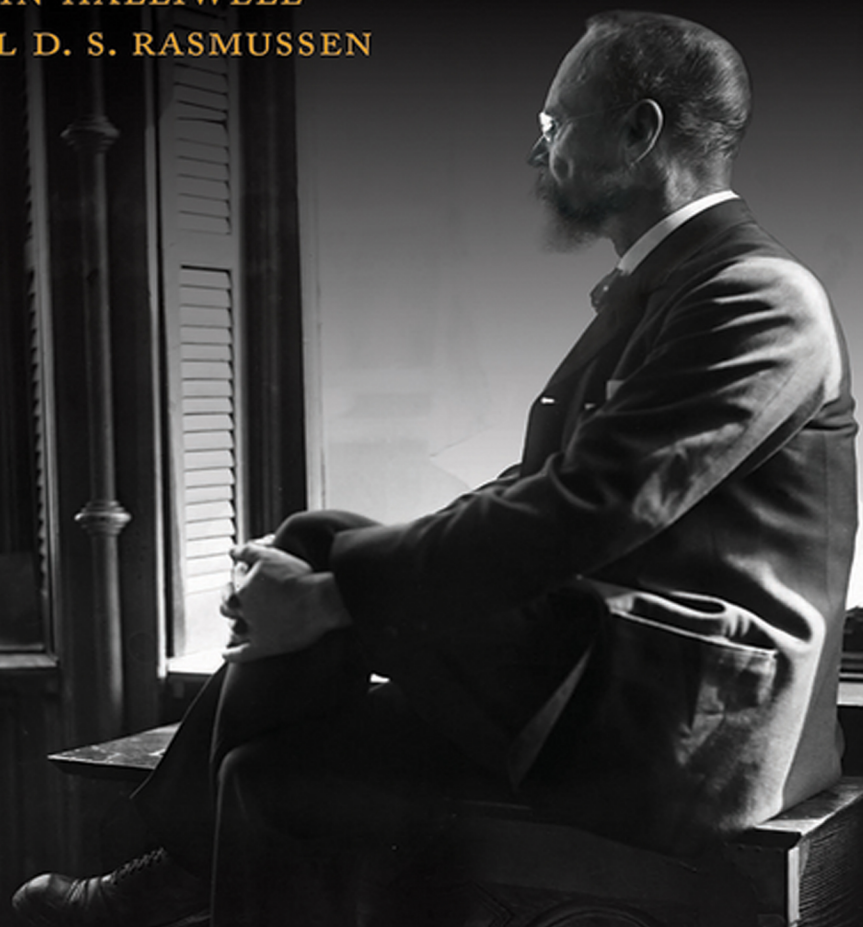


*edited by*

MARTIN HALLIWELL

& JOEL D. S. RASMUSSEN



# WILLIAM JAMES AND THE TRANSATLANTIC CONVERSATION

Pragmatism, Pluralism, & Philosophy of Religion

OXFORD

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CONVERSATION



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*Pragmatism, Pluralism, and Philosophy of Religion*

EDITED BY MARTIN HALLIWELL  
AND JOEL D. S. RASMUSSEN

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# Contents

<i>Notes on the Contributors</i>	ix
----------------------------------	----

Introduction: William James and the Transatlantic Conversation <i>Martin Halliwell and Joel D. S. Rasmussen</i>	1
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## PART I: JAMES'S INTELLECTUAL CONTEXTS

1. The Reception of William James in Continental Europe <i>Jaime Nubiola</i>	15
2. William James, Ecumenical Protestantism, and the Dynamics of Secularization <i>David A. Hollinger</i>	31
3. Religion, Sociology, and Psychology: William James and the Re-enchantment of the World <i>Richard H. King</i>	49
4. William James, the French Tradition, and the Incomplete Transposition of the Spiritual into the Aesthetic <i>Barbara Loerzer</i>	65
5. Vastations and Prosthetics: Henry James, Sr. and the Transatlantic Education of William and Henry James <i>Peter Kuryla</i>	81
6. Morbid and Positive Thinking: William James, Psychology, and Illness <i>Martin Halliwell</i>	97
7. Encountering the Smashing Projectile: William James on John Stuart Mill and the Woman Question <i>Leslie Butler</i>	115

## PART II: THE PHILOSOPHY OF PLURALISM

8. <i>A Pluralistic Universe</i> a Century Later: Rationality, Pluralism, and Religion <i>David C. Lamberth</i>	133
---	-----

9. William James, <i>A Pluralistic Universe</i> , and the Ancient Quarrel between Philosophy and Poetry <i>Joel D. S. Rasmussen</i>	151
10. James's Critique of Absolute Idealism in <i>A Pluralistic Universe</i> <i>Michael R. Slater</i>	167
11. Jamesian Pragmatic Pluralism and the Problem of God <i>Sami Pihlström</i>	183
12. Growing up Zig-Zag: Reassessing the Transatlantic Legacy of William James <i>Jeremy Carrette</i>	199
<i>Bibliography</i>	219
<i>Index</i>	229

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# Introduction: William James and the Transatlantic Conversation

MARTIN HALLIWELL AND JOEL D. S. RASMUSSEN

The genesis of *William James and the Transatlantic Conversation* was the twin centenary of the death of the American psychologist and philosopher William James in 1910 and an important moment in the transatlantic exchange of ideas, when James delivered his 1908 Hibbert Lectures at Manchester College, Oxford, published as *A Pluralistic Universe* in 1909. This ground-breaking lecture series built on James's more famous Gifford Lectures in Edinburgh, published as *The Varieties of Religious Experience* in 1902, and it represented the clearest point of contact between American pragmatism and its reception in the United Kingdom particularly, but also in Europe more generally. In the letter James received from Lawrence Piersall Jacks in November 1907 inviting him to deliver the Hibbert Lectures, Jacks commented that, following James's publication of *Pragmatism* earlier in that same year, the philosophical movement was being discussed "in all the Oxford lecture rooms".<sup>1</sup> Yet, celebrated as James was in the first decade of the twentieth century, he was not without his critics. In 1908 Bertrand Russell published a review essay of William James's *Pragmatism* with the gently teasing title, "Transatlantic 'Truth'". And in his critique, the British philosopher marshals what James himself acknowledges as Russell's typical wit and dialectical subtlety to deem James's pragmatist conception of truth "a failure".<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Lawrence Piersall Jacks to James, 10 Nov. 1907 (bMS Am 1092, #439), repr. in "The Text of *A Pluralistic Universe*", in William James, *A Pluralistic Universe*, ed. Fredson Bowers and Ignas K. Skrupskelis (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1977), 213–14 n. 2.

<sup>2</sup> Bertrand Russell, "Transatlantic 'Truth'", *Albany Review*, 2/10 (Jan. 1908), 410.

Whether or not Russell's philosophical criticisms hit home (something James vigorously denied<sup>3</sup>), the very title of his essay is notable with respect to the present volume, for with his title Russell implies that there is something decidedly American about James's conception of truth as interest-laden and cashed out dynamically in human conversation. "Transatlantic" on Russell's usage simply means "over there in America" (with the wry implication, made explicit in the essay itself, that what passes for true "over there in America" is philosophically inadequate as a conception of truth). By contrast, the sense of the term "transatlantic" operative in this volume is a very different one to Russell's usage, shaped as it is by a body of thought on transatlanticism that emerged in the late 1990s and has led to a number of conferences, publications, and the formation of the Transatlantic Studies Association in 2002. Scholars working in this paradigm have attempted to remap national boundaries and to trace the various routes that ideas, beliefs, cultures, commodities, and ideologies take. In Louis Menand's *The Metaphysical Club* (2001), for example, the experience of European travel and points of European intellectual contact are arguably as important for shaping the philosophical horizon of the group of influential turn-of-the-twentieth-century thinkers—William James, Charles Sanders Peirce, John Dewey, and Oliver Wendell Holmes—as the crucible of the American Civil War or the growth of cultural centres on the East Coast. Rather than identifying something inherently "American" in the experimentalism and democratic reach of pragmatism, as James Kloppenberg has recently done, transatlanticism looks both ways across the Atlantic and connects to a much wider circuit of European ideas and languages which have been transformed and remoulded by transatlantic travel and migration: what Walter Lippmann, two months before the United States joined the First World War, called a "profound web of interest which joins together the western world", a community joined in "their deepest needs and their deepest purposes".<sup>4</sup>

A parallel to our contemporary receptivity to transatlanticism can be discerned at the end of the nineteenth century, when conversations across the Atlantic were being reinitiated following the cultural distancing of the United States from Europe between the early national period and the Civil War. If thinkers like Ralph Waldo Emerson in his 1837 address "The American Scholar" were calling for a distance from "the courtly muses of Europe" in an effort to galvanize the "spirit of the American freeman", then after the Civil War a re-engagement with European ideas and cultures in all their diversity reappeared on the national agenda, particularly in the cosmopolitan circles

<sup>3</sup> See William James, "Two English Critics", in *The Meaning of Truth* [1909], ed. Fredson Bowers and Ignas K. Skrupskelis (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1975), 146–53.

<sup>4</sup> James Kloppenberg, "James's *Pragmatism* and American Culture, 1907–2007", in *100 Years of Pragmatism: William James's Revolutionary Philosophy*, ed. John J. Stuhr (Bloomington, Ind.: Indiana University Press, 2010), 7–40. Walter Lippman, *New Republic* (Feb. 1917), 60.

of Boston and across the Charles River at Harvard University.<sup>5</sup> William James in the realms of psychology, philosophy, and aesthetics (along with his brother Henry James in the spheres of fiction and drama) benefited from this new receptivity to Europe, travelling there frequently from an early age, mainly to great European cities in France, Italy, Germany, Switzerland, and Britain, but also gaining some experience of small-town and rural locations. Europe meant many things to William and, as this volume shows, shaped the pluralistic strands of his mature thought. So rather than pursuing Bertrand Russell's reading of "transatlantic truth" as characterizing some peculiar feature of intellectual life "over there in America", we should inflect transatlanticism with a Jamesian conception of truth as a dynamic process of "verification", as constituted in its workings, and as kaleidoscopic: "Our account of truth", he writes, "is an account of truths in the plural".<sup>6</sup> Consistent with this Jamesian account, "transatlantic" functions in this volume as a dialogical and, typically, pluralistic intellectual space, indicative of the fact that William James is at one and the same time thoroughly cosmopolitan and yet, as many scholars have noted, as American a member of the philosophical conversation as one will ever encounter.

Without wishing to deny that there might be some recognizable spirit of American philosophy which pulses through James's thought, the essays in this collection share the assumption that his thinking was contoured from the very beginning by his experience of growing up, travelling, and corresponding back and forth across the Atlantic Ocean.<sup>7</sup> Born in New York City in 1842 into a wealthy and cosmopolitan family, James grew up "zig-zag", to use Robert Richardson's apt phrase, as developed in the opening and closing chapters of this volume.<sup>8</sup> James's intellectual commerce with Europe and European intellectual life continued throughout his life, beginning with his early exposure to European ideas and culture as a young man, aspiring artist, and medical student. This in turn led him to lengthy engagement with European thinkers and writers from his student days in the 1860s and throughout his career, in which he participated in a number of international conversations ranging across science, psychology, philosophy, religion, ethics, and culture, and ending only upon his death in Chocorua, New

<sup>5</sup> Ralph Waldo Emerson, "The American Scholar" [1837], in *Ralph Waldo Emerson*, ed. Richard Poirier (Oxford: OUP, 1990), 51.

<sup>6</sup> William James, *Pragmatism* [1907], ed. Fredson Bowers and Ignas K. Skrupskelis (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1975), 97, 104.

<sup>7</sup> For discussions of whether there is, in fact, anything peculiarly "American" about American philosophy, see Bruce Kuklick, *A History of Philosophy in America, 1720–2000* (Oxford: OUP, 2001) and William Dean, *History Making History: The New Historicism in American Religious Thought* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1988).

<sup>8</sup> Robert J. Richardson, *William James: In the Maelstrom of Modernism* (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 2006), 19.

Hampshire, in August 1910, just days after having returned from one last trip to Europe.<sup>9</sup>

The “transatlantic conversation” that serves as the title for this book thus signals the attention of its contributors to James’s ongoing intellectual dialogue with Europeans (among whom we include both Continental and British Europeans). Moreover, the focus on “conversations” is embedded in this volume, which seeks to extend James’s own conversations into the twenty-first century by drawing together American, British, Spanish, German, and Finnish scholars from a range of disciplines to assess his work in all its variety, to trace his multidisciplinary reception across the twentieth century and around the globe, and to evaluate his legacy in the twenty-first century. In this respect, the essays collected here all frame their discussions of James’s thinking with the commitment, as Richard Rorty puts it, to “seeing *conversation* as the ultimate context within which knowledge is to be understood”.<sup>10</sup>

The volume is structured into two parts—“James’s Intellectual Contexts” and “The Philosophy of Pluralism”—using the lens of the “conversation” to explore James’s discussions and dialogues with his contemporaries on both sides of the Atlantic and to push the various elements of his thought into conversation with each other. The first section of the book looks broadly at the influences on James’s thought and across his range of texts, while the second section focuses in more closely on *A Pluralistic Universe* as a key, and often neglected, text for assessing James’s transatlantic conversations. Connecting these ideas, the twelve chapters reflect on the ways in which James engaged, on both personal and philosophical levels, with the key intellectual currents of Europe during the Victorian and Edwardian periods, ranging from British physiology and Darwinism to German idealism and *Naturphilosophie*, and from French metaphysics to Swiss and Austrian psychology, all of which helped to shape the dynamism of his thought. As such, the aim is to bind the essays together through overlapping considerations of James’s pragmatism, his pluralism, and his philosophy of religion viewed in the light of his American cosmopolitanism. And in this sense, the organization of the present volume shares in the pluralism that characterizes James’s own radical empiricist take on the world:

For every part, tho it may not be in actual or immediate connexion, is nevertheless in some possible or mediated connexion, with every other part however remote, through the fact that each part hangs together with its very next neighbors in inextricable interfusion. The type of union, it is true, is different here from the monistic type of *alleinheit*. It is not a universal co-implication, or integration

<sup>9</sup> For an appraisal of James’s intellectual range see Paul Jerome Croce, “The Non-Disciplinary William James”, *William James Review*, 8 (2012), 1–33.

<sup>10</sup> Richard Rorty, *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1979), 389.

of all things *durcheinander*. It is what I call the strung-along type, the type of continuity, contiguity, or concatenation.<sup>11</sup>

It is a central commitment of James's radical empiricism that this form of pluralism is a genuine kind of unity, and it is this Jamesian conception of unity that the present volume seeks to exemplify in its double focus on "contexts" and "philosophies". Thus, broadly speaking, the chapters comprising Part I contextualize and explore various elements of pluralism in its larger historical, cultural, and aesthetic manifestations, while the chapters in Part II assess, more than any previously published collection, some of the theoretical dimensions of James's pluralism as explicated in *A Pluralistic Universe*, his final sustained philosophical endeavour, and also the work in which (as its subtitle advertises) his conversation with "the present situation" in European philosophy is most clearly on view.

Part of the richness of James as a thinker is that he sits on the fulcrum between two historical worlds: the gentility of late Victorian New England and the cosmopolitan currents of modernity. James continued to shuttle back and forth between these two worlds, at times offering lines of continuity with nineteenth-century scientific thought and, at others, embracing the modernist interest in border-crossings and disdain for orthodoxy.<sup>12</sup> James had been dead for six years by the time that Randolph Bourne, a former student of John Dewey at Columbia University, conceptualized the notion of a "Transnational America" in 1916, which Bourne describes as a "federation of cultures", or a "cosmopolitan federation of national colonies, of foreign cultures" with "an intellectual internationalism... [holding together] different cultural expressions". Bourne's context was the new wave of European immigrants to the United States, and the intellectual heart of his essay challenges the notion of a homogeneous national culture based on an Anglo-Saxon model "washed out into a tasteless, colorless fluid of uniformity".<sup>13</sup> Likely, Bourne's assimilationist transnationalism would have been too radical for James to adopt, at least within the discourse of immigration, but this does not mean he was blind to cultural change or that he did not keep an eye on developing historical situations. On the contrary, essays such as his philosophical meditation on otherness in "On a Certain Blindness in Human Beings" (1899), along with his membership of the Anti-Imperialist League in July 1898 protesting the annexation of the Philippines (a situation that led to the Philippine War of Independence),

<sup>11</sup> James, *Pluralistic Universe*, 146–7. For a psychohistorical reading of James's pluralism see Cushing Strout, "The Pluralistic Identity of William James", *American Quarterly*, 23 (May 1971), 135–52.

<sup>12</sup> Lisi Schoenbach warns us against conceiving of the break between Victorian and modernist thought as an acute rupture, and offers some interesting thoughts on both William and Henry James: see Schoenbach, *Pragmatist Modernism* (New York: OUP, 2011).

<sup>13</sup> Randolph Bourne, "Transnational America", *Atlantic Monthly*, 118 (July 1916), 86–97.

indicate that he had a keen sense of a world that was about to change out of all proportion through total war and a massive spike in transatlantic migration just a few years after his death. This social dimension of James's thought is, arguably, an underdeveloped area of Jamesian scholarship (usually framed, if at all, with reference to his family's fascinating biography); but, as the final three chapters of Part I demonstrate, his interest in aesthetics, psychology, and political thought had real-life implications across the span of education, health, and gender relations, amongst other topics. Indeed, the reach of James's thought is not just the various ways in which his ideas have been recast in different geographical contexts (as the first two chapters explore), but the ethical weight of Jamesian pragmatism and pluralism makes his thought largely immune from charges that it is just a version of means–end instrumentalism or a neat way of bridging thought and action.

There is often the temptation to push a mercurial figure such as William James into too radical a mould.<sup>14</sup> We could be tempted to mistake him for a visionary or a humanitarian when, for example, he writes in “On a Certain Blindness” of his realization, after first misjudging the manner in which an Appalachian farming community had decided to cultivate their land, that “I had been blind to the peculiar ideality of their conditions as they certainly would have been to the ideality of mine, had they had a peep at my strange indoor academic ways of life at Cambridge.”<sup>15</sup> Of course, this might equally be read as self-mockery, but it indicates the fact that the panoramic view James sought in his restless movement between modes of enquiry and his eagerness to absorb influences from a wide range of sources was actually tempered by a provincialism that he here acknowledges is deeply rooted.

We see another example of this double-jointed nature in James's correspondence concerning his invitation to Oxford to deliver the Hibbert Lectures. His imaginative side was roaming freely when he wrote to his younger brother Robertson James on 18 July 1908 that “England is transcendently beautiful, 1000 years ahead of us in lots of ways, and the people, both men and women, so cheery & manly, that the unwholesomeness of type so frequent in America is hardly to be met here at all.”<sup>16</sup> We see religious and aesthetic discourse blending in the first clause here, and his comment concerning unwholesomeness directs our attention to his perennial interest in health (given that his own was

<sup>14</sup> Two examples of this tendency would be John Wild's *The Radical Empiricism of William James* (Garden City, NY: Anchor, 1970) and Frederick J. Ruf, *The Creation of Chaos: William James and the Stylistic Making of a Disorderly World* (New York: State University of New York Press, 1991).

<sup>15</sup> William James, “On a Certain Blindness in Human Beings”, in *Talks to Teachers on Psychology* [1899], ed. Frederick H. Burkhardt, Fredson Bowers, and Ignas K. Skrupskelis (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1983), 134.

<sup>16</sup> William James to Robertson James, 18 July 1908, *The Correspondence of William James*, ed. Ignas K. Skrupskelis and Elizabeth M. Berkeley (Charlottesville, Va.: University of Virginia Press, 1995), xii. 54.

failing, and that many members of his family suffered various afflictions from childhood onwards). His tendency to compare and occasionally stereotype national characteristics creeps into his next line:

The “wholesomeness” I fully believe, is altogether a matter of social contagion. They’ve adopted that fashion and tone, and imitation keeps it going, whereas we imitate the opposite. Probably our ulterior national destiny will be a bigger thing than theirs, however, and with time we can catch up on the details of civilization.<sup>17</sup>

Again, we see the language of pathology (“social contagion”) and psychology (patterns of “imitation”) segue into an Emersonian exceptionalism in his “bigger” view of the United States, which picks up that earlier “transcendentally beautiful” clause and relegates the “details” of British “civilization” in the process. The tone is both serious and mocking; both a celebration of British hardiness and wholesomeness (one might imagine him reading Thomas Hardy’s tales of rural Dorset or, his personal favourite, George Eliot’s 1860 novel *The Mill on the Floss*) and an expression that the American national identity could likely surpass anything to which Europe had given fruit in the past. He then shifts almost immediately to reflecting on his Hibbert Lectures: “My lectures at Oxford drew big audiences (400) but I heard almost no comment, and the dinner & lunch parties with no real familiar talk were deadly tiresome.” Here the “details” of civilization are reduced to “tiresome” university chatter, and the panoramic vista of that initial appraisal of England dissolves into an elderly man worrying about whether his ideas would be well received amongst the community of Oxford scholars. We see the rich, composite texture of James’s experience in the ambivalence of his linguistic phrasings and turns as he immerses himself in his European environment, all the while looking over his shoulder across the Atlantic, drawing comparisons and contrasts along the way.

James had more to say of Oxford’s “interesting and enlarging” environment and the “cheery callousness” of the typical public-school university student, but in another letter written in summer 1908 responding to a “homesick epistle” from his son Alexander Robertson James (then being tutored in Oxford) he recommended that “Aleck” should remain true to his “native self” and “express yourself freely in your American way”.<sup>18</sup> The restrained receptivity to his changing environments speaks to James’s inexhaustible intellectual inquiry and his interest in other cultures, but his assumptions about national characteristics also demonstrate that we cannot transform him into an archetypal modernist who would sweep away tradition in favour of the more amorphous, fragmentary world of modernity.

<sup>17</sup> James, *Correspondence*, xii. 54–5.

<sup>18</sup> William James to Alexander Robertson James, 7 Oct. 1908, in James, *Correspondence*, xii. 105. See also William James to Alexander Robertson James, 9 Aug. 1908, *Correspondence*, xii. 77.

Given James's comparisons between British and American national characteristics in these 1908 letters, it is worth briefly pausing on an earlier letter he wrote to his brother Henry in 1868 as a young man of 26, only a few years after the end of the Civil War, in which he describes his sensibility as English and pits it against the "apparent artificialness" of the French and the "plebeian crowd" of Germans who "never could *be* such gentleman as we were".<sup>19</sup> A year earlier he had written excitedly about arriving in Paris, but writing from the spa town of Divonne-les-Bains on the French border with Switzerland, James found himself in a contemplative space in which he could look simultaneously east and west, but also north to Britain, which, in this letter, takes on some of the characteristics of the United States.<sup>20</sup> He can be self-deprecating ("I am struck more than I ever was with the hopelessness of us English"), aware that intellectual traditions are perhaps stronger in France and Germany ("They are sensitive to things which do not exist for us"), but also an interpreter of borders and boundaries ("the limitations of *reach* in the French mind strike me more and more . . . their metaphysical incapacity not only to deal with questions but to know what the questions are") which he claims reading deeply in German enabled him to perceive more clearly.<sup>21</sup> Another year later, in April 1869 back in Cambridge, Massachusetts (the year James became a doctor), he asserted that German is the most cosmopolitan of languages, one that made French and English "seem in very important respects provincial".<sup>22</sup> We can already recognize James's aversion to narrow provincialism here, but also a willingness to acknowledge how his views were constantly modified in the light of experience (much as he would elaborate twenty years later in the "Stream of Thought" chapter of his first book-length work, *The Principles of Psychology*). After praising the importance of the German language, he remarks to Henry his readiness to "take back all I ever said to you about it being no matter if you never shd. learn it".<sup>23</sup>

What we see in these early and late letters is a deep tension between various aspects of James's thought that seem to be in amiable conversation with one another. Given the epistolary character of the relationships in the James family, these were often played out in the realm of personal correspondence, but we can easily recognize parallels to this dialogic mode in his more mature philosophical writings, as well as the face-to-face conversations he had with thinkers at Harvard and across the Atlantic. The conversational mode is perhaps

<sup>19</sup> William James to Henry James, 26 Aug. 1868, in James, *Correspondence*, i. 55–6.

<sup>20</sup> For James's excited reaction to seeing a production of Alexander Dumas's comic play *Les Idées de Mme. Aubray* at the Palais Royal in Paris see William James to Henry James, 3 May 1867, *Correspondence*, i. 11–12; this letter, written in French, is translated into English in Ralph Barton Perry, *The Thought and Character of William James* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1935), i. 235–6.

<sup>21</sup> William James to Henry James, 26 Aug. 1868, in James, *Correspondence*, i. 55.

<sup>22</sup> William James to Henry James, 23 Apr. 1869, James, *Correspondence*, i. 67.

<sup>23</sup> James, *Correspondence*, i. 67.

closer to the Victorian or Edwardian gentility that one might associate with Henry James's fireside ghost stories of his early or middle period, not the complex modernism of his later fiction in which it becomes difficult to circumscribe the centre of consciousness of his characters. Whereas one can assign Henry's writings a place in one of three distinct phases identifiable by period and stylistic qualities, across William's body of writing we see a constant movement back and forth in which the Victorian and the modern, the provincial New Englander and the cosmopolitan transatlanticist, the heroic adventurer and the introspective thinker, all jostle for our attention, sometimes within a few lines or phrases.

The very vibrancy of James's dialogical language has also often been noted by commentators, drawing the likes of neo-pragmatist Richard Rorty to a Jamesian sensibility, even though he felt he had more in common philosophically with John Dewey's pragmatism. When Rorty writes about James's "On a Certain Blindness" essay, he highlights James's linguistic and aesthetic sense of what reality and truth are. Using James to read Sigmund Freud, Rorty states that "he just wants to give us one more redescription of things to be filed alongside all the others, one more vocabulary, one more set of metaphors which he thinks have a chance of being used and thereby literalized".<sup>24</sup> In some ways, this pushes James (and Freud) too close to Rorty's view of "redescription" than is helpful. While there is a relativist aspect to James's philosophy of pluralism and he tried to give up on traditional metaphysics by developing a concept of radical empiricism in which we must act "as if" certain things exist that cannot be empirically verified, James is not just about language and redescription—he was deeply interested in religious experience that lies beyond words, and he would maintain that the "energies of men" (referring to James's 1907 essay) are anterior to those meanings that we attach to the word "energy". Some words are useful because they help us do things or say things that otherwise cannot be said or done, but that does not mean that the limits of experience are circumscribed by the limits of language. And if Rorty is right that conversation should be seen as "the ultimate context within which *knowledge* is to be understood", this nonetheless does not exclude for James the possibility that human experience of reality might well exceed conceptual knowledge of it.<sup>25</sup> For James the multiple points of connection between language and things and between representation and reality makes him into a more complex and ultimately more interesting figure than Rorty credits. It is not simply for James's great range that we should read him, although that too can be very satisfying: in "The Energies of Men", for example, he ranges between the French psychologist Pierre Janet, the German metaphysician Gustav Fechner, British and Irish writers H. G. Wells and George Bernard Shaw, Harvard psychologist and

<sup>24</sup> Richard Rorty, *Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity* (Cambridge: CUP, 1989), 39.

<sup>25</sup> Rorty, *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature*, 389. Italics added.

physician Morton Prince, Italian pragmatist Giovanni Papini, and the Spanish hermit Ignatius of Loyola, together with other historical figures and contemporary essayists. We should read James for this kind of intellectual range, but also because he puts the reader in the position of an experiencer of tensions and opposites, denying them the comforts of a fixed metaphysical framework or a complete philosophical system into which everything can fit neatly or be ultimately resolved.

Conversations, then, speak to James's receptivity to the experiences of others, and his willingness to put his thought to the test against perpetually evolving ideas, but also to the fact that language creation—whether it is in the aesthetic, religious, or philosophical realm—is always a conversation between elements of similarity and difference, light and shade, one and the many.<sup>26</sup> Like many post-Kantian philosophers, James at times seemed desperate to dissolve metaphysical tensions: in *Principles*, for example, he sought especially to dissolve the age-old mind–body dualism by identifying synergies between biology and psychology. But rather than continuing along that course he realized in the 1890s that a philosophy of “varieties” or “pluralism” would enable him to hold these tensions and multiple perspectives together without needing to seek resolution or complete agreement with either the monistic naturalists on one side or the monistic idealists on the other. We can see this in a statement towards the end of the “Energies of Men” essay in which his scientific desire to map and chart is juxtaposed with a pluralism that will always exceed the bounds of empirical or philosophical enquiry: he suggests that we should “get a topographic survey made of the limits of human power in every conceivable direction...and we ought then to construct a methodical inventory of the paths of access, or keys, differing with the diverse types of individual to the different kinds of power”.<sup>27</sup> Yet, such a survey remains ever an ambition, never an accomplishment, just as James's evocation of the multiplicity and diversity of our “pluralistic universe” can never eventuate in a system of philosophy articulating and analysing pluralism as such. And for this reason, James's efforts at mapping and coordinating the varieties of lived experience reveal him constantly striving to find better modes of expression, clearer illustrations, and fuller exemplifications of how these tensions can be articulated without collapsing everything into the arid terminology of scientific philosophy, the esoteric language of mystics, or the easy comforts of the New England mind-curists who would seek to dissolve these tensions in transcendent vision.

The three philosophical strands of pragmatism, pluralism, and the philosophy of religion have different trajectories across the corpus of James's published

<sup>26</sup> “The One and the Many” was the title of the fourth lecture of James's *Pragmatism*, 63–80.

<sup>27</sup> William James, “The Energies of Men”, *The Philosophical Review*, 16/1 (Jan. 1907), 1–20; repr. in William James, *Essays in Religion and Morality*, ed. Frederick H. Burkhardt, Fredson Bowers, and Ignas K. Skrupskelis (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1982), 129–46.

work, but, as our authors emphasize, they are intricately connected both textually, in terms of the theoretical shifts that James made, and contextually, via James's multiple points of intellectual and cultural contact across the Atlantic. Although pragmatism has sometimes been elided with a narrowly conceived instrumentalism (such as Randolph Bourne's anti-war attack on Dewey's brand of pragmatism in his 1917 essay "Twilight of Idols" or the outline by German émigrés Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer of an instrumentalist account of reason in their 1944 treatise *Dialectic of Enlightenment*), James was no simple means-end philosopher, despite the fact that he stressed the relationship between rationalism and purpose and, famously, wrote of the "cash value" of truth in *Pragmatism* (1907). Indeed, just as Bourne looked back to James's pragmatism as offering a deeper moral resource than Dewey's "pedestrian" pragmatism (Bourne evokes James's "gay passion for ideas", his "freedom of speculation", and his "creative desire"), it is a misreading to take pragmatism as James's way out of metaphysics.<sup>28</sup> This volume, particularly through its focus on *A Pluralistic Universe*, enables us to see how James's pragmatism is situated within a larger metaphysical vision of pluralism, in which religion is never simply a side issue; on this basis, David Lamberth argues in Chapter 8 that religion is not superfluous to the qualities of James's philosophy.

As the discussion in this introduction has indicated, we think that William James did not just speak to the late nineteenth century or the early phase of modernity, but also to the broader stretch of the twentieth century in which a variety of figures that we discuss in the following chapters, from Miguel de Unamuno to John Dewey, from Henri Bergson to Richard Rorty, from Josiah Royce to F. H. Bradley, and from Erik Erikson to Stanley Cavell, have read and reread James to test out their own thought. The conversations within and across the various elements of James's work are evident in the breadth of the chapters in Part I of this volume, but we maintain that James should not simply be read for the intellectual journey on which he takes his readers, diverting and exhilarating as it is at times. James was a thinker with a mission, and *A Pluralistic Universe* is arguably his most serious book. With it, he hoped to give his most complete and lasting expression to a philosophy of pluralism that can be traced from *The Principles of Psychology* through *The Varieties of Religious Experience* and into his final years. As such, the chapters in Part II are more detailed and specific in their focus.

Part I, "James's Intellectual Contexts", opens with two chapters by Jaime Nubiola and David Hollinger that examine the reception of James's thought, the first from a European geographical perspective in James's own lifetime and the second from a broader historical viewpoint, focusing particularly on the readings and misreading of James's religious thought across the twentieth

<sup>28</sup> Randolph Bourne, "Twilight of the Idols", *The Seven Arts*, 11 (Oct. 1917), 702.

century, particularly the ways in which ecumenical Protestantism has carried James into new contexts and territories. The following two chapters from Richard King and Barbara Loerzer deal more explicitly with James's intellectual contexts, exploring James's links with Max Weber and Henri Bergson and, more broadly, examining discourses of sociology, psychology, and aesthetics which James helped to transform in his lifetime, and which have since shifted within the broader reception of pragmatism, particularly in relation to American, German, and French thought. Chapters 5 and 6 by Peter Kuryla and Martin Halliwell take us more closely into James's transatlantic biography, analysing the ways in which his relationships with his father, Henry James, Sr., his brother, the novelist Henry James (who outlived William), and sister, the diarist Alice James (who did not), influenced the complexion of his thought, particularly James's concerns about his vocation, his health, and his role as an experiential thinker. Chapter 6 raises questions of gender which often trouble James's prose, a topic that is taken further in the final chapter of this first section, in which Leslie Butler discusses James's Anglo-American exchanges with John Stuart Mill on "the woman question". These chapters cover crucial ground for understanding the many contours of James's thought.

Part II situates considerations of *A Pluralistic Universe*—James's last great but least well-known and least discussed work—within the context of the transatlantic conversations explicated in the first section. These chapters give close textual and conceptual analyses of James's mature explorations into the nature of rationality, reality, morality, and "the problem of God", all in critical connection with James's own critical reading of his philosophical contemporaries in Germany, France, and Britain. Taken together, these essays by David Lamberth, Joel Rasmussen, Michael Slater, and Sami Pihlström make the case that not only with respect to James's personal biography, but also concerning his most developed reflections on metaphysics, ethics, and religion, we understand James as a thinker more fully when we attend explicitly to the international connections that help give shape to his philosophy of pluralism. The concluding chapter of the volume by Jeremy Carrette extends this discussion of *A Pluralistic Universe*, but also looks back to the first section to demonstrate how the various transatlantic "zig-zags" between James's intellectual contexts—biographical, philosophical, and socio-historical—came so fully to animate the imaginative and philosophical reach of his final work. Moreover, Carrette further contextualizes William James and the transatlantic conversation in light of the spreading and intensifying processes of globalization across the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, showing how the enduring value of James's pluralistic vision stems from his peerless gift for modelling how—in an increasingly pluralistic universe—"conversation" itself must become recognized and respected as plural, changing, and complex.

## Part I

# James's Intellectual Contexts