rest of my life to the propagation of its doctrines. I despise my own article, which was dashed off for a momentary purpose and published for another. But I don't see why its main doctrine, from a psychologic and sublunary point of view, is not sound; and I think I can, if my psychology ever gets writ, set it down in decently clear and orderly form. All *deducers* of space are, I am sure, mythologists. You are, after all, not so very much isolated in California. We are all isolated — "columns left alone of a temple once complete," etc. Books are our companions more than men. But I wish nevertheless, and firmly expect, that somehow or other you will get a call East, and within my humble sphere of power I will do what I can to further that end. My accursed eyesight balks me always about study and production. *Ora pro me!* With most respectful and devout regards to the fair Object, believe me always your

WM. JAMES

Berkeley, Sept. 19, 1880

My dear James, —

I owe you a second letter for your kindness in giving me a sort of introduction to Shadworth Hodgson, from whom I received a

[12] The reference is to Carveth Read's review of *The Philosophy of Reflection* by Shadworth Hodgson, in *Mind*, V (1880).

very pleasant note. I answered him at great length, as is my fashion when I once set about the business of writing.[18] For some time past I have been trying to get certain notions into shape so as to write them down for good. . . . Kant starts two great questions, one as to the objects (*Gegenstände*) and the limits of human knowledge, and one as to the structure of knowledge. The former question has been to my mind fairly settled in an idealistic sense. . . . But another set of problems remains . . . concerned with the structure of knowledge. . . . Modern German logic — Lotze, Sigwart, Wundt, Bergmann and the others — and the efforts of such men as C. S. Peirce in his *Popular Science Monthly* articles of two years ago, are labors in this field.[14] Your method of discussing psychological problems would make them a sort of propædeutic to this deepest philosophic study. I say "deepest"; for to solve the problem of the structure of knowledge would be to gain insight into everything in the range of philosophy. . . .

The deepest question is Kant's "How is experience possible?" . . . Experience is a series that everyone admits. Experience is known as a series: that most writers regard as too simple a thing to mention. Yet just here is the kernel. . . . In each state only itself is given. Hence each state can know the others only by actively constructing or postulating them. . . . Hence time as a series of states is never a datum, only a postulate or construction. . . .

If experience is possible only through this constructive process, then what is the ultimate datum? Not matter, not mind, not a series of experiences, not the distinction of object and subject, but just this: a moment of reception of some content, joined with a constructive act that postulates a world of other consciousness beyond the present data. . . . And, furthermore, the business of philosophy is to find out . . . the forms of this constructing activity. . . . These ways of constructing will be the highest principles of all thinking, whose truth is unquestionable, because they themselves produce all truth. . . . And finally, all these forms of activity appear as expressions of certain fundamental interests that we take in the world. In each moment we construct such a world because

[18] This correctly describes Royce's epistolary habits at the time. On June 7, he had sent James over eighteen closely written pages on knowledge of the past and future, on Shadworth Hodgson, etc.

[14] Christoph von Sigwart's *Logik* had appeared in 1878; Julius Bergmann's *Allgemeine Logik* in 1879. For Peirce's articles, *cf.* below, II, 410.

we are interested in doing so. The final basis of our thought is ethical, practical. These things are so because a given moment of activity must have them so. "Give me a world" is the cry of consciousness; and behold, a world is made even in the act of crying.

All this last which sounds so fantastical is not at all opposed to the work of science. Science expresses a particular kind of activity, especially distinguished by the ethical qualities of patience, self-possession, doubt, and universality of aim, coupled with much definiteness of construction. The difference between science and fanaticism is ethical. Else why prefer science? Some of this you will, I think, agree with; some of it, at all events, I have learned from or through you. . . .

Your essay on the "Feeling of Effort" was duly received and greatly enjoyed. Many thanks. Yours ever,

JOSIAH ROYCE

Cambridge, Dec. 25, 1880

My dear Royce, —

Your very interesting letter of September 19 crossed mine on the way. Your views about the structure of thought and so on are somewhat too concisely expressed for me to catch their full bearings, but you have evidently got hold of something and I hope to Heaven you will work it out. We do want some sane and educated constructive philosophizing in this country to set off against the *borborygme* and other peristaltic phenomena of the Hegelian band. Hegelism in the person of Professor Palmer and one Emery, Secretary of the Concord School, a retired merchant of forty-five who has entered our law school, is making a very able and active propaganda here; and part of my fun this winter is trying to scotch it. I shall count on you as an ally in the common task; — what you sketch in your letter as the vindication of the element of spontaneity in the construction of truth, — the postulates which the moment makes. The field is fruitful, the reapers as yet but few, but everywhere else in my opinion, lies *humbug*. No philosophy can be anything else than an attempt to *make* a certain construction work.

I wish you were here to talk to — dictation does not lend itself to copiousness. My eyes are as bad as ever and I get over but little ground. I hope you are married and settled by this time and en-

joying a felicity this Christmas Day which "postulates" no presents. Always your friend

WM. JAMES

Cambridge, March 25, 1881

My dear Royce, —

Dr. Peabody, Professor of Ethics, has resigned. There may be immediate changes in the philosophic department here by which eventually a new man will have to be brought in. As you know, I am desirous of getting you here *per fas aut nefas,* provided extreme old age and the married state have not so blunted your faculties as to belie the promise of your youthful prime. If you can conscientiously say you think yourself fit to compete in the philosophic struggle for existence here, and abandon your proud preëminence of being the only metaphysician on the Pacific slope, I advise you without any loss of time to write to the "President and Fellows" of Harvard University, saying you wish to be considered a candidate for any vacancy that may occur. . . . I will work for you all I can, though I can't show much zeal owing to the fact that my most intimate philosophic friend, Hall, is among the candidates. In great haste, faithfully yours,

WM. JAMES

Royce made the application as James suggested, but this first effort to obtain Royce's appointment at Harvard came to nought. Another opportunity soon arose, and was promptly improved.

Cambridge, May 8, 1881

My dear Royce, —

I scribble this hasty line to tell you that the Harvard chances of a vacancy are for the present *nil.* The transfer of Profesor Palmer, which for a moment seemed probable, has blown over. A negotiation which began between myself and President Gilman has come to nought, Professor Bowen looks as imperishable as ever, in short all things resume their ancient state. Still, one more year may upset everything again, and your application made now will keep.

I have read your George Eliot and Kant articles[15] with great pleasure. You certainly have the gift of popularization, but I con-

[15] "George Eliot As a Religious Teacher," *The Californian,* III (1881); "Before and Since Kant," *Berkeley Quarterly,* April 1881.

fess I was glad to hear you speak of the article sent to *Mind,* for I shall enjoy something more technical and dense from your pen. I am slugging along doing very little work, but feeling in tougher physical condition than for years past, at this vernal season. Finished with great delight this morning the long-postponed Sidgwick's *Data of Ethics.* Of all long-winded, copious, flexible-minded, dispassionate cusses, he is the worst.

I hope you won't feel disappointed at my news. It might have been worse — vacancy filled by some insignificant schoolmaster, for example. Always yours,

WM. JAMES

Before the next letter James had again written to Royce, praising an article on "Pessimism and Modern Thought" which had recently appeared in the *Berkeley Quarterly.*

Berkeley, Dec. 28, 1881

Dear James, —

I have been prevented by heaps upon heaps of red- and purple- and black-ink essays, written by freshmen on all subjects and on all kinds of paper, from answering your very kind letter. . . . You were very good to find so much in the essay on pessimism. For one thing it is not very original, since some of the best ideas in it were in great part suggested by you in some of our conversations during my summer at Cambridge. . . . I have three articles on the point of appearing. . . . All three are efforts to state aspects of what I take to be the proper *Fortbildung* of Kant. The sum of them all is that ontology, whereby I mean any positive theory of an external reality as such, is of necessity myth-making; that, however, such ontology may have enough moral worth to make it a proper object of effort so long as people know what they mean by it; that philosophy is reduced to the business of formulating the purposes, the structure and the inner significance of human thought and feeling . . . that the ideal of the truth-seeker is not the attainment of any agreement with an external reality, but the attainment of perfect agreement among all truth-seeking beings; that ethical philosophy is the highest philosophy. . . .

I received your "Reflex Action and Theism." So did Professor "Joe," as people familiarly (in his absence) call Joseph Leconte.

Joe was very enthusiastic over it the other day when I chanced to meet him. And Joe is our great man here. As for me I accept most of it. . . . I think that your article on the "Sentiment of Effort" needed towards the end a little more definition of your concept of reality. . . . Do you or do you not recognize this reality of which you speak as . . . independent of the knowing consciousness? . . . The same hesitation, if I am right in so calling it, appears in C. S. Peirce's papers on the "Logic of Science." [16] In one way he seems to regard reality as for us merely the representative of our determinations to act so or so, and of our expectations that we shall succeed if we do so. . . . Yet [he] is not content with this, but continually appeals to the transcendent reality as justifying our determination and our expectation. Now I want to be on this matter very explicit. I fear the ambiguity and the hesitation. For me the sentiment of reality, the determination to act thus and so, the expectation of certain results, all these facts of the active consciousness are together the whole truth. There is needed or known or conceivable above these facts of consciousness absolutely no transcendent reality. . . . And yet I am no subjective idealist of the old-fashioned sort. Not *myself* is the ultimate truth, but consciousness as such. . . . Thank you very much for your kind interest. Yours truly,

JOSIAH ROYCE

The first of the articles alluded to in this letter appeared in *Mind* in January 1882, under the title of "Mind and Reality." It not only argued that any theory of external reality must be a hypothesis constructed in response to subjective demands, but proposed a particular hypothesis which he refers to as "modern phenomenism." This view postulates that the external world is the "counterpart" (not the cause) of my ideas, being either the actual experiences of some other conscious human being, or a "possible experience." Royce then proceeds, in quite the manner of his later works, to substitute for this field of possible experience the actual experience of a "Universal Consciousness." [17] The "Absolute" thus sheepishly

[16] "Illustrations of the Logic of Science," *Pop. Science Mo.*, XII (1877); XIII (1878).

[17] *Mind*, VII (1882), 49, 53. It is to be noted that Royce places Fichte first among the philosophers who support this view. It is interesting that Fichte should have meant so much to Royce and so little to James. It is, in fact, the key to the difference between them.

garbed as a mere hypothesis or moral postulate apparently aroused no hostility in James's mind.

Cambridge, Jan. 15 [1882]

My dear Royce, —

Bravissimo! Your "Mind and Reality" has stayed by me and nourished me for three days. I, in all sincerity, don't believe anyone in America or anyone in England short of Hodgson, could have written a thing in which a subject so profound and important is so lightly handled and has *air* so let in through all its interstices, and behind it. I find in you the combination of play with earnestness which is so refreshing in philosophic writing, but which so few fellows have. Poor, feeble, dismal, serious Green, how the transcendental ego oppresses him! The two articles are foils to each other, and yours is certainly not the one that suffers in comparison.[18] I think the point that interested me most was your treatment of Cause *vs.* Counterpart, which formulated the issue and solved it in a way quite new to me. It also gave me a new synonymization, so to speak, of Hodgson's Aspect *vs.* Condition, and Order of Analysis *vs.* Order of History.[19] But I can't write another word now, so with best wishes remain yours ever,

WM. JAMES

The "inspiring" letter to which the following is a reply is unfortunately missing. James was evidently still exerting himself to improve Royce's professional situation.

Berkeley, Jan. 19, 1882

My dear James, —

Your inspiring letter put me the other day into a very good humour, which has survived even one of our dry unmerciful California northers. As for your kind offer to write to some one of our trustees about me, I should of course be thankful for anything that you might say. . . . I should be just a little tender about being called a luminary, you know; red-haired men always are. You might use some other metaphor. But your judgment will decide that for you. . . .

[18] The same number of *Mind* contained T. H. Green's "Can There Be a Natural Science of Man?"

[19] The order is here reversed. Cause is to Counterpart (in Royce's sense) as Condition to Aspect or History to Analysis (in Hodgson's sense).

We must have an objective sanction for our thoughts and for our acts, and so we resolve to regard such and such a conception as an objective authority. The last fact is our free surrender of ourselves to this authority, which, for its own part, exists in and through our act of self-surrender. The consciousness of subjective and arbitrary independence is fatal to our thoughts and lives; therefore we freely render ourselves dependent, and put on our self-made harness. All thinking is putting on the harness, that we may gain in unity and fulness of life more than we shall lose by losing the lawless freedom of romanticism or of scepticism. Yours truly,

J. ROYCE

At last the long-awaited opportunity came, to bring Royce to Harvard.

Cambridge, April 23, 1882

My dear Royce, —

I have read your Saratoga paper [20] with even more than my usual pleasure in your style. The preliminary critical part of it is first-rate in all respects. As for your "recasting" attempt, without saying I disagree, I find certain things obscure, and cannot but think that the attempt you make is destined to receive further elaboration at your own hands.

But the object of this writing is not to bandy compliments or the reverse with you, but to ask you a practical question. I have received leave of absence on half-pay for next year and must find a substitute to do my work on the remaining half, which makes the dwarfish figure of $1250. Schurman of Nova Scotia,[21] who is a fine fellow and perfectly safe man, will undoubtedly do the job if asked; but inasmuch as whoever does it gets the inside track for promotion here on Bowen's withdrawal; inasmuch, too, as I may safely say that you and Schurman are the only men the College Corporation has its eyes on for filling a vacancy (G. Stanley Hall has just been appointed to the Johns Hopkins University for three years, and I am disposed to doubt of a vacancy here being tendered him); inasmuch, moreover, as I think you would be the highest

[20] "Kant's Relation to Modern Philosophic Progress," *Jour. of Specul. Philos.*, XV (1881); prepared for a celebration of Kant's centennial, Saratoga, July 6, 1881, and read for Royce by "some benevolent wretch."

[21] Jacob Gould Schurman, afterwards President of Cornell University and Ambassador to Germany, was at this time professor of English literature, political economy, and psychology at Acadia College in Nova Scotia.

prize we could permanently gain; inasmuch, also, as I know the President does not feel convinced of your teaching powers being first-class, partly because they don't yet offer you the new professorship in your own university, partly because no accounts either favorable or unfavorable have yet been received here; inasmuch as all this, you see that if you could manage to come for a year at your own risks, many questions of the highest concern to you *might* be settled at a stroke. The President, I think, would rather try you than Schurman because it gives him the chance of capturing a larger prize, but he has an impression that with you he also runs larger risks; and he does not believe that you could afford to drop your permanent appointment at Berkeley and travel all this way for $1250 without a guarantee of something beyond one year. . . .

Should your teaching during my absence give satisfaction, and yet the looked-for vacancy not occur at the end of the year, it is probable but not certain, that there will be vacancies in the English rhetoric and theme department in which you could bide your time, which certainly can't be long, as good old Bowen hints at resignation constantly and seems very feeble. I think you see clearly just what the chances and the risks are. I write without the President's knowledge to ask you whether, knowing them all, you still feel as if you might like to take my place. I feel sure the President would then officially invite you. There is a chance of a good little furnished house here for $360 rent. First-class board would cost you and your wife $30 a week. I ought to say that your work would consist of Psychology, three hours a week (a beginner's course with Taine or Spencer as textbook); of Locke, Berkeley and Hume, three hours a week; and of a graduate course in "Advanced Psychology" of one or two hours, for which there will probably be no applicants and out of which, even if there are, you can easily wriggle.

I would give anything to have you safe within our fold, but I should think your own university must now advance you. You have no doubt heard of their sounding Palmer and of his refusing to be a candidate. I don't know what first-class man they can get to go from the East — possibly poor John Watson with his transcendental ego might, possibly George S. Morris,[22] but you are worth

[22] John Watson was professor of logic, mental and moral philosophy, at Queens College, Kingston, Ontario. George S. Morris was professor of philosophy at the University of Michigan.

Palmer, Watson and Morris together for one who really enjoys the living movement of philosophizing. If your answer is affirmative, as I hope it may be, *telegraph* it immediately. No time is to be lost. Yours always,

WM. JAMES

P.S. I ought to say as my *private* opinion, that I cannot myself imagine why you should *not* succeed as a teacher here, and that I should suppose your coming for the next year would be practically tantamount to perpetuity. . . . But the *risks,* such as they are, are **yours.**

W. J.

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JOSIAH ROYCE: THE BATTLE OF THE ABSOLUTE (1882–1899)

ROYCE took the "risks" and crossed the continent in the summer of 1882 with his wife and first-born. The absence of Palmer made it possible to renew his appointment for a second year, and in 1885 he received his appointment of assistant professor. In his first autumn at Harvard he wrote to James in Europe: —

[Cambridge], Oct. 31, 1882

My dear James, —

. . . Professor Palmer is cordial and very genuinely friendly. I wonder how he can endure me with my slip-shod Western manners, and he so precise and *streng*. Nevertheless neither on our walks together nor in our little visits (both have been fewer than I wished) does he manifest any disgust for me. We have already been doctoring up the transcendental ego in various ways, and giving our rival diagnoses of the poor fellow's case. . . . Please write me soon. I see after all but few people and am sometimes lonesome. A word from you will always cheer me. Yours truly,

JOSIAH ROYCE

After James's return from Europe in 1883 there was for some years a close companionship between the two men — and little correspondence. This was the time when Royce's influence over James was at its height. James "discovered" him, and with his characteristic enthusiasm advertised his merits to all the world. His letters are full of allusions to this "wonderfully powerful fellow," "the most promising man we have in this country," "from whom nothing is too great to expect"; and to his new book, "one of the very freshest, profoundest, solidest, most human bits of philosophical work I 've seen for a long time." [1] Royce's *Religious Aspect of Philosophy,*

[1] *Cf.* above, 629, 772, etc.; and *L.W.J.*, I, 265.

published in 1885, commended itself to James on two grounds of doctrine, apart from its style. In the first place, the author recognized the "motives of philosophizing," and held that philosophical theory was an act of will justified by its practical fruits. Thus, for example, he skillfully expounded the intellectual craving for a theory "wherein the greatest fulness of data shall be combined with the greatest simplicity of conception." [2] More important, however, was his "new and original proof of idealism"; which James would not have grasped "without many an oral discussion with Royce himself," and which, being grasped, he found it for many years impossible to drop.[3]

We have made the acquaintance of this argument in James's patient exposition of it to Renouvier. He also expounded it in a review of Royce's book published soon after its appearance.[4] An idea cannot be either true or false except relatively to its object. But what makes an object "its object"? Only the intention of a mind which possesses both the idea and the object and declares that the one *shall* be the idea of the other. But the object of a finite mind's idea lies outside that mind and beyond its control. We must suppose, then, says Royce, that there is an enveloping mind, a universal consciousness; which, possessing as its own *both* the finite mind's idea and that idea's object, can by its fiat *make* the first the idea of the second and the second the object of the first. For many years James was convinced by this argument; or, rather, was unable to answer it — for he was never *satisfied* by it.

"The ordinary objection to a pantheistic monism like this," he wrote in 1885, "is the ethical one, that it makes *all* that happens a portion of the eternal reason, and so must nourish a fatalistic mood. . . . Dr. Royce is not as disdainful of this difficulty as the Hegelians are. We are not sure he has got over it." [5] He was soon sure that Royce had *not* got over it, and there ensued a very interesting struggle in James's mind between the theoretical argument and the ethical objection — interesting for the light which it throws on the relative priority of the several "motives of philosophizing." For it is evident that James did not permit himself to give way to the moral motives until his logical scruples were satisfied.

[2] *Religious Aspect of Philosophy*, 1885, 357; qu. by W.J., *Principles*, II, 316.
[3] *C.E.R.*, 278.
[4] *Atlantic*, LV (1885).
[5] *Ibid.*; *C.E.R.*, 283.

In 1887 he frankly confessed himself *"unable* to overthrow Royce's argument," though he "suspects it of inconclusiveness." [6] In 1888 he expounded the argument in order to remove Renouvier's misunderstandings, and was evidently still convinced by it. At last, in 1893 or thereabouts, "largely through the influence of Professor D. S. Miller," he "came to see that any definitely experienceable workings would serve as intermediaries quite as well as the absolute mind's intentions would." [7] He was not immediately convinced, even by the reading of Miller's article. But he now made up his mind to settle the question once and for all. "With the help of God I will go at it again this winter, when I settle down to my final bout with Royce's theory, which must result in my either *actively* becoming a propagator thereof, or actively its enemy and destroyer. It is high time that this more decisive attitude were generated in me, and it ought to take place this winter." [8] As a result of these decisive meditations he came to see that an idea could be linked to its object by relations falling altogether within the finite mind, its object being that which it "directly or indirectly operates on," "actually or potentially terminates in." If an idea can thus indicate its own object by pointing or leading to it along paths of human experience, then Royce's Absolute Thought, or Universal Consciousness, becomes a supernumerary, the idle witness of an achievement which does not require its services.

The extraordinary thing is that this view was to James an old story. It substituted Renouvier's "relations *de proche en proche"* for Royce's Absolute Thought, precisely as he had proposed to the former in 1888.[9] In fact the view was contained in an article which James published in 1885 and wrote in 1884 — before the appearance of Royce's book, but after he had felt the full force of Royce's contention. In this article he acknowledged Royce's influence in impressing upon him the importance of the problem of the idea's objective reference, but postponed examination of Royce's own theory as having a metaphysical scope beyond "the practical and psychological point of view to which" in the present article he proposed to confine himself. In other words, it apparently took James eight years to be-

[6] *L.W.J.*, I, 265.
[7] *M.T.*, 22, note. Miller's article was "The Meaning of Truth and Error," *Philos. Rev.*, II (1893); *cf.* also, *Psychol. Rev.*, II (1895), 535.
[8] *L.W.J.*, II, 18.
[9] *Cf.* above, 705.

come convinced that his "practical and psychological" account of objective reference, in terms of human experience, would suffice also for metaphysical purposes.[10]

There was a limit even to Royce's strength, and in 1888 his head had "broken down with too much work." He went on a sea voyage to Australia and wrote the following letter on board ship.

Southern Ocean, circ. 600 miles out of Melbourne
Lat. circ. 40° S; Long. circ. 135° E.
May 21, 1888

Dear James, —

It ought to be a long letter, if it were to undertake to tell the whole story of my life since I last saw Boston Light; but it must be a short one, since I have so many others to write. . . . I don't know, of course, how I shall feel on land, but here in my place of safety I seem to myself to be entirely cured. There was indeed a long period of depression . . . but all this . . . is no longer in order. With the winds and the birds of the southern sea came a new life. My wits had been working all along. In the deepest of my nothingness I read mechanics, and mathematics, and Martineau, and even Casanova, with an impartial insight into the essential nothingness of definite integrals, easily conquered maidens, and divine laws — one and all. But while I mused dispassionately upon the world of passion, my head was clear so far as the mere mechanics of thinking went. And now that passion has come again, and the good Lord seems to have some life in his world of *Sonnen und Milchstrassen*, my wits grow more constructive, and I more and more look upon the voyage as a very highly educating experience. In fine, I have largely straightened out the big metaphysical tangle about continuity, freedom, and the world-formula which, as you remember, I had aboard with me when I started; and I am ready to amuse you with a metaphysical speculation of a very simple, but, as now seems to me, of a very expansive nature, which does more to make the dry bones of my "Universal Thought" live than any prophesying that I have heretofore had the fortune to do. The fields of speculation are very wide and romantic, after all, and great is the fun of bringing down new game. I must live to tell about this new specimen, at any rate. But I despair of describing it to you in this letter. I must wait until

[10] "On the Function of Cognition," *Mind*, X (1885), especially 36, note. The article was reprinted in 1909 in *M.T.*, where it was evidently regarded as constituting an answer to Royce.

we meet. Suffice it that the old trouble about continuity has come to seem to me very enlightening for the whole range of metaphysics, but particularly for our question about freedom and the ideals. . . .

My plans for a new story are also still active. I am holding myself back from any hard work, but by the time I get back I think that I shall be ready for an outburst of literary toil. I shall indeed "lean no more on superhuman aid" and shall dread fatigue more than I used to do; but so far as I can see, my strength is going to be once more excellent. As for my security against relapse, it lies rather in the fact, not that "a burnt child dreads the fire," but that, in the words of my favorite Buddhist homily, I feel "like a fire that returns not to the place once burnt over." *That* experience is done for and over forever. New lands and worlds call for me now, so at least I fancy, and though I shall never amount to much in any of them, I *can't* go back. . . .

My companionships aboard the ship have been highly agreeable. The Captain, as Yankee and Cape Cod man, who has read a good deal in the long sea hours of his life, is contemplative. Once in a while I have to explain to him metaphysics, as thus: We sit on deck in the tropics, gazing into the heavens, and talking over Newcomb's *Astronomy,* which Captain has been reading. He grows now more and more meditative over the vast stellar distances, and the rest, and at last observes: "Well, sometimes it seems to me like nothing so much as a dream. Don't it ever occur to you that perhaps the whole thing above there and our life, too, is a dream of ours, and perhaps there ain't anything anyhow, that 's real?" I admit having had such thoughts. "Well now, what do you teach your classes at Harvard about all this?" Thus called upon to explain amid the trade-winds, and under the softly flapping canvas, the mysteries of absolute idealism, I put the thing thus: "There was once a countryman," I say, "from Cape Cod, who went to Boston to hear Mark Twain lecture, and to delight his soul with the most mirth-compelling of our humorists. But, as I have heard, when he was in Boston, he was misdirected, so that he heard not Mark Twain, but one of Joseph Cook's Monday Lectures. But he steadfastly believed that he was hearing Mark. So when he went home to Cape Cod, they asked him of Mark Twain's lecture. 'Was it *very* funny?' 'Oh, it was *funny,* yes, — it was *funny,*' replies the countryman cautiously, 'but then, you see, it was n't so *damned* funny.' Even so, Captain," say I,

"I teach at Harvard that the world and the heavens, and the stars are all *real,* but not so *damned* real, you see." The Captain has been a devout student of the *Religious Aspect* from time to time ever since, though in lucid intervals he affirms that the whole is consarned nonsense, and thereupon he falls back upon Macaulay's essay on Bacon, which he reads to his wife as a fortification of his common-sense. The rest of the ship's life is very amusing, on the whole. I escaped altogether sea-sickness, at the outset of the voyage, probably because of my abnormal nerves. God be with thine house. . . . Yours very truly,

JOSIAH ROYCE

A letter of August 10 from Los Gatos, California, announced Royce's safe return to the American continent and complete recovery of health. James replied as follows: —

Chocorua, Aug. 24, 1888

My dear Royce, —

I have received with great satisfaction your two letters, one from Melbourne and t' other from California, and have been daily moving towards a reply California-wards, but the slight obstacle of writing to your spouse for the address has made me off-shove the proceeding from one day to another until now I receive by yesterday's post your Los Gatos lines. What a sight of the world you are getting, and how your cosmic emotions and your *empirisches Bewusstsein* must increase! And how, from the fluffy and feather-bed existence I lead, immersed in family cares and guests, I envy you the pure ethereal independence of the detached and irresponsible wanderer and observer! No matter! I 've had my chance; and you, probably, will never have another one like this. What you say of your "cure" rejoices me exceedingly. By Jove, old man, if you ever *do* relapse, it will be the sorriest shame and suicide that ever disgraced humanity. You must n't, you can't, with your gifts. If you do I 'll strangle you with my own hands. That 's my last word about that matter.

I shall "admire" to hear your final solution of all the antinomies, and am eager *deswegen* for your return. Things look well next year in the student line. I 've had letters from no fewer than five outside graduates inquiring about advanced psychology. They may not

all come; but if they do we can probably make something good out of the "Philosophical Club," which I confess I enjoyed last year. . . . I, as usual, had plans of work for the summer, but, as usual, the facts of life have busted them. . . . Still on the whole I 'm well eno', measured by other standards, and that blessed life of Darwin which I have just read is enough to make anyone stop complaining. Heaven bless you!

W. J.

James went to Europe in the spring of 1892 and remained for fifteen months. During that time Royce wrote to him faithfully, especially of departmental matters. James had secured Hugo Münsterberg to fill his place in psychology and hoped to be permanently relieved of the burden of the laboratory. Royce and Münsterberg thought well of one another. "Royce ist ein prächtigen kluger Mensch, der auf mich einen bedeutenden Eindruck macht," wrote Münsterberg. What Royce thought of Münsterberg appears in the following letter: —

Cambridge, Oct. 17, 1892

Dear James, —

In the dead waste and middle of the night, at the end of a busy day, it occurs to me to write you a bit of a letter. The delay has been long, but I miss you now; — would write sonnets, if I could, entitled "The Deserted House," "The Darkened Path," "He Comes Not," and "Tired of All These Faculty Meetings, Deans, etc., for Restful Death I Cry" — if I could, I say. Meanwhile, as I can't write the sonnets, I ought to produce the letter, premising that Cambridge without you is like toast unbuttered, like the heart without blood, and that, to be brief, the night hath a thousand eyes, and the day but One, but —

Sentiment aside, the summer passed very fairly. I travelled some 5000 miles, lectured at Davidson's School, sat up with him nights till we were both talked blind, and broke religiously all the rules of his sacred community at Glenmore. I grew very fond of him. . . . Münsterberg is an immense success. His English is charming. The students love it as a mother her babe's first prattle. He fears them not, and they revere his wisdom the more, the more his speech seems shattered. To me he is a great comfort, although, of course, no *Ersatz* for the aforesaid condition of my heart. . . .

The term opens as usual, only more so — "unexampled numbers," endless opportunities to do good. One or two sorrowful hearts that have formerly confided in you, now come to poor me for relief and consolation. For such is the scarcity of comforters hereabouts. Over these I brood and psychologize. It seems to be, so far, a good deal of a year for giving advice. A young poet, whom you don't know, has joined himself unto me, and having found me psychologically sympathetic, has deposited the entire entrails of his spirit, contents and all, in my library for expert investigation, and there they lie now, among other things of the spirit, waiting a quiet hour. There is, moreover, a nihilist, escaped over the frontier after a half-year's imprisonment and much policing. . . . He has become a special student. He has read absolutely everything that is radical, and in Russian too, so that you can't refute him. He is already a terror of my life. After lectures he gathers round me, outstays all other questioners, and talks Darwin, Spencer, idealism, mathematics, socialism — everything, till I flee. Then he accompanies me homewards. My brain whirls, I groan inwardly, I long for a little deep interstellar silence, — but in vain. At last, as I hurry and hobble along, hastening to be free, he says kindly, "But I detain you." "No, No," I cry, and to prove it take to my heels. The last I hear, as the spectre pursues me past Memorial Hall, is: "But I don't agree wid Spencer, bud yed I do dink dat Indegration" — At night, whenever the floors crack, I lie dreading the emissaries of the Russian police, who, as I doubt not, are already spying on this ill-starred intimacy.

In short, it is a busy year. Palmer is majestic, despotic, tender and lusciously sweet by turns. . . . We are well. And so always the tenderest affection and greetings from yours fondly,

JOSIAH ROYCE

Florence, Dec. 18, 1892[11]

Beloved Josiah, —

Your letter of Oct. 17, with "missent Indian mail" stamped upon its envelope in big letters, was handed in only ten days ago, after I had long said in my heart that you were no true friend to leave me thus languishing so long in ignorance of all that was befalling in Irving St. and the country round about. Its poetical hyperboles about

[11] Reprinted, with some additions, from *L.W.J.*, I, 331–5.

the way I was missed made amends for everything, so I am not now writing to ask you for my diamonds back or to return my ringlet of your hair. It was a beautiful and bully letter and filled the hearts of both of us with exceeding joy. I have heard since then from the Gibbenses that you are made Professor — I fear at not more than $3000. But still it is a step ahead and I congratulate you most heartily thereupon. What I most urgently wanted to hear from you was some estimate of Münsterberg, and when you say "he is an immense success" you may imagine how I am pleased. He has his foibles, as who has not; but I have a strong impression that that youth will be a great man. Moreover, his naïveté and openness of nature make him very lovable. I do hope that [his] English will go — of course there can be no question of the students liking him, when once he gets his communications open. He has written me exhaustive letters, and seems to be out-doing even you in the amount of energizing which he puts forth. May God have him in his holy keeping!

From the midst of my laziness here the news I get from Cambridge makes it seem like a little seething Florence of the XVth Century. Having all the time there is, to myself, I of course find I have no time for doing any particular duties, and the consequence is that the days go by without anything very serious accomplished. But we live well and are comfortable by means of sheet-iron stoves which the clammy quality of the cold rather than its intensity seems to necessitate; and Italianism is "striking in" to all of us to various degrees of depth, shallowest of all I fear in Peg and the baby. When *Gemüthlichkeit* is banished from the world it will still survive in this dear and shabby old country; though I suppose the same sort of thing is really to be found in the East even more than in Italy, and that we shall seek it there when Italy has got as tram-roaded and modernized all over as Berlin. It is a curious smell of the past, that lingers over everything, speech and manners as well as stone and stuffs!

I went to Padua last week to a Galileo anniversary. It was splendidly carried out, and great fun; and they gave all of us foreigners honorary degrees. I rather like being a doctor of the University of Padua, and shall feel more at home than hitherto in the *Merchant of Venice*. I have written a letter to the *Nation* about it,[12] which I

[12] "The Galileo Festival at Padua," *Nation*, LVI (1893).

commend to the attention of your gentle partner. Allan Marquand was there, just returning from a very thorough hunting up of all the specimens of Della Robbia pottery in Italy, for a monograph which he is preparing. He did n't strike me as having any special sympathy with the æsthetic side of art, but I find that nowadays the critical cataloguer regards the man whose interest in art is artistic as a most miserable and ignorant worm. Denman Ross seems to *me* a saint in this matter, with great love and acquaintance, but little scholarship and no humbug or conceit of knowledge.[13] Mark Twain is here for the winter in a villa outside the town, hard at work writing something or other. I have seen him a couple of times — a fine, soft-fibred little fellow with the perversest twang and drawl, but very human and good. I should think that one might grow very fond of him, and wish he 'd come and live in Cambridge.

I am just beginning to wake up from the sort of mental palsy that has been over me for the past year, and to take a little "notice" in matters philosophical. I am now reading Wundt's curiously long-winded *System,*[14] which, in spite of his intolerable sleekness and way of *soaping* everything on to you by plausible transitions so as to make it run continuous, has every now and then a compendiously stated truth, or *aperçu,* which is nourishing and instructive. Come March, I will send you proposals for my work next year, to the "Cosmology" part of which I am just beginning to wake up. Benn,[15] of the history of Greek philosophy, is here, a shy Irishman (I should judge) with a queer manner, whom I have only seen a couple of times, but with whom I shall probably later take some walks. He seems a good and well-informed fellow, much devoted to astronomy, and I have urged your works on his attention. He lent me the *New World* with your article in it, which I read with admiration.[16] Would that belief would ensue! Perhaps I shall get straight. I have just been "penning" a notice of Renouvier's *Principes de la Nature* for Schurman.[17] Renouvier cannot be *true* — his world is so much *dust.* But that conception is a *zu überwindendes Moment,* and he

[13] Allan Marquand was for many years professor of archæology and the history of art at Princeton University; Denman W. Ross, painter, connoisseur, collector, and from 1899 lecturer on the theory of design at Harvard University.

[14] *System der Philosophie,* 1889.

[15] Alfred W. Benn, author of *Early Greek Philosophy,* etc., was an Englishman, a private scholar who lived for many years in the vicinity of Florence.

[16] "The Implications of Self-Consciousness," *New World,* I (1892).

[17] *Philos. Rev.,* II (1893).

has given it his most energetic expression. There is a theodicy at the end, a speculation about this being a world fallen, which ought to interest you much from the point of view of your own cosmology.

Münsterberg wrote me, and I forgot to remark on it in my reply, that Scripture wanted him to contribute to a new Yale psychology review, but that he wished to publish in a volume. I confess it disgusts me to hear of each of these little separate college tin-trumpets. What I should really like would be a philosophic *monthly* in America which would be all-sufficing, as the *Revue philosophique* is in France. If it were a monthly, Münsterberg could find room for all his contributions from the laboratory. But I don't suppose that Scripture will combine with Schurman any more than Hall would, or for the matter of that, I don't know whether Schurman himself would wish it.

I hear that Mrs. Palmer is to go to Chicago. Is this to end by drawing Palmer gradually thither, or not?[18] I also hear that they have 250 graduates, which might well account for any amount of depletion elsewhere. Have you heard of their filling out Palmer's philosophic program at all? What are you working at? Is the Goethe work started? Is music raging round you both as of yore? . . . We heard last night the new opera by Mascagni, *I Rantzau,* which has made a furore here and which I enjoyed hugely. How is Santayana, and what is he up to? You can't tell how thick the atmosphere of Cambridge seems over here. "Surcharged with vitality," in short. Write again whenever you can spare a fellow a half-hour, and believe me, with warmest regards from both of us to both of you, yours always,

WM. JAMES

During the middle '90s, having, as he believed, escaped the clutches of Royce's dialectic, James took the offensive and pressed his own objections against the Absolute. There was no diminution in his admiration of Royce's "power." Writing to Münsterberg in 1896 of his failure to review a certain work on psychology for *Mind,* he said: "Keeping the volumes two months, I had to back out and hand the job over to Royce, who is ready for everything in this world or the next." Philosophical discussion continued unabated. "Work

[18] Alice Freeman Palmer accepted the deanship of the women's department of the University of Chicago, but resigned in 1895.

a while at the library on the Browning business," Royce noted in his diary, "and get James, on the way home, into an argument on the external world, which we at last discussed by the gate, ankle deep in nasty, damp March snow." It was on the day after some such parley as this that James wrote the following letter, recording the things that he might have said. The burden of the complaint is that when Royce argues the Absolute from the finite individual he uses one logic, while when he argues the finite individual from the Absolute he uses another. In the first case he appeals to the *indivisibility* of the whole, and in the second case he proceeds to *divide* it!

[May 1895]

My dear Royce, —

I am always clearer (or less muddy) with pen than tongue, so here 's at you with some manuscript notes on our talk of yesternoon. I confess that my worm-on-the-hook despair came less from my assimilation of what you said than from the ease and assurance of your manner in saying it! If you had never been born, this trouble would not have come upon me.

The talk was in two parts:

(1) Ascent from particular cognitions to the necessity of a monistic All-Thought — call it *T;* (2) Descent from *T* to a pluralism of particular finite thoughts. (3) In this the general charge that occurs to me is that you play fast and loose with your whole and its parts: in (1), you refuse to let a term *B* be considered apart from *any* of the relations in which it can be known, and so monism is easily reached; in (2) you find no offense in letting terms drop cognitive relations with each other to any extent (the terms in question being thoughts), and so pluralism offers no difficulty.

(4) Now why don't you work the same rule both ways? Why is it that, if (when ascending) the knowledge of *A* must be insisted on as of *B*'s essence, and if I have no right to treat *B* at all without including *A* in what I say, you nevertheless (in descending) are so willing to let the several *A*'s, *B*'s, and *C*'s know so little either about each other or about the whole? Am I muddled? or are you inconsistent?

(5) Your fundamental plea is that the mutual knowledges of *A* and *B are T*'s consciousness of the pair of them. This consciousness

does not *produce, ab extra, A*'s knowledge of *B*, for example, but *is* all there is "to" either *A* or *A*'s knowledge.

(6) In what sense then can *A, B,* and *T,* with their several knowledges, possibly be distinct?

(7) In no sense, if *T* be a unit, for then they are only distinguished *by* it, not distinct from it. There is *then* no *A*-consciousness, no *B*-consciousness. There is only the *T*-consciousness of $(A + B)$, taken integrally and as such, a true psychic monism. Out of the consciousness of *A* as part of a pair, you can by no logical process get *A* as a part of the consciousness of a pair. The thought of a part is not the same with part of a thought.

(8) *Ergo,* your fundamental plea (see 5) cannot hold with *T* a monism, so long as *A* and *B* are distinct.

(9) But here my empiricism comes in. They *are* distinct, both from each other and from *T* — three different subjective facts. Neither knows *as* the other knows. *B*'s knowledge *can* be considered without mentioning *A*. Can *T*, then, be an aggregate and no unit, as $T = A + B$?

[Postscript] The contradiction is in your saying that the finite *B* can't be realized piecemeal if it has a diversity of "aspect," but must be integrally or not at all; and yet that the infinite self not only can be, but is, realized piecemeal all the time by us.[19]

[unsigned]

There is a considerable mass of marginalia and loose notes in James's handwriting from 1888 or earlier to 1899 or later, and bearing eloquent testimony to his prolonged brooding upon Royce's doctrine of the Absolute. Of these notes the most important was written in 1899.[20] It throws an interesting light on James's method of criticism. He argues that Royce first supposes facts which fall outside of human experience, and then introduces the Absolute to experience them, whereas a good idealist should have excluded such humanly unexperienced facts from the outset. In reply Royce argues elaborately that human experience *presupposes* facts which it cannot embrace. To which James rejoins that these alleged facts can

[19] For the inclusion of finite minds in a "superhuman" consciousness, *cf. P.U.*, 337, note.

[20] Reprinted, together with Royce's reply and W.J.'s rejoinder, as Appendix V.

be embraced within human experience; or, if not, then they disprove the idealistic hypothesis. It is clear that if James is going to be an idealist (which is doubtful), he is going to be an idealist of the humanistic or empirical type; and that he regards idealism as an hypothesis which is worth trying, rather than as a principle which is logically coercive. It is clear, furthermore, that he is now carrying the war into the enemy's country; and accusing Royce — the heavily armed and heavily armored dialectician — of breaches of logic! From this time forth he cites Royce's arguments for purposes of exposition and he has ceased to fear them. He has ceased, in fact, even to be impressed by them. Royce is the romanticist, more to be admired for his imagination and feeling, or for the volume and originality of his speculative effusion, than for the rigor of his thought. The following paragraph is from a letter to Professor Dickinson S. Miller, — in which he praises the latter's judgment of Royce: —

"Since teaching *The Conception of God* I have come to perceive what I did n't trust myself to believe before, that looseness of thought is R.'s *essential* element. He *wants* it. There is n't a tight joint in his system; not one. And yet I thought that a mind that could talk me blind and black and numb on mathematics and logic, and whose favorite recreation is works on those subjects, must necessarily conceal closeness and exactitudes of ratiocination that I had n't the wit to find out. But no! he is the Rubens of philosophy. Richness, abundance, boldness, color, but a sharp contour never, and never any *perfection*. But is n't fertility better than perfection?" [21]

[21] Jan. 31, 1899; *L.W.J.*, II, 86

LI

JOSIAH ROYCE: FRIENDLY OPPONENTS (1899–1910)

THE engagement with Royce described in the last chapter, in which so much ammunition was expended on both sides, took place in March 1899, just after Royce had returned from his first Gifford Lectures at the University of Aberdeen. In the following year these lectures were published as the first volume of Royce's *World and the Individual.* The second volume appeared in 1901, and the two together constituted Royce's most important systematic work. Its publication evoked from James a general estimate, or reassessment, of Royce's merits and defects as a philosopher. He is the admired but no longer formidable representative of a rival philosophy. He is the author of "the most persuasive arguments in favor of a concrete individual Soul of the world," with which James is acquainted; and makes "by far the manliest of the post-Hegelian attempts to read some empirically apprehensible content into the notion of our relation to the absolute mind." [1] James read the first volume of *The World and the Individual* while convalescing in France, at Costebelle, Hyères, and at Richet's neighboring Château de Carqueiranne, and it was from here that he wrote his most immediate impressions, first, to Mrs. Glendower Evans, a friend of Royce and herself a sympathetic student of his philosophy: —

"I have, in the last days, gone so far as to read Royce's book from cover to cover, a task made easy by the familiarity of the thought, as well as the flow of the style. It is a charming production, — it is odd that the adjectives 'charming' and 'pretty' emerge so strongly to characterize my impression. R. has got himself much more organically together than he ever did before, the result being, in its *ensemble,* a highly individual and original *Weltanschauung,* well fitted to be the storm-centre of much discussion, and to form a well-spring of suggestion and education for the next generation of

[1] *V.R.E.,* 454, note; *P.U.,* 184.

thought in America. But it makes youthful anew the paradox of philosophy — so trivial and so ponderous at once. The book leaves a total effect on you like a picture — a summary impression of charm and grace as light as a breath; yet to bring forth that light nothing less than Royce's enormous organic temperament and technical equipment, and preliminary attempts, were required. The book consolidates an impression which I have never before got except by glimpses, that Royce's system is through and through to be classed as a light production. It is a charming, romantic sketch; and it is only by handling it after the manner of a sketch, keeping it within sketch technique, that R. can make it very impressive. In the few places where he tries to grip and reason close, the effect is rather disastrous." [2]

A similar impression is described in a letter to Dickinson S. Miller, which is followed by an exchange of letters with Royce himself, who had apparently visited James at Costebelle about the middle of January.

"We enjoyed Royce's visit very much, and yesterday I finished reading his book, which I find perfectly charming as a composition, though as far as cogent reasoning goes, it leaks at every joint. . . . To me . . . the book has brought about a curious settlement in my way of classing Royce. In spite of the great technical freight he carries, and his extraordinary mental vigor, he belongs essentially among the lighter skirmishers of philosophy. A sketcher and popularizer, not a pile-driver, foundation-layer, or wall-builder. Within his class, of course, he is simply magnificent. It all goes with his easy temperament and rare good-nature in discussion. The subject is not really vital to him, it is just fancy-work. All the same I do hope that this book and its successor will prove a great ferment in our philosophic schools. Only with schools and living masters can philosophy *bloom* in a country, in a generation." [3]

Costebelle, Jan. 21, 1900

Dear Josiah, —

I am proud of Irving Street, that *punctum saliens* of the globe! The day before yesterday I finished *The World and the Individual,* having read practically every word of it from cover to cover. My

[2] Jan. 17, 1900; *L.W.J.*, II, 113–4.
[3] Jan. 18, 1900; *L.W.J.*, II, 116.

predominating impression is of its *charming* character in being a presentation so light and flowing, of a complex and weighty *Weltanschauung*. Its ease, its unfailing clearness, its sincerity and affability so over-spread its subtlety and intricacy as to disguise them. All this is said without the slightest prejudice to my hard-heartedness in the matter of belief, for I find the arguments you use as incoercive as ever, and the Absolute still remains for me a hypothesis to be tested by its uses, rather than a doctrine to be submitted to for its credentials. But I must say that it gives me the profoundest pleasure to see how delightfully you have got yourself together in this book. It is far more of an organic whole than any of your previous statements. I don't see how you can fail, from now onward, to be recognized as the champion of absolute idealism for Anglo-Saxondom, and the one thoroughly original leader of that whole school of thought. The Absolute himself must get great fun out of being you.[4] My wife can bear testimony to the cooings of rapture with which the reading of my daily stint of your pages was interrupted. I confine myself to this total impression, and don't at present venture on any criticisms of detail, not being well enough for polemics. But the Absolute, I am rejoiced to inform you, seems to be finding the purpose of his thought better fulfilled by turning his selective will more favorably in my direction than for three months past, and if I ever do get able to settle down to that second course of Gifford Lectures I will run you as close a second as I can.[5] A few days after you left, my whole nervous condition took a sudden upward turn. For ten days now I have been practically out of doors all day long. The climate here is magnificent, and the progress, though not exactly rapid, is uninterrupted. My inner mood has changed from apprehension to aggression and outer conditions have fallen in most felicitously. Seth's committee has simply not counted this year, and dated my appointment from next. Eliot writes that I can stay another year, if I need to, *und zwar* on half-pay, which I confess I never expected. . . .

I thank you for your good letter which it was a pleasure to receive, and hope that your second course is reeling itself off even more satis-

[4] "The Absolute must enjoy being *him*, less so being me" (W.J. to J. M. Baldwin, Jan. 9, 1900).

[5] On Feb. 8, feeling less well, James wrote, "It would be too careless on the part of the Absolute to leave your lectures undestroyed by mine, but it looks as though the old sinner might be going to do it."

factorily and easily than the first. After all, it 's the books that count, not the lectures. . . . Always affectionately yours,

WM. JAMES

R.M.S. Oceanic, Feb. 7, 1900

Dear James, —

Your letter was a great joy to me. Best of all was the news of your improvement. Very grateful was your goodness in speaking so kindly of my book, which, to me, as I hope, will soon have faded like streaks, etc., into the infinite azure, etc., although I am still pretty near to it, and still more or less concerned in its fate. Your approval, in just the sense in which you gave it, is worth more to me than that of anybody else.

My catalogue of engagements has been: Aberdeen, regular lectures; lecture to Philosophical Society at Edinburgh, Jan. 20; ditto, St. Andrews, Jan. 27; lecture as Honorary President of Philosophical Society at Glasgow, Feb. 2; two extra lectures (one prepared *ad hoc*), at Aberdeen; dinners; teas; letters; good behavior (so far as I was capable) as guest in people's houses during my visits away from Aberdeen; and, finally, a visit, from last Saturday until yesterday, with Dr. Carpenter in Oxford (where I met Caird, Stout, dons that I do and dons that I don't know); a lecture at Oxford; and last this steamer homeward bound. All went well enough. Everywhere they ask about you, and regard me only as the advance agent of the true American Theory. *That* they await from you. I received endless kindness; but they have still far more, I am sure, in store for you if only fate would permit them to get at you.

This by way of mere report and for the instant, farewell. My warmest greeting to Mrs. James, — affectionately, yours always,

JOSIAH ROYCE

Nauheim, Sept. 8, 1900

[To Royce] We are both to blame for not writing to each other for so many months. You have the excuse of over-industry in other directions, I that of over-idleness in every direction. I find that one has about as much "time" under the one régime as under the other. But why could n't you send me your *"Immortality"* lecture?[6] — that

[6] Royce's Ingersoll Lecture on "The Conception of Immortality" was delivered in 1899 and published in 1900.

was an unkind cut! I suppose you are grinding away all summer at your second Gifford volume, and I hope you 'll be able to see it through before the term begins. . . . I wish you could get a year off and have some rest. Write and tell me all about it, and how the boys are getting on. As for me . . . I will say nothing except that it has been a sadly disappointing year, and the end is not yet. Do my darnedest, and I have only succeeded in executing four lectures for next winter. . . . The worst of it is that both courses are fully ripe inside of me, and I only lack strength to write them down. Love to you all.

W. J.

Cambridge, Sept. 12, 1900

Dear James, —

I suppose that I have seemed hopelessly unfaithful, but the fact is that the second half-year's work, on my return, proved very exacting, giving me, towards the end, not indeed any serious physical tire, but a sense of being driven, a discomfort with the sight and presence of classes and responsibilities, that left me, at the close, morally tired, — mildly aboulic, so to speak. . . .

Of you I have heard frequently, now from this and now from that source, and I have thought, I assure you, despite my silence, a great deal. The year to come will be very lonesome without you, and my own interest in Harvard is more bound up with my associations with you than it is with any one other interest. Philosophy I love for itself, and life for its general meaning. But Harvard originally meant to me *you,* and the old association remains still the deepest. I shall go on, and lecture; but the Department can have its real meaning to me personally only when you are here. And I ought the more plainly to say that, because I am so poor a letter writer, and so silent, that you must think me less bound up in you than I always am. My defect as a letter writer is simply a result of my writing so much otherwise. The writing centres rebel at anything but lectures and books. But the heart has its own life too, and I miss you deeply.

. . . The Cubans . . . gave a very weird seeming to Harvard Square.[7] . . . "Against the fence" leaned not only the mucker and the jobless workingman, but also the wide-trousered little squat

[7] During the summer of 1900 a group of Cuban school-teachers had attended the Harvard Summer School.

swarthy Cuban, destroying cigarettes, and gesticulating, while his loud conversational voice, harsh and shrill, often made the Square seem like a bird-store when the parrots are lively. The Cuban women were far more picturesque. They sat in rows in the evenings, after supper, beneath the tablets of Memorial Hall. Their chaperons, and their visitors, male and female, clustered about them. . . . Cummings, as you know, has joined the company of the saints, and is to be Edward Everett Hale's successor as a pastor. He will, however, still live amongst us, and the neighborhood gains in sanctity daily. Lanman, as I learn, has so impressed some of his Ceylonese friends with his work as editor of Buddhist Scriptures, that a shrine has been erected in his honor somewhere out there, and he is in the way to be worshipped with special rites! . . . I visited Norton [8] at Ashfield, and spoke at the Ashfield dinner this August. Stanley Hall was there, took me driving, was almost affectionate in his friendliness, and stroked my fur down till it gleamed in the sunlight. Norton himself was the perfect host that he is bound to be, and I came away quite overcome with the dignity of Ashfield. And now when you consider once more your neighbors, as these familiar names recall them to you, does n't it make you feel almost ready to get back to Irving Street? Where else are to be found such judges, clergymen, apotheosized Orientalists? . . .

I came rather near deciding, the other day, upon closing vacation by a coasting voyage by steamer as far as Galveston. I almost decided upon taking the Mallory Line boat of September 1. Considerations of economy, rather than anything else, finally led me to take a shorter trip, by the Clyde Line to Charleston and directly back. Had I followed out the first plan, I should have reached Galveston, if at all, along with the hurricane. Thus we see that no man can escape destiny.

Well, this gossip must close now. Much affection goes with it. I wish that real cheer could go also. But that I suppose depends on your luck. I hope that you do as well as possible, and that the Gifford Lectures prosper. My best regards to Mrs. James. Mrs. Royce greets you both heartily, and with best wishes. Yours lovingly,

JOSIAH ROYCE

[8] Rev. Edward Cummings and Prof. Charles Eliot Norton lived on Irving St., while Prof. Charles R. Lanman lived near by on Farrar St.

Nauheim, Sept. 26, 1900[9]

Beloved Royce, —

Great was my, was *our* pleasure in receiving your long and delightful letter last night. Like the lioness in Æsop's fable, you give birth to one young one only in the year, but that one is a lion. I give birth mainly to guinea-pigs in the shape of postcards; but despite such diversities of epistolary expression, the heart of each of us is in the right place. I need not say, my dear old boy, how touched I am at your expressions of affection, or how it pleases me to hear that you have missed me. I too miss you profoundly. I do not find in the hotel waiters, chambermaids and bath-attendants with whom my lot is chiefly cast, that unique mixture of erudition, originality, profundity and vastness, and human wit and leisureliness, by accustoming me to which during all these years you have spoilt me for inferior kinds of intercourse. You are still the centre of my gaze, the pole of my mental magnet. When I write, 't is with one eye on the page, and one on you. When I compose my Gifford lectures mentally, 't is with the design exclusively of overthrowing your system, and ruining your peace. I lead a parasitic life upon you, for my highest flight of ambitious ideality is to become your conqueror, and go down into history as such, you and I rolled in one another's arms and silent (or rather loquacious still) in one last death-grapple of an embrace. How then, O my dear Royce, can I forget you, or be contented out of your close neighborhood? Different as our minds are, yours has nourished mine, as no other social influence ever has, and in converse with you I have always felt that my life was being lived importantly. Our minds, too, are not different in the *Object* which they envisage. It is the whole paradoxical physico-moral-spiritual Fatness, of which most people single out some skinny fragment, which we both cover with our eye. We "aim at him generally" — and most others don't. I don't believe that we shall dwell apart forever, though our formulas may.

Home and Irving Street look very near when seen through these few winter months, and tho' it is still doubtful what I may be able to do in College, for social purposes I shall be available for probably numerous years to come. . . . Your Irving Street . . . gossip was *köstlich*. . . . Love to you all,

W. J.

[9] Reprinted, with omissions and additions, from *L.W.J.*, II, 135–8.

The following brief but spirited messages to Royce from Edinburgh announce the beginning and the end of James's first series of Gifford Lectures: —

May 17 [1901]

Well! I made the plunge yesterday, and have come out unscathed. The audience was ultra-sympathetic, and laughed whenever I uttered a polysyllabic word. I feel all right and doubt not, Heaven helping its champion, that I shall pull through successfully. It is a Rubicon passed, and parts me from a hideous phase of existence. I hope the Royces all are well.

June 18, 1901

The bloody dog is dead! — *i.e.,* the lectures delivered, and I safe and sound and tougher than when I came, so that I begin to look forward to a long future career of edification of my kind by pious precept and noble example. I know that this will please you almost as much as it does myself. We go straight to Nauheim, and thence Aug. 31st home by a Leyland steamer. Pray write me a line . . . telling me how you and yours have got through the year. I 'm afraid you 've overworked.

In 1903–1904 James gave a metaphysical seminary in which he defended pluralism against monistic idealism. On a certain occasion, when he had intended to criticize Royce, he was ill and had Royce fill his place. The latter, quite equal to the occasion, went to the class armed with James's copy of his *World and the Individual,* from which he read aloud some of James's most spirited marginal notes, such as "what an ass of a realist," interjected opposite a passage in which Royce had written, "Our realist . . . may hereupon say, etc." If Royce proceeded further he read, "I cannot imagine what is gained by Royce's vague and floundering account" — "Bah! What silly quibbling" — "Blind and confused." Especially interesting are James's vigorous marginal rejoinders to Royce's attack upon realism. Royce's attack turned on construing the "independent reals" of realism as entirely *unrelated* to knowledge. James felt that Royce was constantly guilty of abstractionism, of failure to see that in experience things are both independent and related, or dependent in one

respect and independent in another.[10] He complained, too, of Royce's "vagueness." The author seemed to him to be forever referring to psychological processes such as "purpose," "idea," etc., without describing them; and to be mixing experience and dialectic. Finally, it was impossible that James should be satisfied with Royce's ultimate moral and religious conclusions. To subordinate evil to good, as in his monistic world he is compelled to do, Royce alludes to "the highest good, which consists in the overcoming of sorrow." This "overcoming" cannot mean the elimination of sorrow, for nothing is eliminated in Royce's world; it must mean, in some sense, living with sorrow, even when sorrow is unmitigated or untransmuted. How, then, is it "overcome"? James here wrote in the margin, "By 'grinning and bearing,' as Royce explicitly admits to me today (Nov. 1, 1902) to be all that he need be supposed to mean."

James's copy of *The World and the Individual* was a presentation copy from the author, and contains the following epitaph written in Royce's hand and pasted on the inside of the front cover: —

✠

Ut dicant quum veniunt
Angelorum chori
Deus sit propitius
Huic potatori

Hier liegt begraben
Josias Royce
Aus Grace Valley

Obsthändler und Damenphilosoph

Er starb an einem Ueberfluss lauter Beredsamkeit[11]
Von der Wissenschaft zwar nicht besonders vermisst
Von seinen treuen Jüngern zwar niemals verstanden
aber
Von seinen Gläubigern herzlich beklagt

---

[10] *Cf.* also, *P.U.*, 61.

[11] It is evident that Royce himself would have enjoyed Dickinson Miller's remark that "Royce finds lecturing the easiest form of breathing."

Siste Viator!
Damit du diese Lehre, durch seine Erfahrung
Reichlich bestätigt
Nicht wieder vergisst

Mensch, bezahle deine Schulden | *Und du musst noch manchmal borgen*
Lang ist noch des Lebens Bahn | *Wie du's hast so oft gethan.*[12]

In 1907 James published his *Pragmatism.* From the earliest days Royce had built bridges from James's empirical and naturalistic voluntarism to a voluntarism of his own absolutistic type,[13] but James was not to be lured across. The *Pragmatism* seemed to destroy every such bridge, and after its appearance there was a new note of disapproval in Royce's criticism. He felt that James had been flippant, and that, saint though he might be, he had provided weapons and ammunition for the unrighteous. The following fragment must have been written by Royce in 1907, soon after the appearance of *Pragmatism* — the characteristic written aftermath of the customary verbal encounter: —

"I hope that my criticism, in answer to your question, did not seem austere or too blind, this afternoon. A man's personal tone is his own. Yours is a most effective one. I have no wish to urge any subjective attitude of mine regarding your method in your *Prag-*

[12] The opening stanza is taken from the mediæval drinking song, "Meum est propositum." There is a translation of the song in Stephen E. De Vere's *Grave and Gay*, 1883. The closing stanza is from Heine's "Mensch, verspotte nicht den Teufel," of which there are many translations. The remainder, composed by Royce himself, may be translated as follows: —

Here lies buried
Josiah Royce
of Grace Valley

Fruit Vendor and Ladies' Philosopher

He died from an excess of loud garrulity
Not, indeed, greatly missed by science
Nor ever, forsooth, understood by his faithful disciples
But sincerely lamented by his creditors

Stay, traveler!
That this lesson, so amply confirmed by his experience,
You may never in future forget

"Grace Valley" is, of course, "Grass Valley," Royce's Californian birthplace.

[13] *Cf., e.g.*, "The Eternal and the Practical," *Philos. Rev.*, XIII (1904).

matism book. And all that I have said in an appreciative tone about the book is sincere, — heartily so. As to the one criticism, I can only say: Consider your own manner and method in the 'Dilemma of Determinism' as well as in the *Varieties of Religious Experience,* and the rest. It *does* seem to me that then there was no danger of having the people regard the discussion just as some of them now do the *Pragmatism, viz.,* as in large part a splendid joke — a brilliant *reductio ad absurdum* of all attempts at serious grappling with any philosophical issue. This was in no sense your intent; but, as a fact, the externals, the mere setting and style of the *Pragmatism,* tend to produce on the man in the street this impression — an impression that those earlier papers would not make, and that you in no sense mean these to make.

Meanwhile, no criticism of mine is hostile. Life is a sad long road, sometimes. Every friendly touch and word must be preciously guarded. I prize everything that you say or do, whether I criticize or not."

In December 1907, James read before the American Philosophical Association at Cornell University a brief paper entitled "The Meaning of the Word Truth," which he afterwards had printed as a leaflet for distribution among his friends. Royce's copy came back to James, its margins overflowing with unfavorable comments.[14] James's theory of truth was correct, he thought, as far as it went, but it did not go far enough — it was only "a scrap of a theory of truth," not "the whole truth about truth."

Royce's dissent made him only the more eager to express his affection. His *Philosophy of Loyalty,* appearing in 1908, contained the following passage in the Preface: "I have had to engage in a certain polemic regarding the problem of truth, — a polemic directed against certain opinions recently set forth by one of the dearest of my friends, and by one of the most loyal of men; my teacher for a while in my youth; my honored colleague for many years, — Professor William James. . . . Had I not very early in my work as a student known Professor James, I doubt whether any poor book of mine would ever have been written, — least of all the present one. What I personally owe him, then, I most heartily and affectionately acknowledge. But if he and I do not see truth in the same light at present, we still do well, I think, as friends, each to speak his mind

[14] Reproduced below, Appendix VI.

as we walk by the way, and then to wait until some other light shines for our eyes." [15]

To this James replied: —

Cambridge, April 11, 1908

Dear Royce, —

I am quite overwhelmed by the oriental hyperbole of your page *x* to me-wards. That the world owes your books to *me* is too awfully gracious a saying! But I thank you for the beauty of spirit shown and for the honor. I am sorry you say we don't see truth in the same light, for the only thing we see differently is the Absolute, and surely such a trifle as that is not a thing for two gentlemen to be parted by. I believe that at the bottom of *your* heart *we* see things more alike than any pair of philosophers extant! I thank you anyhow from the bottom of mine. Affectionately yours,

WM. JAMES

In the second half of the year 1909–1910 Royce gave a course on "Contemporary Philosophical Issues," in which it was a part of his task to elucidate James's metaphysics. The latter was in Cambridge, and on the eve of his last and unsuccessful quest for health he sent these suggestions to his neighbor and interpreter: —

[March 23, 1910]

Dear Royce, —

Pray tell your students this: that if the "idea" and the reality form two worlds so distinct as to exclude *all* mediating fact, there is no sense in talking of them as knower and known. Even if the idea should copy the fact exactly, they would be simply duplicates, and neither true of the other. Your Absolute might then mediate so as to make either "true" of the other, if he used it as its substitute and representative. It would work *like* the other, for him, in all operations where likeness was important. But so naked a world as this is an unreal hypothesis. The only realities of which men ever wish to have true ideas are parts of this world of which their ideas are also a part, and between them other parts mediate, which, yielding evidence and verification, *are* the workings, and *constitute* the truth or falsehood, of the ideas. What 's the use of treating the subject in a

[15] *Philosophy of Loyalty*, x–xi.

vacuum? You can always add your Absolute to the full concrete world and say "just these workings are what it (or he) means by an idea truly or falsely representing."

I am glad it 's up to you now to defend my doctrine against the stupidity of others. I don't believe that the fault has been with the inconceivable obscurity of my exposition. I seem to see more and more that it lies with the unfamiliarity to readers of the genuinely concrete way of looking at things.

Pray don't forget Franklin's anecdote. "Thermo-dynamics" (like "epistemology") is too elegant and elevated a thing to have anything to do with culinary operations![16]

The prolonged struggle with Royce had subjected James to a severe discipline. He had not evaded the issues which Royce raised. Even when they tormented him for years, he fought them out, and in so doing greatly strengthened his own intellectual tissues. From Royce, furthermore, he learned that no theory of knowledge can be considered seriously unless it somehow links the idea with its intended object, and so prescribes the evidence which is relevant to its truth or falsity. Unwilling to accept Royce's speculative explanation, he was forced to find an empirical one of his own, and in so doing was led to develop in its epistemological bearings that aspect of interconnectedness and continuity which his psychology had already ascribed to experience.[17] But long before the end James had ceased to fear Royce's dialectics, or even to look to him for light. He regarded him as an outstanding exponent of "noetic monism" — a sublime, vague, religiously toned philosophy, which, however, fails to explain finitude or evil, contradicts experience, and denies freedom. "In its essential features," wrote James at the close of his life, "Spinoza was its first prophet, Fichte and Hegel were its middle exponents, and Josiah Royce is its best contemporary representative."[18]

It is impossible to understand James's relations with the Kantian-idealistic movement of his time unless we take into account the

[16] Benjamin Franklin used to tell the anecdote of how when he was once electrocuting a turkey he made the mistake of setting up the current through his own body. W. C. Bruce, *Benjamin Franklin Self-Revealed*, 1917, II, 9.

[17] In 1905 James spoke of his essays in "radical empiricism" as a "pragmatic treatment of the problems of knowledge" by which he got "rid of the need of an absolute of the Roycean type." (*E.R.E.*, 195.) For W.J.'s insistence on the importance of the subject, *cf. C.E.R.*, 481.

[18] *S.P.P.*, 137, note, 138.

peculiar prestige which that movement enjoyed. It claimed a sort of apostolic succession, after Leibnitz, in the line of the great philosophers that sprang from Plato. This claim was so widely acknowledged that in the last decades of the nineteenth century philosophers of other schools, especially in England and America, felt themselves on the defensive. This state of mind accounts not only for the time which it took James to throw off the yoke, but for the violence with which he did so. It accounts for the temper of such passages as the following, written in 1899: "I am getting less and less to respect the German transcendentalist movement which has overrun our race of late, and more and more to believe in the development of the old English lines — at any rate in regard to method. And before I die, I hope to say a positive word in that direction." Similarly, James wrote in 1906 to F. C. S. Schiller: "Your article . . . is, I think, the most completely effective thing you 've written, and is the *first* thing to put Absolutism squarely on the defensive, as the little subjective fad which it really is in spite of its aristocratic lineage." [19]

But towards the end of his life emotions of respect and disrespect tended to give place to a more even tone. Once it was deflated and its arrogant pretensions discredited, absolute idealism took its place among the major hypotheses from which the philosopher must make his choice.

[19] The allusion was to an article by Schiller in *Mind, N.S.*, XV (1906), entitled "The Ambiguity of Truth."

ABBREVIATIONS

I. WORKS OF WILLIAM JAMES

Principles of Psychology, N. Y., 1890	*Principles*
Psychology. Briefer Course, N. Y., 1892	*P. B. C.*
The Will to Believe, and Other Essays in Popular Philosophy, N. Y., 1897	*W. B.*
Human Immortality: Two Supposed Objections to the Doctrine, Boston, 1898	*H. I.*
Talks to Teachers on Psychology: and to Students on Some of Life's Ideals, N. Y., 1899	*T. T.*
The Varieties of Religious Experience: A Study in Human Nature, N. Y., 1902	*V. R. E.*
Pragmatism: A New Name for Some Old Ways of Thinking, N. Y., 1907	*Pragm.*
The Meaning of Truth, A Sequel to "Pragmatism," N. Y., 1909	*M. T.*
A Pluralistic Universe: Hibbert Lectures on the Present Situation to Philosophy, N. Y., 1909	*P. U.*
[1] *Some Problems of Philosophy: A Beginning of an Introduction to Philosophy,* N. Y., 1911	*S. P. P.*
[1] *Memories and Studies,* N. Y., 1911	*M. S.*
[1] *Essays in Radical Empiricism,* N. Y., 1912	*E. R. E.*
[1] *Collected Essays and Reviews,* N. Y., 1920	*C. E. R.*

II. OTHER WORKS, RELATING TO JAMES

Henry James, *A Small Boy and Others,* N. Y., 1913	*S. B. O.*
Henry James, *Notes of a Son and Brother,* N. Y., 1914	*N. S. B.*
Henry James, Letters of, edited by Percy Lubbock, N. Y. 1920	*L. H. J.*
William James, Letters of, edited by his son Henry James, Boston, 1920	*L. W. J.*
Henry James, The Literary Remains of the Late, edited by William James, Boston, 1885	*L.R.H.J.*
R. B. Perry, *Annotated Bibliography of the Writings of William James,* N. Y., 1920	*Bg.*

[1] Posthumous

III. FAMILY NAMES

William James (1842–1910)	W. J.
Henry James (1811–1882), father of W. J.	H. J.[1]
Henry James (1843–1916), brother of W. J.	H. J.[2]
Henry James (1879–), son of W. J.	H. J.[3]
Garth Wilkinson James (1845–1883), brother of W. J.	G. W. J.
Robertson James (1846–1910), brother of W. J.	R. J.
Alice James (1848–1892), sister of W. J.	A. J.
Alice Howe Gibbens James (1849–1922), wife of W. J.	A. H. J.
William James (1882–), son of W. J.	W. J.[3]
Margaret Mary James (1887–), daughter of W. J.	M. M. J.
Alexander Robertson James (1890–), son of W. J.	A. R. J.