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The Religious Naturalism of William James

A New Interpretation Through the Lens of 'Liberal Naturalism'

Jacob Herbert Bunzl

Abstract:

This thesis argues that recent developments in philosophical naturalism mandate a new naturalistic reading of James. To that end, it presents the first comprehensive reading of James through the lens of liberal rather than scientific naturalism. Chapter 1 offers an extensive survey of the varieties of philosophical naturalism that provides the conceptual tools required for the rest the thesis, and allows us to provisionally locate James within the field. Crucially, it establishes the coherence and validity of a radical form of liberal naturalism that rejects 'the causal closure of the physical', and endorses doctrines of strong emergentism and macro-causation. The thesis will argue that it was to this form of naturalism that James was ultimately committed.

Chapter 2 provides a detailed chronological treatment of James's key published works, seeking to understand the development of certain core naturalistic themes over the course of his career. It unearths a nascent doctrine of emergentism in *The Principles*, a critique of scientificism in *The Will to Believe*, a psycho-biological account of religious experience in *The Varieties*, a doctrine of panpsychist identism in *Essays in Radical Empiricism*, an evolutionary theory of cognition in *Pragmatism*, and a doctrine of finite theism in *A Pluralistic Universe*. The underlying aim of chapter 2 is to demonstrate the superficiality of James's endorsement of piecemeal supernaturalism in *The Varieties*. It shows that he had originally planned to defend a doctrine of 'theistic naturalism' in his second course of Gifford Lectures, and that he only defined himself as a supernaturalist in contradistinction to a particularly austere doctrine of 'mechanical naturalism' that endorses 'the causal closure of the physical'. James, whilst he rejected 'the causal closure of the physical', continued to endorse 'the causal closure of nature'. Through the schema developed in chapter 1, the thesis demonstrates how James can be classified as a radical religious naturalist.

Finally, in chapter 3, the thesis enters a more consciously constructive phase. Building on James's suggestion that his philosophy was "too much like an arch built only on one side", it embarks upon a detailed reconstruction of 'the arch of James's naturalism'. It argues that reconstructed versions of James's doctrines of panpsychism and emergentism, in addition to being coherent and fertile in their own right, serve as the basis for a restoration of his theistic naturalism; the missing keystone of his mature philosophy.

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Acknowledgement

First of all, I would like to thank the University of Kent for its faultless provision of excellent resources at every stage of this project. In particular I wish to thank the department of religious studies – its students and its staff – for the pleasure of their acquaintance and for the intellectual stimulation that their conversation and research has brought me. First among them of course I must thank my supervisor Jeremy Carrette, for his tireless and diligent support (despite his daunting duties as Dean of Europe in this critical period). Without his ever-patient (but increasingly nervous) reminders that this thesis is supposed to have a word limit, the editing process might have been even more of a nightmare than it has been! I should also like to thank my examiners for their kind indulgence in reading the product, which, despite Jeremy's best efforts, remains – as James said of *The Principles* upon its publication – something of a "bloated, dropsical mass".

I owe the University of Kent and its staff a great deal of gratitude; more, no doubt, than I can express in this paltry acknowledgement. But much of the work for this project, and the whole of my life beyond it, has occurred not on the Canterbury campus, but in London, where I live. To consider, therefore, things closer to home, I would like next to thank my beautiful wife Alice. She shares with James's wife not only her name, but the thankless task of looking after a rudderless philosopher. Her patience, love, and understanding over the last two years have been more vital and indispensable than any academic resource.

Last but by no means least I would like to thank William James. For one thing, it was with his sound advice in mind that I proposed to my own Alice late last year:

> It is as if a man should hesitate indefinitely to ask a certain woman to marry him because he was not perfectly sure that she would prove an angel after he brought her home. Would he not cut himself off from that particular angel-possibility as decisively as if he went and married someone else?

So it was that I put James's advice to the pragmatic test, and made my angel-possibility into an angel-reality. I am pleased to report that with each passing day that advice seems to approach fuller and fuller verification. Surely, the long-run consensus of the community of all inquirers will be that she is the most wonderful wife in the world!

Besides his excellent advice in this regard I must also thank James for the broader intellectual and spiritual resource his philosophy has been to me personally. Speaking as someone who was raised outside of any religious tradition, and whose temperament, in any case, was probably too cynical to countenance many of them, I have found that James's philosophy provided me with a means of coming to terms with certain important experiences in my own life which, without it, I might never have adequately assimilated. If the present project can serve – even if only through me – to make that resource available to more people, then it will have been a success.

Jacob Bunzl, December 2019

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List of Abbreviations

James's Works

PP – *The Principles of Psychology*

EMS – *William James on Exceptional Mental States*

WB – *The Will to Believe*

MPML – 'The Moral Philosopher and the Moral Life'

VRE – *The Varieties of Religious Experience*

ERE – *Essays in Radical Empiricism*

TPAF – 'The Place of Affectional Facts in a World of Pure Experience'

PRAG – *Pragmatism*

MT – *The Meaning of Truth*

PU – *A Pluralistic Universe*

SPP – *Some Problems of Philosophy*

Other Abbreviations

CCP – The Causal Closure of the Physical

> *According to which all causal power is confined to the lowest level of natural phenomena (microphysical phenomena).*

CCN – The Causal Closure of Nature

> *According to which all causal power is confined to the single space-time-causal system we call nature.*

SCI – Scientism

> *According to which only science can provide genuine knowledge/truth about reality.*

PER – The Principle of Epistemological Reducibility

> *According to which theories/discourse about all entities/properties is reducible to theories/discourse about their lowest level parts/properties of their lowest level parts.*

POR – The Principle of Ontological Reducibility

> *According to which all entities/properties are wholly reducible to their lowest level parts/properties of their lowest level parts.*

HSR – Hyperscientific Realism

> *According to which only entities postulated by scientific theories are real.*

MTN – The methodological thesis of naturalism

According to which philosophy is continuous with science.

DSCI – The Disunity of Science

According to which there is no single method or form that unites the sciences and demarcates them from non-sciences.

WE – Weak Emergentism

According to which theories/discourse about certain entities/properties is not reducible to theories/discourse about their parts/properties of their parts.

SE – Strong Emergentism

According to which certain entities/properties are not wholly reducible to their parts/properties of their parts.

MC – Macro-Causation

According to which certain strongly emergent entities/properties possess causal power over and above their parts/properties of their parts.

ETRN – The Existential Thesis of Religious Naturalism

According to which nature or something within nature merits a religious response.

INC – The Integral Nature of Consciousness

According to which states of consciousness possess a strongly emergent boundary/unity.

PPSI – The Psychophysical Structural Isomorphism Requirement

According to which, given parallelism or psychophysical identity, physical facts must be structurally isomorphic with their mental counterparts.

PCMB – The Problem of Stating the Connection Between the Mind and the Brain

According to which, given parallelism or psychophysical identity, an atomistic brain cannot serve as the physical counterpart to an integral consciousness.

MTRE – The Methodological Thesis of Radical Empiricism

According to which only things that are directly experienced can be discussed in Philosophy.

FTRE – The Factual Thesis of Radical Empiricism

According to which the relations between experiences are themselves parts of experience.

MTPE – The Metaphysical thesis of Pure Experience

According to which the world is wholly constituted of bits of pure experience held together by experienced relations, without any transempirical connective support.

Definitions

The Causal Exclusion Argument

According to which causal power at lower levels of nature excludes or makes redundant causal power at higher levels of nature.

Epiphenomenalism

According to which mental entities/properties are wholly dependent on physical entities/properties, and possess no causal power over and above physical entities/properties.

Mereological Supervenience

According to which one set of properties – X – is dependent upon another set of properties – Y –, such that given Y, X is automatically instantiated.

Mereological Atomism

According to which atoms are the only genuine entities; all other entities being wholly reducible to atoms.

Priority-Monism

According to which one entity (the universe or the totality of existence) has ontological priority; i.e. is more real or fundamental than others.

Substance-Monism

According to which all entities are constituted of one substance; i.e. mental substance or material substance.

Thing-Monism/Existence-Monism

According to which only one genuine entity exists; i.e. the universe or the totality of existence.

Thing-Pluralism/Existence-Pluralism

According to which a plurality of genuine entities exists.

Neutral Monism

According to which both the inner/subjective and the outer/objective aspects of experience are differentiated out of an original, neutral experiential content.

Russellian Monism

According to which both physical and mental entities/properties are in some sense grounded in neutral entities/properties that are neither physical nor mental.

Russellian Panpsychism

According to which experiential entities/phenomenal properties constitute the intrinsic natures of physical entities/properties.

Naïve/Natural Realism

According to which entities exist independently of human/other perception in the same mode as they exist within human/other perception; i.e. with secondary qualities, etc.

The Boundary/Unity Problem

According to which a bounded/unified macroexperience cannot be identical with a mereological aggregate of microexperiences.

The Synchronic Constitution Problem

According to which microexperiences cannot exist as self-identical individuals whilst simultaneously constituting a macroexperience.

Introduction

Scholars have widely acknowledged a naturalistic strain in the work of William James. They have found justification for locating a naturalistic theory of mind in his work[1]; a naturalistic theory of cognition[2]; and a naturalistic ethical theory[3], to name but a few[4]. Yet James's work also contains what some would call an antinaturalistic strain. He conceives of definite, somewhat severe limits to the scientific enterprise; he endorses the existence of contra-causal spiritual forces at work in the natural world; and he believes that religion, and indeed God, play a vital role in human life[5]. It is on this basis that commentators like Richard Gale warn against attempts to provide naturalistic interpretations of James. Such interpretations, they say, inevitably leave important elements out, and distort our understanding of his worldview[6]. It is partly for this reason that when philosophers began to explore the possibility of a distinctively 'pragmatic naturalism' in the latter half of the 20th century, they tended to place much more emphasis on the work of Peirce and Dewey than they did on the work of James[7]. A recent anthology on *Pragmatism and Naturalism* contains a discussion of 'Peirce's Mature Religious Naturalism', and another of 'Deweyan Naturalism', but we find no mention of a Jamesian Naturalism[8]. Rather, we find only an

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[1] John Dewey, 'The Vanishing Subject in the Psychology of James', *The Journal of Philosophy*, 37 (1940), pp589-599. See also: Owen Flanagan, 'Naturalizing the Mind: The Philosophical Psychology of William James', in *The Science of the Mind* (Cambridge MA: The MIT Press, 1984). Flanagan has since revised his view on this point. He now believes that *The Principles* "cannot, without a good deal of interpretive sleight of hand, be given a consistent naturalistic reading". See: Owen Flanagan, 'Consciousness as a Pragmatist Views it', in *The Cambridge Companion to William James*, ed. by Ruth Anna Putnam (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), pp25-48 (p26). He credits an essay of Wesley Cooper's with having changed his mind. See: Wesley Cooper, 'William James's Theory of Mind', *Journal of the History of Philosophy*, 28 (1990), pp571-593

[2] Charles Augustus Strong, 'A Naturalistic Theory of the Reference of Thought to Reality' *The Journal of Philosophy, Psychology, and Scientific Methods*, 1, (1904), pp253-260; Henry Jackman, 'William James', in *The Oxford Handbook of American Philosophy*, ed. by Cheryl Misak (Oxford: OUP, 2008), pp60-86

[3] Graham Bird, *William James* (London: Routledge, 1986). See also: Richard Gale, *The Divided Self of William James* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999)

[4] We will review much of the literature concerning James and naturalism as we proceed with our chronological reading of James's key texts in chapter 2.

[5] For an excellent summary of James's prima facie conflicts with naturalism see: David Lamberth, 'Pragmatism and Naturalism: An Inevitable Conjunction?', *Cognitio*, 2 (2001), pp76-87 (pp77-81).

[6] See: Richard Gale, 'John Dewey's Naturalization of William James', in *The Cambridge Companion to William James*, ed. by R. A. Putnam, pp49-68

[7] See: Samuel Morris Eames, *Pragmatic Naturalism* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1977); Paul Kurtz, *Essays in Pragmatic Naturalism* (New York: Prometheus Books, 1990); *Pragmatic Naturalism and Realism*, ed. by John Shook (New York: Prometheus Books, 2003); *Philip Kitcher: Pragmatic Naturalism*, ed. by Marie I. Kaiser & Ansgar Seide (Frankfurt: Ontos Verlag, 2013). One possible exception to this tendency is Thomas Martland Jr., who explicitly invokes James as a progenitor of pragmatic naturalism. However, Martland, unlike most proponents of pragmatic naturalism, seems to define the doctrine almost exclusively in terms of its adoption of a process-metaphysics. See: Thomas Martland Jr., *The Metaphysics of William James and John Dewey* (New York: Philosophical Library, 1963)

[8] See: *Pragmatism and Naturalism*, ed. by Matthew Bagger (New York: Columbia University Press, 2018)

exploration of 'Religious Apologetic, Naturalism, and Inquiry in the Thought of William James'. Naturalism, it seems, can be found *in the thought of* William James, but James's philosophy does not itself *amount* to a form of naturalism. Among James's interpreters Nancy Frankenberry and Phil Oliver are more or less alone in holding out hopes for a distinctively Jamesian naturalism. The former, however, thinks that James's views must be supplemented with those of Alfred North Whitehead in order to affect a genuine naturalistic synthesis[9]; while the latter, in spite of the many other merits of his study, defines naturalism so broadly as to drain the category of much of its content[10].

To say that naturalistic interpretations of James inevitably distort our understanding of his worldview is, of course, to assume that naturalism itself is a monolithic doctrine, susceptible to a single, unified interpretation. In fact, it has become a classic trope of the naturalistic tradition that naturalism is susceptible to innumerable interpretations[11]. The doctrine has undergone a number of transformations throughout its history; from an austere metaphysical doctrine committed to the causal closure of the physical[12], to a relatively liberal metaphysical doctrine endorsing emergentism and macro-causation[13], to a primarily methodological doctrine committed to the dispassionate use of empirical methods, etc.[14] The form of naturalism most prevalent in the present day is widely known as 'scientific naturalism'. It is typically committed to at least the following theses: i) scientism, ii) the methodological thesis of naturalism, iii) the causal closure of the physical, iv) the principle of ontological reducibility[15]. When contemporary commentators on James warn against naturalistic interpretation of his work, it is something like this form of naturalism that they have in mind.

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[9] Nancy Frankenberry, *Religion and Radical Empiricism* (New York: SUNY Press, 1987); Nancy Frankenberry, 'The Fate of Radical Empiricism and the Future of Pragmatic Naturalism', in *Pragmatism and Naturalism*, ed. by Bagger, pp221-251.

[10] Oliver's study does not aim for a systematic treatment of James's philosophy. Rather, it focuses on a Jamesian notion of 'transcendence' drawn from selective readings of his ethical and religious texts. Oliver's aim is to show that such a Jamesian notion of transcendence is compatible with what he calls 'global naturalism', according to which "everything experienced and experienceable is real and in precisely that sense is a part of nature". The study's great merit, in our view, is not in establishing a thoroughgoing Jamesian naturalism, but in advancing lively and persuasive arguments for the conclusion that James's approach to religion embodied the naturalistic spirit. See: Phil Oliver, *William James's "Springs of Delight"* (Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press, 2000), p28.

[11] See: Barry Stroud, 'The Charm of Naturalism', in *Naturalism in Question*, ed. by Mario De Caro & David Macarthur (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 2004). See also: Owen Flanagan, 'Varieties of Naturalism', in *The Oxford Handbook of Religion and Science*, ed. by Philip Clayton (Oxford: OUP, 2008)

[12] James Ward, *Naturalism and Agnosticism* (London: Adam and Charles Black, 1906)

[13] Roy Wood Sellars, 'Why Naturalism and not Materialism?', *The Philosophical Review*, 36 (1927), pp216-225

[14] James Pratt, *Naturalism* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1939)

[15] See the 'List of Abbreviations' for details.

In recent decades, however, a new form of naturalism has been coming onto the philosophical scene. A growing contingent of so-called 'liberal naturalists' dissent from several of the core theses of scientific naturalism. They reject at least scientism, strong versions of the methodological thesis, and the principle of ontological reducibility. Several of them are even suspicious of the principle of the causal closure of the physical. A number of these liberal naturalists attempt to articulate their distinctive position in two recent anthologies edited by Mario De Caro and David Macarthur entitled *Naturalism in Question* and *Naturalism and Normativity*[16]. Leading the charge, and inspiring the whole movement, are Hilary Putnam and John McDowell. Richard Rorty, Donald Davidson, Barry Stroud, and John Dupre are among the other contributors. Liberal naturalists, according to De Caro and Macarthur's introduction, are committed to the causal closure of *nature* rather than the causal closure of the physical; and they are unified in having a nonreductive attitude towards intentionality, normativity, and consciousness[17].

Our central contention in this thesis is that these recent developments in philosophical naturalism merit a new naturalistic reading of James. To that end, we will provide the first comprehensive interpretation of James's work through the lens of *liberal* rather than scientific naturalism. In doing so, we will be seeking to establish not so much that *James was a naturalist*, as that *a Jamesian naturalism is possibl*e. At the same time however we will be aiming at real consistency with James's views, and at faithfulness to the spirit of his philosophy. We think that our interpretation is one that James's texts fully support. The project will be divided into three chapters. We begin, in chapter one, with an extensive survey of the varieties of philosophical naturalism that will at once acquaint us with the conceptual tools required for the rest of our undertaking, and allow us to provisionally locate James within the field. As well as surveying the varieties of naturalism, chapter one also contains a mostly implicit argument to the effect that more liberal forms of naturalism are coherent and valid. Crucially, it describes and defends a form of naturalism which we call 'radical liberal naturalism', which endorses doctrines of strong emergentism and macro-causation. It is to this form of naturalism – or rather, to its religious counterpart – that we think James was committed. We move on, in chapter two, to a detailed chronological treatment of James's key published works, seeking to understand the development of certain core naturalistic themes over the course of his career. This will be the largest chapter of the thesis, because it is here that we will engage most directly with James's voluminous corpus

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[16] *Naturalism and Normativity,* ed. by Mario De Caro & David Macarthur (New York: Columbia University Press, 2010)

[17] Mario De Caro & David Macarthur, 'Introduction: The Nature of Naturalism', in *Naturalism in Question*, ed. by De Caro & Macarthur, pp1-17

(and its ample secondary literature). In it, we apply many of the concepts, methods, and terminology we discovered in chapter one to a detailed rereading of James's texts. We find the fundaments of a doctrine of emergentism in PP; a detailed critique of scientificism in WB; a profoundly naturalistic psycho-biological account of religious experience in VRE; the beginnings of a doctrine of panpsychist identism in ERE; an evolutionary theory of cognition in *Pragmatism*; and the outlines of a doctrine of theistic naturalism in PU. The key underlying argument in chapter two is that James's avowal of 'piecemeal supernaturalism' in VRE is superficial[18]. As we shall see, in an original draft for his second course of Gifford Lectures James had planned on calling his position 'theistic naturalism', but at some point in the following year he changed his mind, and settled on 'piecemeal supernaturalism' instead. We argue it was likely his reading of James Ward's *Naturalism and Agnosticism* – a book which he expected to be epoch-making – that caused him to change his mind. According to Ward, naturalism is committed to the causal closure of the physical, a doctrine which James could not abide. We contend that it was only in contradistinction to this austere form of naturalism that James defined himself as a supernaturalist. In fact, he only rejected the causal closure of the physical, and continued to endorse the causal closure of nature. As such, by our lights, he is to be classified as a radical liberal naturalist. Finally, in chapter three, we will embark upon an ambitious reconstruction of 'the arch of James's naturalism', with doctrines of panpsychism and emergentism as its column and springer respectively, and a doctrine of theistic naturalism as its keystone. The underlying argument of chapter three is that reconstructed versions of James's doctrines of panpsychism and emergentism give him the resources he needs to accommodate a powerful, personal God *within* the natural world. In addition, however, we also aim to bring out the independent merit of each of these doctrines, and to demonstrate the continuing fecundity of James's philosophy.

This project will be, first and foremost, a contribution to James scholarship[19]. In addition to providing the first in-depth interpretation of his worldview from the perspective of liberal

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[18] By 'superficial' we emphatically *do not* mean that such avowals were unimportant or peripheral for James. This, indeed, is one of Phil Oliver's claims in *William James's "Springs of Delight"*. He says that "the supernatural "overbeliefs" James sometimes professes or flirts with may be seen as idiosyncratically personal curiosities, peripheral to his central insight into the natural ground of all kinds of religious speculation, including the supernatural." See: Oliver, pp29-30. We differ sharply from Oliver on this point. We think that James's over-beliefs are of great importance; to him personally, but even more so from the point of view of understanding his total philosophy. In calling his avowal of piecemeal supernaturalism superficial we mean that it should not be understood as committing him to a traditional doctrine supernaturalism, according to which there exists some region of reality that is ontically discontinuous with nature.

[19] By 'James scholarship' we mean the effort to understand James's philosophy in its own right; an effort inaugurated by Ralph Barton Perry's seminal study, *The Thought and Character of William James*, and which

naturalism, it will articulate several novel analyses/reconstructions of aspects of his philosophy. Thus, we shall provide a reconstruction of his doctrine of emergentism, a detailed exposition of his critique of scientificism, a new reading of the pragmatic theory of truth as an evolutionary theory of cognition, an interpretation of his panpsychism as a form of 'russellian panpsychism', a reconstruction of his dispositional model of value experience, and a reconstruction of his 'theistic naturalism'. Regarding James's emergentism, both Bird and Sprigge have hinted that James may have endorsed a form of the doctrine, but neither have developed this line of thought in detail[20]. In chapter two we will present new insights that establish a definite mandate for an emergentist interpretation of James; and in chapter three we will provide a detailed reconstruction of James's emergentism that illustrates its relationship to the rest of his philosophy. As to James's critique of scientificism, although his various critical statements regarding science and 'scientificism' are well known, our own treatment is the first to consolidate those statements into a single coherent critique, and to demonstrate its relevance to contemporary liberal naturalist critiques of scientism and hyperscientific realism[21]. With respect to our reading of the pragmatic theory of truth as an evolutionary theory of cognition, whilst several commentators have noted the Darwinian inspiration for theory, our reading is totally original in drawing on contemporary studies in biology and cognitive science in order to exhibit previously unnoticed advantages of James's account. There is nothing new, of course, in panpsychist interpretations of James, but our analysis covers new ground by locating a brand new 'intrinsic nature argument' for panpsychism in James's work, and by utilizing recent studies of panpsychism to provide a more detailed classification of his version of the doctrine (specifically, as a form of 'emergent, layered, russellian panpsychism'). Regarding James's dispositional model of value experience, Graham Bird has indicated the natural synergy that James's ethical philosophy has with such models[22]. In chapter three we present a

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continues in the work of numerous biographers and commentators past and present. See: Ralph Barton Perry, *The Thought and Character of William James*, 2 vols (London: OUP, 1935)

[20] Bird suggests that both consciousness and values may be emergent for James. In the former case he gives very little detail as to how he envisions James's account. In the latter case he suggests that contemporary dispositional models of value experience would be a good fit for James's conception of emergent values. See: Bird, *William James*, p127; p146; p158; p175. Sprigge does not explicitly invoke the concept of emergence, but likens James's view of consciousness/mental causation in PP to that of Roger Sperry; a well-known contemporary proponent of the doctrine. See: Sprigge, *James and Bradley: American Truth and British Reality* (Chicago: Open Court, 1993), p71; p153.

[21] The most thorough treatment to date of James's philosophy of science occurs in chapter 3 of William Gavin's book, *William James and the Reinstatement of the Vague*. Gavin's treatment is more general and wide-ranging than our own, drawing on James's total corpus, and not just on WB. As a result, it is less detailed and less specific, attempting to formulate broad conclusions rather than precise arguments. Gavin focuses on James's instrumental stance toward scientific theories, but also touches, implicitly, on issues relating to normativity in science. See: William Joseph Gavin, *William James and the Reinstatement of the Vague* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1992), pp56-64

[22] Graham Bird, 'Moral Philosophy and the Development of Morality', in *The Cambridge Companion to William James*, ed. by R. A. Putnam, pp260-281

fresh reading of James's essay on 'The Place of Affectional Facts in a World of Pure Experience' according to which it implicitly contains such a model. Finally, a number of interpreters have recognized a naturalistic component in James's religious views, with Eugene Taylor for instance saying that the orthodox interpretation finds James to be committed to some form of "naturalistic theism"[23]. However, we go further than other interpreters in exploring the detailed nature of James's concept of God, and in establishing its relations to his mature ethical and metaphysical views[24].

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[23] Taylor, *William James on Consciousness Beyond the Margin* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996), p88

[24] Neil Williams provides an excellent contemporary account of James's ethical philosophy that highlights its relation to the metaphysics of radical empiricism. Williams's account, however, errs in our view in claiming that God drops out of James's ethics post-ERE. For our part, we agree with Michael Slater in assigning ethical importance to VRE, and in taking that text to imply a role for God in James's mature ethics. And we agree with David Lamberth that the core details of radical empiricism were settled prior to VRE. As such, we hold that God continued to play an important role in James's ethics throughout his career. See: Neil E. Williams, 'Realism, Individualism, and Pluralism: The Metaphysics and Ethics of William James' (Unpublished Doctoral Dissertation, The University of Sheffield, 2017)

Chapter 1 – The Varieties of Naturalism: Locating James

In the opening essay of De Caro's and Macarthur's *Naturalism in Question*, Barry Stroud presents a shrewd analysis of the concept of naturalism and its place in contemporary philosophy. He begins by noting the overwhelming popularity of the doctrine among contemporary philosophers. This popularity, he thinks, is unsurprising, because naturalism, in and of itself, contains very little that is controversial. The controversy only arises when philosophers try to prescribe what is and is not to be included in our concept of nature:

> "Naturalism" seems to me in this and other respects rather like "World Peace." Almost everyone swears allegiance to it, and is willing to march under its banner. But disputes can still break out about what it is appropriate or acceptable to do in the name of that slogan. And like world peace, once you start specifying concretely exactly what it involves and how to achieve it, it becomes increasingly difficult to reach and to sustain a consistent and exclusive "naturalism."[25]

Stroud, we shall see, is quite right about this. There are almost as many concepts of naturalism as there are philosophers to conceive them. In this first chapter, therefore, we will attempt to survey several important forms of the doctrine, and to define explicitly the various tenets to which they are committed. In doing so we will map the territory of philosophical naturalism, and develop a schema for categorizing varieties of the doctrine. This, in turn, will lay the conceptual groundwork for the rest of the project, introducing and defining the key concepts and terminology that will be used throughout.

The present chapter will consist of six sections. Section 1.1, on 'The Birth of Philosophical Naturalism', will explore the origins and development of philosophical naturalism. In doing so it will provide some vital historical context, and will demonstrate that the definition of naturalism has shifted back and forth between the poles of austerity and liberality since its inception. One important conclusion of section 1.1 will be that no single version of naturalism can legitimately claim to be 'the true naturalism'. Section 1.2, on 'Scientific Naturalism', will attempt to establish the core tenets of the most popular form of contemporary philosophical naturalism. This form of naturalism, as we shall see in chapter 2, is essentially similar to the mechanical naturalism which James aligned himself against in texts like VRE. Section 1.3, on 'Liberal Naturalism', will examine several of the doctrines and arguments put forward in De Caro and Macarthur's anthologies. We

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[25] Stroud, 'The Charm of Naturalism', in *Naturalism in Question*, ed. by De Caro & Macarthur, p22. This essay is a reprint of Stroud's 1996 presidential address to The American Philosophical Association. See: Barry Stroud, 'The Charm of Naturalism', *Proceedings and Addresses of the American Philosophical Association*, 70 (1996), pp43-55

shall see that the liberal naturalists define their position in contradistinction to scientific naturalism, and present a thoroughgoing critique of that doctrine. In chapter 2 we will discover that this critique was significantly foreshadowed by James's own critique of scientificism in WB. Section 1.4, on 'Radical Liberal Naturalism', will consider the possibility of a form of naturalism that rejects the causal closure of the physical, and endorses doctrines of emergentism and macro-causation. As we have noted, it is to the religious counterpart of this radical form of liberal naturalism that we think James's was committed. Finally, section 1.5, on 'Religious Naturalism', will give a brief overview of some doctrines of 'religious naturalism', and will provide a tabulated schema for categorizing the forms of naturalism considered so far. At the end of section 1.5 we will provisionally locate James's position in our schema; we will suggest that his philosophy constituted a form of 'radical religious naturalism'.

1.1.   The Birth of Philosophical Naturalism

When considering the origins and development of naturalism it is important to distinguish between 'philosophical naturalism' on the one hand, and what we might call 'the naturalistic spirit' on the other. The former is a relatively explicit philosophical doctrine whose origins can be traced to a group of American philosophers in the late 19th and early 20th century[26]. The latter is a more or less implicit attitude/approach to the world, characterised by a predominant interest in experience as opposed to a putative transcendent realm. Thus, we might say, in accordance with a somewhat stereotyped view of these thinkers, that Aristotle possessed the naturalistic spirit to a greater degree than Plato did[27]. In this section our main concern will be with philosophical naturalism rather than with the naturalistic spirit. Plotting the origins of this doctrine in detail would of course go far beyond the scope of this project. As such we have chosen to investigate them through a series of vignettes or snapshots of some early forms of the doctrine. In each case we have tried to choose examples that are at once representative and enlightening, and at the same time relevant to the broader content of this project. Thus, we begin with the mechanical naturalism of philosophers like Friedrich Paulsen, which James considered classic, and which

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[26] We have been unable to discover the first use of the term 'naturalism' in a sense continuous with the modern usage. Such figures as George Combe, Thomas Huxley, Herbert Spencer, and John Tyndall are among those frequently named as progenitors of the doctrine, but none of them appear to have actually employed the term. For more on the early origins of philosophical naturalism see: *The Age of Scientific Naturalism: Tyndall and His Contemporaries*, ed. by Bernard Lightman & Michael S. Reidy (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2016); Bernard Lightman, 'The "History" of Victorian Scientific Naturalism: Huxley, Spencer, and the "End" of Natural History', *Studies in History and Philosophy of Biological and Biomedical Sciences*, 58 (2016), pp17-23; John van Wyhe, *Phrenology and the Origins of Victorian Scientific Naturalism* (London: Routledge, 2004)

[27] James Pratt does in fact make this claim in his Lowell Lectures on *Naturalism*. See: Pratt, p22.

Ward had assailed in *Naturalism and Agnosticism*. We then move on to the evolutionary naturalism of Roy Wood Sellars, who explicitly invoked the concept of emergentism in articulating his view, and whose illustrious son Wilfrid became a key source of inspiration to modern day scientific naturalists. Next, we consider the 'critical naturalism' of James Pratt, who completed his PhD with William James at Harvard, and who presented one of the first essentially methodological doctrines of naturalism. And finally, we examine the 'new naturalism' of John Dewey, a long-term friend and colleague of James, who was converted to the doctrine by his reading of the latter's *Principles of Psychology*.

1.1.1. Some Early Forms of Naturalism

1.1.1.1. Mechanical Naturalism

The following quotation is taken from James's preface to the first American edition of Friedrich Paulsen's *Introduction to Philosophy*:

> There have always been two ways of thinking about Nature. For Christianity, e.g., Nature is something opposed to the truer unseen world, a surface of recoil to which we must first die. For the more pantheistic systems the relation of Nature to the Unseen is not one of contrast but rather of less and more – there is but one world, partly seen and partly unseen, and its evolution is simple and direct. Now if we give the name of "naturalism" to any specimen of the latter way of thinking which also asserts the universality of mechanistic determination throughout the universe, the present *Introduction to Philosophy* may be briefly described as an attempt so to state it as to make it harmoniously continuous with religious faith.[28]

James adds that Paulsen's "exposition of the naturalistic view as a whole is by the superiority of its form calculated to supersede all previous general statements" of the doctrine[29]. By the lights of contemporary philosophy, James's judgement in this regard is somewhat surprising. Paulsen was by no means the most reductively/materialistically inclined philosopher of his time. On the contrary, he appears to have endorsed a doctrine of priority-monism, for which the universe as a whole has existential primacy over its parts; and a universal psycho-physical identity theory, which amounted to a form of panpsychism. What then, about Paulsen's exposition, did James consider so definitive? We get a clue as to the answer from the quotation above. James says that there are two ways of thinking about nature: the broadly theistic (or dualistic), and the broadly pantheistic (or monistic). Naturalism is a species of the monistic way of thinking about nature "which also asserts the universality of mechanistic determination throughout the universe". In

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[28] William James, 'Preface', in Friedrich Paulsen, *Introduction to Philosophy*, trans. by Frank Thilly (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1895), p. iii-iv. Reprinted in: *The Works of William James: Essays in Philosophy*, ed. by Frederick Burkhardt (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 1978), pp90-93 (p92)
[29] James, 'Preface', in Paulsen, *Introduction to Philosophy*, trans. by Thilly, p. v

other words, it is a species of substance-monism which presupposes the scientific view of the world as an essentially deterministic, law-governed system. In Paulsen's words:

> The uniform reign of law in all natural occurrences is the principle of natural science. One domain after another has been made subject to this principle, and thus the thought gradually has come to prevail with irresistible force that all natural processes are to be considered as the results of uniformly-acting forces. … Whatever is not in accord with this thought lies outside of the sphere of modern philosophy.[30]

This, it seems, was the definitive feature of naturalism for James; its commitment to 'universal mechanistic determination'. It was this kind of mechanical naturalism that constituted the chief target of James Ward's critique in his Aberdeen Gifford lectures on *Naturalism and Agnosticism*; a critique which, as we have noted, James found to be decisive. According to Ward naturalism is defined by its commitment to three philosophical/scientific doctrines: i) the mechanical theory of nature, ii) the theory of evolution, and iii) the theory of epiphenomenalism[31]. Ward thought of the second and third of these doctrines as extensions of/extrapolations from the first.

i)   The Mechanical Theory of Nature

According to the mechanical theory of nature, all natural phenomena are fully explicable in terms of the science of mechanics (or physics). In practice, Ward says, this means that there is nothing that is "physically inexplicable"; biological and psychical phenomena "furnish no exceptions to purely physical laws"[32].

ii)   The Theory of Evolution

According to the theory of evolution, all the attributes of human beings – "not merely man's erect gait and noble bearing, but his speech, his reason, and his conscience too" – came about through a process of Darwinian evolution[33]. Furthermore, or so naturalists claim, this process is wholly "dysteleological" involving no hint of genuine purpose or design[34].

iii)   The Theory of Epiphenomenalism

According to the theory of epiphenomenalism all psychical phenomena are invariably accompanied by, and wholly dependent upon, a parallel set of physical phenomena. The

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[30] Paulsen, *Introduction to Philosophy*, trans. by Thilly, p. xii-xiii
[31] Ward, p. ix
[32] Ward, p9
[33] Ward, p7
[34] Ward, p6

psychical phenomena are causally inert, and have no effect whatsoever on the course of events in the physical world:

> The series of neural events – being physical – is already, so to say, closed and complete within itself, each neural state is held to be wholly the effect of the neural state immediately preceding it, and the entire cause of that directly following.[35]

We think it is legitimate to say that the core thesis of naturalism, in Ward's view, is one that is known in contemporary philosophy as 'the causal closure of the physical' (CCP). According to this thesis all causal power is confined to the lowest level of natural phenomena, and is governed by fundamental physical laws.

1.1.1.2. Evolutionary Naturalism

A quarter of a century after Ward's Gifford Lectures we find a neglected giant of American philosophy – Roy Wood Sellars – providing a very different take on the essential nature of the doctrine. For Sellars naturalism is distinguished from materialism precisely by its *rejection* of CCP, and by its endorsement of a doctrine of emergentism. According to the doctrine of emergentism, certain configurations of physical entities give rise to emergent entities/properties governed by emergent laws[36]. Thus, certain configurations of atoms give rise to molecules governed by chemical laws; certain configurations of molecules give rise to cells governed by biological laws; and certain configurations of cells give rise to neural structures governed by mental laws. In this way nature is stratified into a series of levels, each with its own distinctive domain of phenomena, each presided over by a different special science: chemistry, biology, psychology, etc. In Sellars's view those early naturalists who were the target of Ward's critique – who endorsed CCP, and adopted what he called 'the method of reduction' – had made a great error:

> Psychology was to become physiology; physiology, chemistry; and chemistry, physics. By such a process of repeated translation the assimilation of man was to be accomplished. That nature itself contained natural levels so that assimilation by reduction could only be carried through by being untrue to nature was not grasped. Dead-level mechanicalism forced a Procrustean bed upon naturalism; gave it a false task and ideal. And its lack of success lowered its prestige.[37]

What matters for Sellars is not the causal closure of the *physical*, but the causal closure of *nature* (CCN). Whatever levels and modes of causality nature may include, these levels must be conceived of as forming one, continuous, "space-time-causal system", not susceptible to influence

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[35] Ward, p11
[36] R. W. Sellars, 'Why Naturalism and not Materialism?', p224
[37] Roy Wood Sellars, 'The Emergence of Naturalism', *International Journal of Ethics*, 34 (1924), pp309-338 (p329)

from a supernatural realm[38]. This, for Sellars, is the difference between materialism and

naturalism. The former endorses CCP; the latter endorses CCN.

1.1.1.3. Critical Naturalism

Let us now jump forward once again to consider James Bisset Pratt's 1939 Lowell Lectures on

Naturalism at the University of Indiana. As we said earlier, they represent the introduction of an

important theme into naturalistic discourse; namely its emphasis on methodology. Pratt diverges

from both Ward and Sellars in refusing to identify naturalism with any particular metaphysical

doctrine:

> Of course the principal point I have tried to make is the distinction between a crude
> and a critical Naturalism; and the importance of identifying Naturalism not with any
> particular theory but with its empirical method and its truth-seeking aim. My little
> book I consider a defence of Naturalism against its most dangerous enemies; the
> majority of whom are usually found in the ranks of the "naturalists."[39]

Pratt is particularly concerned to resist the identification of naturalism with "some dogmatic form

of extreme Materialism or Mechanism"[40]. Thus, when he speaks of 'crude naturalism' he appears

to have in mind something like what we earlier called 'mechanical naturalism'. It seems likely

however that his suspicion of metaphysical forms of naturalism would extend to Sellars'

evolutionary naturalism, with its essential commitment to emergentism. Critical naturalism,

according to Pratt, is to be defined primarily in terms of its aim and its method. Its aim is at

nature, as opposed to some supernatural realm, and at truth, as opposed to comfort or

satisfaction[41]. Its method is the empirical method, defined in broad terms, without reference to

any special scientific method. Any theory or philosophy thus aligned deserves to be called

naturalistic.

1.1.1.4. The New Naturalism

Just five years after Pratt's Lowell Lectures we find a group of influential philosophers expounding

yet another version of naturalism. In *Naturalism and the Human Spirit,* the likes of John Dewey,

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[38] R. W. Sellars, 'Why Naturalism and not Materialism?', p217
[39] Pratt, p. ix-x
[40] Pratt, p2
[41] In this respect, he says, it is opposed to James's will-to-believe doctrine. Pratt evidently interprets said doctrine as implying a form of metaphysical idealism or constructionism. He says that "[Naturalism] is in sharp and conscious contrast to the Will-to-Believe. Its aim, as we have seen, is not propaganda; neither is it self-deception. It is seeking not a pleasant feeling state nor a comfortable belief, but the truth. And Naturalism believes that the truth is what it is, no matter what we think about it. Nature, the world of reality, has a character, a structure of its own, and our opinions are true only insofar as they conform to this actual situation." See: Pratt, pp3-4. In section 2.6.2.2, we will attempt to challenge idealist readings of the pragmatic theory of truth.

Sydney Hook, and Ernest Nagel defend a version of naturalism that places special emphasis on the *scientific* method. Thus, Dewey declares that "the naturalist is one who has respect for the conclusions of natural science"[42]; Hook defines naturalism as "the wholehearted acceptance of scientific method as the only reliable way of reaching truths about the world of nature, society, and man"[43]; and Abraham Edel insists that "reliance on scientific method, together with an appreciation of the primacy of matter and the pervasiveness of change, I take to be the central points of naturalism as a philosophical outlook"[44]. These statements appear to evince – and closer reading of *Naturalism and the Human Spirit* confirms this – a commitment on the part of the contributors to a thesis that today is known as 'scientism', according to which only science can give us knowledge/truth about reality. They may also be said to express a related methodological theme, according to which the methods of science are applicable to, and ought to be utilised in, every domain of inquiry. In an article-length review of the book written in the year following its publication Arthur E. Murphy suggests that this methodological theme is the most distinctive feature of the new naturalism:

> Starting from the acknowledged achievements of scientific inquiry so far, the "naturalists" intend to show that these same methods, or others essentially "continuous" with them, are adequate also to those aspects and dimensions of "the human spirit" which in the past have often been held on philosophical grounds to transcend the methods and aims of science.[45]

In addition to declaring their allegiance to the scientific method, the contributors to Krikorian's volume also took a definite stance regarding the causal closure of the physical. This stance is well expressed in a response on the part of Dewey, Hook, and Nagel, to a series of articles written by Yale philosopher and vocal critic of naturalism, W. H. Sheldon[46].

In the relevant articles, Dewey, Hook, and Nagel describe their position as a form of 'non-reductive materialism'[47]. Non-reductive materialism holds that "the occurrence of a mental event is contingent upon [but not *reducible* to] the occurrence of certain complex physico-chemico-

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[42] John Dewey, 'Antinaturalism in Extremis', in *Naturalism and the Human Spirit*, ed. by Yervant Krikorian (New York: Columbia University Press, 1944), pp1-16 (p2)

[43] Sidney Hook, 'Naturalism and Democracy', in *Naturalism and the Human Spirit*, ed. by Krikorian, pp40-64 (p45)

[44] Abraham Edel, 'Naturalism and Ethical Theory', in *Naturalism and the Human Spirit*, ed. by Krikorian, pp65-95 (p65)

[45] Arthur E. Murphy, 'Review of Naturalism and the Human Spirit', *Journal of Philosophy*, 42 (1945), pp400-417 (p405)

[46] Wilmon Henry Sheldon, 'Critique of Naturalism', *The Journal of Philosophy*, 42 (1945), pp253-270

[47] John Dewey, Sidney Hook, & Ernest Nagel, 'Are Naturalists Materialists?', *The Journal of Philosophy*, 42 (1945), pp515-530 (p519)

physiological events and structures"[48]. It is contrasted with 'reductive materialism', which holds that "the mental is simply identical with, or is "nothing but," the physical"[49], and that "every psychological term is *synonymous with*, or has *the same meaning* as, some expression or combination of expressions belonging to the class of physical terms"[50]. Neither reductive nor non-reductive materialism, so far as Dewey, Hook, and Nagel conceive of them, have any truck with the doctrine of emergentism:

> [The] structured object is not an *additional* thing which, in manifesting its properties, controls from some external vantage point the behaviour of its organized parts. The structured object in behaving the way it does behave under given circumstances is simply manifesting the behaviour of its constituents as related in that structure under those circumstances.[51]

In other words, Dewey, Hook, and Nagel endorse CCP. But for their endorsement of scientism and the methodological theme, they have more or less reverted back to the mechanical naturalism attacked by Ward in his 1896 Gifford lectures.

1.1.2. The Shifting Definition of Naturalism

W. H. Sheldon, in the aforementioned series of articles, mounts a 'Critique of Naturalism' in which he accuses the "new naturalists" of misappropriating the term 'naturalism' and turning it to novel and, he thinks, philosophically suspect uses. The new naturalists, according to Sheldon are simply attempting to rehabilitate the doctrine of materialism by giving it a new name:

> What then do the symposiasts we are to examine *really* stand for? As we all know, they *say* they stand for the study of nature by scientific method. But what do they mean by nature and by scientific method? To what does their usage of these words commit them? I now give point to the inquiry by a specific accusation. Namely, their usage of said words in the contexts of the book shows them to be materialists. Their naturalism is just materialism over again under a softer name. They claim to have superseded that perennial type of metaphysic; I believe they slip back into the same old rut.[52]

Sheldon does not provide much detail as to what, in his opinion, would constitute a more appropriate use of the term naturalism, but he does make the comment that the new use of the term differs, presumably for the worse, from the use employed by James Pratt in *Naturalism*[53]. Pratt, as we have seen, defined naturalism methodologically in terms of the disinterested pursuit

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[48] Dewey, Hook, & Nagel, p519
[49] Dewey, Hook, & Nagel, p518
[50] Dewey, Hook, & Nagel, p518
[51] Dewey, Hook, & Nagel, p521
[52] Sheldon, p254
[53] Sheldon, p253

of truth by way of 'the empirical method'. Sheldon, it seems, thought that Pratt's relatively liberal definition of naturalism was the more distinctive and useful one.

Clearly the definition of naturalism was undergoing quite rapid and significant changes even very early on in its development. In 1895-1899 Paulsen and Ward took for granted that naturalism was a relatively austere metaphysical doctrine, committed to the mechanical theory of nature. In 1924 Sellars considered that naturalism had broken free from mechanicalism and reductionism. Pratt, in 1939, likewise expressed a sense that the emergence of a more critical naturalism was in the offing. Thus, a shift in the understanding of naturalism in the direction of liberality seems to have occurred between 1899 and 1939. The publication of *Naturalism and the Human Spirit* in 1944 heralded yet another shift, this time, back in the direction of austerity. Thus, we see that movement between the poles of austerity and liberality has been a feature of our understanding and use of the term naturalism since its inception. Indeed, Pratt found that this same pattern extended all the way back to the first manifestations of the naturalistic spirit in ancient Greece. He considered that the austere naturalism of Democritus had given way to the more liberal naturalism of Aristotle, and saw his own 'critical naturalism' as inaugurating a similar transition away from the kind of 'crude naturalism' that was the subject of Ward's critique[54]. We should be wary then of claims to the effect that a particular (austere or liberal) form of naturalism is 'the true naturalism'.

The following three theses emerge during this early phase in the development of philosophical naturalism:

The Causal Closure of Nature (CCN): All causal power is confined to the one continuous space-time-causal system that we call 'nature'.

The Causal Closure of the Physical (CCP): All causal power is confined to the lowest level of natural phenomena (microphysical phenomena).

Scientism (SCI): Only science can provide us with knowledge/truth about reality

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[54] Pratt, p29

1.2. Scientific Naturalism

Roy Wood Sellars, in his essay on 'The Emergence of Naturalism', rejected what he called 'the method of reduction', according to which "Psychology was to become physiology; physiology, chemistry; and chemistry, physics." This method, he said, "forced a Procrustean bed upon naturalism; gave it a false task and ideal."[55] Twenty years later we found Dewey, Hook, and Nagel evincing similar suspicions about reductionism. They distinguished naturalism from 'reductive materialism', which holds that "the mental is simply identical with, or is "nothing but," the physical"[56], and that "every psychological term is *synonymous with*, or has *the same meaning* as, some expression or combination of expressions belonging to the class of physical terms"[57]. They doubted whether "any competent thinker has ever held such a view", and said that "very little can be said in its favor"[58]. What Dewey, Hook, and Nagel call 'reductive materialism' can, we suggest, be analysed in terms of its commitment to two key theses. First, what we shall call the 'principle of ontological reducibility' (POR), of which the statement that "the mental is simply identical with, or is "nothing but," the physical" is an apt expression. According to this thesis all higher-level entities and properties are identical with physical entities and properties. Second, what we shall call the 'principle of epistemological reducibility' (PER), according to which theories and discourse about higher-level entities and properties is reducible to theories and discourse about physical entities and properties. The statement above that "every psychological term is *synonymous with*, or has *the same meaning* as, some expression or combination of expressions belonging to the class of physical terms" can be said to express a particularly strong version of this thesis. In the present section we shall see that in the years following this early phase in the development of naturalism, philosophers' negative attitudes towards reductionism began to thaw. Ultimately, under the banner of 'scientific naturalism', the majority of professional philosophers would come to champion reductionism in one form or another. This process can be said to have begun already with Ernest Nagel, who, though he rejects the crude expression of PER quoted above, came to give a very influential defence of a more nuanced version of the thesis.

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[55] R. W. Sellars, 'The Emergence of Naturalism', p329
[56] Dewey, Hook, & Nagel, p518
[57] Dewey, Hook, & Nagel, p518
[58] Dewey, Hook, & Nagel, pp518-519

1.2.1. The Principle of Epistemological Reducibility

Nagel's most definitive defence of PER occurs in his 1970 essay, 'Issues in the Logic of Reductive Explanations'. He begins the essay by noting some examples of successful theory reduction in modern science:

> For example, as a consequence of this reductive process, the theory of heat is commonly said to be but a branch of Newtonian mechanics, physical optics a branch of electromagnetic theory, and chemical laws a branch of quantum mechanics. Moreover many biological processes have been given physicochemical explanations, and there is continuing debate as to the possibility of giving such explanations for the entire domain of biological phenomena.[59]

Clearly, Nagel thinks, something loosely describable as 'reduction' is possible in the realm of scientific theory. The question is: what form does reduction take, and what conclusions, if any, can we draw from it?

As to the first question, of what form reduction takes, Nagel outlines four broad possibilities: i) deduction, ii) correspondence, iii) replacement, and iv) instrumental analysis. Reduction by deduction occurs when the reduced theory is logically/mathematically deduced/derived from the reducing theory. This is only ever possible, according to Nagel, when the theories in question are 'homogeneous', meaning that the same set of terms appears in both. Thus, Kepler's laws of planetary motion have been reduced to Newton's theory of gravitation in the sense that the former have been derived from the latter. But this was only possible because both theories appealed to the same set of terms; e.g. distance, time, acceleration, etc. When two theories do not share the same set of terms they are said to be 'inhomogeneous'. In these cases, reduction by deduction is impossible. One cannot *deduce* the second law of thermodynamics from classical mechanics because the former contains the notion of 'heat' (temperature) whereas the latter does not. Some sort of 'correspondence rules' or 'bridge laws' are required, which offer an explanation (in the form of an empirical hypothesis) about the relation between the terms/referents of the theories[60]. Thus, the bridge law in the above case says that temperature corresponds to average translational kinetic energy. Given the appropriate bridge laws, Nagel

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[59] Ernest Nagel, 'Issues in the Logic of Reductive Explanations', in *Emergence: Contemporary Readings in Philosophy and Science*, ed. by Mark Bedau & Paul Humphreys (Cambridge MA: The MIT Press, 2008), pp359-373 (p360). This essay originally appeared as chapter 6 of: Ernest Nagel, *Teleology Revisited and Other Essays in the Philosophy and History of Science* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1979), pp95-113.

[60] E. Nagel, 'Issues in the Logic of Reductive Explanations', p366

thinks, reductions by correspondence are essentially similar to reductions by deduction; one can deduce/derive the reduced theory from the reducing theory *plus* the bridge laws.

In the case of heat or temperature the term which the bridge law explains refers to an attribute. In such cases bridge laws tend to specify the conditions, in terms of the reducing theory, under which the attribute occurs. Thus, we say that a gas has X temperature when the average translational kinetic energy of its molecules has Y magnitude[61]. In other cases, where the terms in question refer to *entities* rather than attributes, bridge laws may serve a different function; namely that of establishing *identities* between terms and their referents. For instance, the claim that 'the Morning star is identical with the Evening star' is an example of an identity-establishing bridge law in astronomy; and the claim that 'a water molecule is identical with two hydrogen atoms bonded to an oxygen atom' is an example of an identity-establishing bridge law in chemistry. Notice that identity-establishing bridge laws, unlike condition-specifying bridge laws, imply the *ontological* reducibility of the referents of the terms in question. Temperature *corresponds* to average translational kinetic energy; water *is* (i.e. is nothing but) H2O. Nagel suggests that "failure to distinguish between them [i.e. between identity-establishing bridge laws and condition-specifying bridge laws] is perhaps one reason for the persistence of the mistaken belief that reductive explanations establish the "unreality" of those distinctive traits of things mentioned in reduced laws."[62] Thus for Nagel (and Dewey and Hook) the mistake of reductive materialism, we may say, is its attempt to *identify* the mental with the physical, when it ought to have been content to *specify the physical conditions* under which the distinctive traits of the mental occur[63].

Finally, we consider the instrumental analysis of scientific reduction. Nagel provides the following excellent summary:

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[61] E. Nagel, 'Issues in the Logic of Reductive Explanations', p367
[62] E. Nagel, 'Issues in the Logic of Reductive Explanations', p368
[63] The third kind of reduction – or possible kind of reduction – is reduction by replacement. This is not really a distinct kind of reduction so much as a distinct interpretation of what scientific reduction entails. The chief proponent of this interpretation at the time of Nagel's writing was Paul Feyerabend, who criticized Nagel's conception on the basis that it took for granted the existence of a core of 'observation statements' – statements of observed fact that are independent of any theory – that could be appealed to in judging one theory (the reducer) to have included/subsumed another (the reduced). Feyerabend argued that observation statements are themselves theory-laden, and that they cannot therefore serve as an independent basis for claims of correspondence or identity between the terms of one theory and another. What the reductive process really consists in, he insists, is not the reduction of one theory to another, but the replacement of one theory by another. Nagel, while acknowledging that observation statements are dependent on theory to a degree, rejects the claim that they have no independent purchase on reality. See: Paul Feyerabend, *Explanation, reduction, and empiricism* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1962). Retrieved from the University of Minnesota Digital Conservancy, <http://hdl.handle.net/11299/184633>

> [This view] is usually advocated by thinkers who deny a cognitive status to scientific laws or theories, regarding them as neither true nor false but as rules (or "inference tickets") for inferring so-called "observation statements" (statements about particular events or occurrences capable of being "observed" in some not precisely defined sense) from other such statements.[64]

This view, in other words, tends to be advocated by 'scientific antirealists'. Such thinkers, Nagel says, hold that scientific theories do not represent reality in any straightforward sense, but rather that they constitute sets of rules for predicting what observations will result in particular circumstances. To put it crudely, they hold that theories about imperceptible entities like elementary particles for instance, do not necessarily tell us anything about little balls of matter whizzing around below the observable level; they tell us about what readings we can expect to see on our instrument dials given a particular experimental set up. As such, they take the following view of reduction:

> The claim that a theory T (e.g., the corpus of rules known as thermodynamics) is reduced to another theory T' (e.g., the kinetic theory of gases) would therefore be interpreted as saying that all the observation statements which can be derived from given data with the help of T can also be derived with the help of T', but not conversely.[65]

Thus, the instrumental analysis of reduction abstains from addressing questions about the content of scientific theories and confines itself to establishing the comparative ranges of observable phenomena to which the theories are applicable. Nagel, for his part, thinks that the instrumentalist approach is overly cautious, and ultimately incomplete[66].

Although the instrumental approach to scientific reduction, and to science in general, was, for a time, in the ascendant, the philosophical consensus has, for the time being, come down in favour of Nagel. The majority of contemporary philosophers adopt some form of scientific realism, and endorse some form of the reductionist project. The success of reductionism in Sellars's day may have been limited, but with the advent of quantum mechanics and the successful reduction of large parts of chemistry to physics and biology to chemistry, the fecundity of the reductive method is no longer in doubt. Many philosophers and scientists, contra Nagel's warnings, have taken this success to imply the truth of universal ontological reducibility. Even in the present day, when the prospects for full epistemological reduction are doubted by many scientific naturalists,

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[64] E. Nagel, 'Issues in the Logic of Reductive Explanations', p364
[65] E. Nagel, 'Issues in the Logic of Reductive Explanations', p365
[66] E. Nagel, 'Issues in the Logic of Reductive Explanations', p365

the principle of ontological reducibility is still popular. In the next section we will attempt to tell part of the story of the increasingly widespread acceptance of POR.

1.2.2. The Principle of Ontological Reducibility

The increasingly widespread acceptance of the principle of ontological reducibility could be demonstrated with reference to the work of any number of philosophers, but we have chosen Wilfrid Sellars, the son of Roy Wood Sellars, for this purpose. We have done this partly for the sake of continuity, but mainly because Sellars (from now on 'Sellars' is Wilfrid Sellars unless otherwise specified) provided, in any case, probably the most influential expression of this thesis of any philosopher in the twentieth century. Furthermore, others of his ideas, as we shall see, have been highly influential on contemporary naturalism, so it will be doubly efficient to make his acquaintance at this early stage.

The ideas most relevant to the present subject, namely POR, occur very distinctively in Sellars's seminal essay on 'Philosophy and the Scientific Image of Man'[67]. It is here that he draws the now famous distinction between 'the manifest image' and 'the scientific image'. He characterises the manifest image as a refinement and development of 'the original image', where the original image is "the framework in terms of which man came to be aware of himself as man-in-the-world. … the framework in terms of which, to use an existentialist turn of phrase, man first encountered himself"[68]. The manifest image affirms the full reality of "persons, animals, lower forms of life and 'merely material' things, like rivers and stones"[69]. It also affirms the reality of "sensation, image, feeling, conscious or unconscious thought"[70], and of values, rights, and duties[71]. In other words, the manifest image includes irreducible wholes (and by implication a commitment to emergentism), consciousness, intentionality, and normativity. Sellars pointedly emphasizes the fact that the manifest image is not simply the naive and pre-scientific worldview of primitive man; it is an intellectually respectable refinement of that worldview, incorporating everything that it can of contemporary science and philosophy. But he goes on to tell us that "There is, however, one type of scientific reasoning which it, by stipulation, does not include, namely that which involves the postulation of imperceptible entities, and principles pertaining to them, to explain

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[67] Wilfrid Sellars, 'Philosophy and the Scientific Image of Man', in *Science, Perception and Reality* (California: Ridgeview Publishing Company, 1963)
[68] W. Sellars, 'Philosophy and the Scientific Image of Man', in *Science, Perception and Reality*, p6
[69] W. Sellars, 'Philosophy and the Scientific Image of Man', in *Science, Perception and Reality*, p9
[70] W. Sellars, 'Philosophy and the Scientific Image of Man', in *Science, Perception and Reality*, p22
[71] W. Sellars, 'Philosophy and the Scientific Image of Man', in *Science, Perception and Reality*, p39

the behaviour of perceptible things"[72]. This type of scientific reasoning, which is governed by what Sellars calls the 'principle of reducibility'[73], is the foundation of the scientific image:

> If an object is in a strict sense a system of objects, then every property of the object must consist in the fact that its constituents have such and such qualities and stand in such and such relations or, roughly, every property of a system of objects consists of properties of, and relations between, its constituents.[74]

At first glance this might look like another version of CCP, but in fact it is a much stronger thesis. Sellars does not just think that higher level phenomena are without causal power; he thinks that the properties of higher-level phenomena "consist of", or are identical with, properties of lower-level phenomena. This then, is nothing other than the principle of ontological reducibility which Dewey, Hook, and Nagel had so vehemently rejected. Sellars, pace his eminent forebears, thinks it is a principle that science cannot do without, and which the success of science confirms.

And so, an obvious problem comes into view: the manifest and scientific images do not appear to fit together. How can one and the same object – a human being for instance – be both an irreducible whole, possessing consciousness, and responsive to reason and value, and, at the same time, a system of particles, devoid of non-physical properties, blindly obeying physical laws? Sellars thinks there are broadly three options open to us for solving the problem. 1) manifest objects are reducible to the objects of physics without remainder, 2) the objects of physics are just abstract or symbolic ways of representing manifest objects, and are reducible to manifest objects without remainder, or 3) manifest objects are 'appearances' of a reality that is constituted by the objects of physics, and these appearances are ultimately identical with systems of such objects (i.e. with brain states)[75]. Sellars thinks that option 1 amounts to abolishing the manifest image altogether, and finds it ultimately unacceptable. Option 2 does the reverse, abolishing the scientific image, and is likewise unacceptable. The most viable of these alternatives in Sellars's view is option 3. He therefore endorses the primacy of the scientific image, but suggests a strategy of sympathetic reduction rather than all-out elimination of the manifest image. He supposes that there must be "sufficient structural similarities" between manifest objects and their scientific counterparts to account for the success of the manifest image, but warns against piecemeal attempts to elucidate such structural similarities[76]. Rather he thinks that the job of philosophers should be to establish the best possible version of each image, and to let them stand

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[72] W. Sellars, 'Philosophy and the Scientific Image of Man', in *Science, Perception and Reality*, p7
[73] This is the inspiration for our use of the terms 'principle of ontological reducibility' and 'principle of epistemological reducibility'.
[74] W. Sellars, 'Philosophy and the Scientific Image of Man', in *Science, Perception and Reality*, p27
[75] W. Sellars, 'Philosophy and the Scientific Image of Man', in *Science, Perception and Reality*, p26
[76] W. Sellars, 'Philosophy and the Scientific Image of Man', in *Science, Perception and Reality*, p 28

side by side[77]. As to how he envisions the relationship between the final versions of the images, one of his most memorable and oft quoted statements makes this clear:

> [O]f course, as long as the existing framework [the manifest image] is used, it will be *incorrect* to say – otherwise than to make a philosophical point *about the framework* – that no object is really coloured, or is located in Space, or endures through Time. But, *speaking as a philosopher*, I am quite prepared to say that the common sense world of physical objects in Space and Time is unreal – that is, that there are no such things. Or, to put it less paradoxically, that in the dimension of describing and explaining the world, science is the measure of all things, of what is that it is, and of what is not that it is not.[78]

Sellars's position here can be said to express a doctrine known today as 'scientific realism'. Scientific realism states, contra instrumentalism and positivism, that the entities postulated by science, including unobservable ones, really do exist. Indeed, Sellars goes further than this, straying into a kind of 'hyperscientific realism': he says not only that such entities exist, but that *only* such entities exist.

1.2.3. The Methodological Thesis of Naturalism

In the previous section we saw that the 'new naturalists' – the contributors to Krikorian's anthology – began to develop a methodological theme of naturalism, according to which philosophy ought to employ scientific methods in the study of the human spirit. However, as Jaegwon Kim remarks in an article on 'The American Origins of Philosophical Naturalism', the American naturalists, with the possible exception of Ernest Nagel, seem to have been relatively uncritical (compared, for example, with the logical positivists) about the question of *how* the methods of science ought to be applied in philosophy[79]. In an address to the American Philosophical Association published in 1944 Nagel suggests that philosophers ought to stop emulating the system-builders of the past, attempting to contribute to some supposed perennial philosophy, and ought instead to imitate the strategy of modern science by directing their energies toward "the resolution of limited problems and puzzles that emerge in the analysis of scientific and ordinary discourse"[80]. He even raises the question of whether philosophy ought to become "a specialized positive science"[81]. This is about as explicit as this methodological theme

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[77] W. Sellars, 'Philosophy and the Scientific Image of Man', in *Science, Perception and Reality*, p19
[78] Wilfrid Sellars, 'Empiricism and the Philosophy of Mind', in *Science, Perception and Reality*, p173
[79] Jaegwon Kim, 'The American Origins of Philosophical Naturalism', *Journal of Philosophical Research*, 28, (2003), pp83-98 (p87)
[80] Ernest Nagel, 'Naturalism Reconsidered', *Proceedings and Addresses of the American Philosophical Association*, 28, (1954-1955), pp5-17 (p6)
[81] E. Nagel, 'Naturalism Reconsidered', p6

becomes in this phase of the development of naturalism. In the decades that followed however, it became a dominant feature of the most popular forms of the doctrine.

Willard Van Orman Quine in particular is credited with having brought this methodological theme to the fore. Having studied under Rudolph Carnap, Quine's background was in logical positivism. The logical positivists are notable for their combination of scientism, scientific antirealism, and phenomenalism. They believed that scientific inquiry was the only means of arriving at truth about the world, but that the imperceptible entities postulated by science were abstractions reducible to manifest objects; specifically, one class of manifest objects, namely sensations[82]. The positivists envisioned a relatively sharp separation between science and philosophy, with scientists discovering facts about the world, and philosophers submitting these facts to conceptual analysis. Quine's great contribution to the development of naturalism came in the form of his undermining of some of the assumptions of logical positivism. In his now famous essay 'Two Dogmas of Empiricism' he argued against both the possibility of reducing the objects of the sciences to sensation, and against the sharp distinction between analytic and synthetic truths (and therefore, as he saw it, between philosophy and science)[83]. He concluded that there need not be any such thing as 'first philosophy' with a goal of grounding, justifying, or otherwise domesticating science. Rather, the best philosophy will itself be *continuous* with science. As he would later comment:

> [M]y position is a naturalistic one; I see philosophy not as an *a priori* propaedeutic or groundwork for science, but as continuous with science. I see philosophy and science as in the same boat – a boat which, to revert to Neurath's figure as I so often do, we can rebuild only at sea while staying afloat in it. There is no external vantage point, no first philosophy.[84]

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[82] The logical positivists may therefore be said to have opted for the second of Wilfrid Sellars's strategies for reconciling the manifest and scientific images.

[83] Willard Van Orman Quine, 'Main Trends in Philosophy: Two Dogmas of Empiricism', *Philosophical Review*, 60 (1951), pp20-43

[84] Willard Van Orman Quine, 'Natural Kinds', in *Ontological Relativity and Other Essays* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1969), pp126-127. Quine's mention of "Neurath's figure" refers to Otto Neurath's analogy between the project of science and a boat at sea: "There is no way to establish fully secured, neat protocol statements as starting points of the sciences. There is no *tabula rasa*. We are like sailors who have to rebuild their ship on the open sea, without ever being able to dismantle it in dry-dock and reconstruct it from its best components. Only metaphysics can disappear without a trace. Imprecise 'verbal clusters' [*Ballungen*] are somehow always part of the ship. If imprecision is diminished at one place, it may well reappear at another place to a stronger degree." See: Otto Neurath, 'Protocol Statements', in *Philosophical Papers 1913-1946*, ed. by Robert S. Cohen & Marie Neurath (Dordrecht: Reidel, 1983), pp91-99 (p92)

In another well-known essay, 'Epistemology Naturalized', Quine indicated what he meant by philosophy that is continuous with science, and gestured at the direction in which he hoped naturalistic philosophy would develop[85]. He later summarised his view as follows:

> Naturalism does not repudiate epistemology, but assimilates it to empirical psychology. Science itself tells us that our information about the world is limited to irritations of our surfaces, and then the epistemological question is in turn a question within science: the question how we human animals can have managed to arrive at science from such limited information. Our scientific epistemologist pursues this inquiry and comes out with an account that has a good deal to do with the learning of language and with the neurology of perception. He talks of how men posit bodies and hypothetical particles, but he does not mean to suggest that the things thus posited do not exist. Evolution and natural selection will doubtless figure in his account, and he will feel free to apply physics if he sees a way.[86]

Here we see the aforementioned methodological theme developed to its limit. Naturalistic philosophy does not just respect, utilise, and imitate science; it *is* science. It investigates the history and logic of the sciences and their methods. It tries to bring the findings of the different sciences together into a single intelligible scheme. It works at the frontiers and peripheries of the sciences, attempts to trace the contours of unknown territory, to establish the sorts of questions that are worth asking, and to develop methodologies for approaching those questions. When it is sufficiently successful in a given area, it breaks off from the rest of philosophy and actually *becomes* a special science. This is part of the story of cognitive science, the field that occupies Quine's famous pupil Daniel Dennett (and indeed, as James himself acknowledged, it is also part of the story of psychology[87]). Such was Quine's vision, and it is a vision that is now shared by large numbers of philosophers, and by the majority of philosophers who call themselves naturalists. In their recent widely-read anthology *Naturalism in Question* Mario De Caro and David Macarthur call this Quinean brand of naturalism 'scientific naturalism'[88]. They identify projects that have been carried out in the spirit of scientific naturalism in ontology[89], epistemology[90], and

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[85] Quine, 'Epistemology Naturalized', in *Ontological Relativity and Other Essays,* pp69-90

[86] Willard Van Orman Quine, 'Five Milestones of Empiricism', in *Theories and Things* (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 1981), p72

[87] William James, *Some Problems of Philosophy* (New York: Longman's Green, and Co., 1911), pp9-10. For reasons of accessibility we generally refer to first editions of James's works (links to digitized versions of which are provided in the bibliography). We refer to the Harvard edition of *The Works* only when they contain material that cannot be found in the first editions.

[88] De Caro & Macarthur, 'Introduction: The Nature of Naturalism', in *Naturalism in Question*, ed. by De Caro & Macarthur, pp1-13

[89] De Caro and MacArthur cite: David Armstrong, *Universals and Scientific Realism*, 2 vols (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1978). We add: James Ladyman & Don Ross, *Everything Must Go: Metaphysics Naturalized* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007)

[90] De Caro and MacArthur cite: Quine, *Theories and Things*; Philip Kitcher, 'Naturalists Return', *The Philosophical Review*, 101 (1992), pp53-114; *Naturalizing Epistemology*, ed. by Hilary Kornblith (Cambridge MA: MIT Press, 1994)

semantics[91]. We might add that similar projects exist in the philosophy of mind[92], ethics[93], and the philosophy of religion[94]. This is just a tiny sample of the work being done today in this Quinean spirit. Contemporary analytic philosophy journals abound with articles devoted to the finer points of such naturalization projects.

In addition to the three theses discussed so far, scientific naturalism may be said to endorse the following:

The Principle of Epistemological Reducibility (PER): Theories/discourse about all entities is reducible to theories/discourse about their lowest level parts/properties of their lowest level parts.

The Principle of Ontological Reducibility (POR): All entities/properties are wholly reducible to their lowest level parts/properties of their lowest level parts.

Hyperscientific Realism (HSR): Only entities postulated by scientific theories are real.

The Methodological Thesis of Naturalism (MTN): Philosophy is continuous with science.

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[91] De Caro and MacArthur cite: Barry Loewer, 'A Guide to Naturalizing Semantics', in *A Companion to the Philosophy of Language*, ed. by Bob Hale & Crispin Wright (Oxford: Blackwell, 1997)

[92] See: Fred Dretske, *Naturalizing the Mind* (Cambridge MA: MIT Press, 1997); Daniel Dennett, *Consciousness Explained* (UK: Penguin, 1993)

[93] See: *Ethical Naturalism: Current Debates*, ed. by Susana Nuccetelli & Gary Seay (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012). See also: Peter Railton, 'Moral Realism', *The Philosophical Review*, 95 (1986) pp163-207; Richard Boyd, 'How to Be a Moral Realist', in *Essays on Moral Realism*, ed. by Geoffrey Sayre-McCord (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1988)

[94] Owen Flanagan, *The Bodhisattva's Brain: Buddhism Naturalized* (Cambridge MA: The MIT Press, 2011)

1.3. Liberal Naturalism

Not surprisingly given its reductive pretensions, scientific naturalism has attracted a number of critics from both within and outside of the movement. The contributors to De Caro and Macarthur's anthology endorse a doctrine of 'liberal' or 'expansive naturalism' which rejects the thesis of scientism, as well as the principle of epistemological reducibility (PER) and strong versions of the methodological thesis of naturalism (MTN). Many of the contributors also reject the principle of ontological reducibility (POR), and some seem to have doubts about the causal closure of the physical (CCP)[95]. De Caro and Macarthur suggest that, for all of their contributors, expansive naturalism shares four general features: i) it represents a shift in philosophical focus from nonhuman nature to human nature, ii) it endorses a nonreductive attitude to normativity, iii) it conceives philosophy as in some respects autonomous from scientific method, and iv) it acknowledges the disunity of the sciences; "not just that there is no single method or set of methods that is properly called *the* scientific method, but, more than this, that there is no clear, uncontroversial, and useful definition of science to do the substantial work scientific naturalists require of it"[96]. In the first essay of the anthology, 'The Charm of Naturalism', Barry Stroud helps to flesh out the distinctive content of liberal naturalism:

> What I am calling open-minded or expansive naturalism says we must accept everything we find ourselves committed to in accounting for everything that we agree is so and want to explain. We want to explain the thoughts, beliefs, knowledge, and evaluative attitudes that we think people have got. If mathematical and logical truths have to be accepted in order to make sense of those attitudes, then they must be accepted, however in some sense "non-natural" they might seem. If some evaluative propositions must be endorsed in order even to recognize the evaluative attitudes of others, then evaluative states of affairs must be included too, however difficult it might be to decide which particular evaluations are correct. If we have to hold that objects are colored in order to specify and acknowledge all the perceptions and beliefs that we know people have, then the colors of things must be allowed into the picture, and not in reductionist form.[97]

Liberal naturalists, we may say, are committed to preserving the manifest image within a naturalistic framework. In this spirit, Donald Davidson defends his anomalous monism, and its thesis that psychological concepts are indispensable for the understanding of human thought and

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[95] In particular, see John Dupre, 'The Miracle of Monism', in *Naturalism in Question*, ed. by De Caro & Macarthur, pp36-58

[96] De Caro & Macarthur, 'Introduction: The Nature of Naturalism', in *Naturalism in Question*, ed. by De Caro & MacArthur, pp14-15. We note that the doctrine known as 'pragmatic naturalism', which we mentioned in the introduction, shares many of the features enumerated here. Indeed, it is probably best described as a species of liberal naturalism that places special emphasis on the social/instrumental nature of human inquiry. We will have cause to examine pragmatic naturalism in more detail in chapter 2 (section 2.6.2.2).

[97] Stroud, 'The Charm of Naturalism', in *Naturalism in Question*, ed. by De Caro & Macarthur, p34

action, and irreducible to the concepts of physics, chemistry, and biology[98]; Hilary Putnam argues for the possibility of a "conceptual pluralism" for which ethical statements and statements of meaning and reference are bona fide forms of rational discourse, governed by norms of truth and validity[99]; John Dupre defends the doctrine of the disunity of science, and rejects CCP[100]; John McDowell argues that naturalism ought to include reasons and values as sui generis natural items[101]; and Akeel Bilgrami argues that intentional facts and normative facts do not supervene on physical facts[102].

1.3.1. Liberal Naturalism and Science

In section 1.1.2 we saw that the so-called 'new naturalists' – the contributors to Krikorian's anthology – endorsed a thesis known today as scientism. As Sidney Hook put it, they accepted 'the scientific method' as "the only reliable way of reaching truths about the world of nature, society, and man"[103]. This thesis immediately suggests certain conclusions. Firstly, it suggests that subjects such as the nature of society and man – subjects originally held to be in the domain of philosophy rather than science – ought in fact to be investigated using the methods of science. The implication is that philosophy, if it is to continue investigating these subjects, ought to utilize those methods in its investigations. This is what we called the methodological thesis of naturalism (MTN). Another conclusion, which we saw exemplified in the work of Wilfrid Sellars, is that the deliverances of science take precedence over those of common sense, and that where the two are in conflict, science is to be preferred. This notion of the precedence of science over common-sense, when it pertains to the reality of entities postulated by physics, may be said to express a doctrine of '*hyper*scientific realism', according to which *only* the unobservable entities postulated by physics are real[104]. Concomitant with this doctrine is the principle of ontological reducibility (POR), according to which all properties are identical with properties of such entities. Liberal naturalists, as we have just seen, reject most of these theses. They reject scientism, MTN, PER, and often POR; and they resist hyperscientific realism, preferring a reconciliatory approach

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[98] Donald Davidson, 'Could There Be a Science of Rationality?' in *Naturalism in Question*, ed. by De Caro & Macarthur, pp152-169

[99] Hilary Putnam, 'y Naturalism', in *Naturalism in Question*, ed. by De Caro & Macarthur, pp59-70

[100] Dupre, 'The Miracle of Monism', in *Naturalism in Question*, ed. by De Caro & Macarthur, pp36-58

[101] John McDowell, 'Naturalism in the Philosophy of Mind', in *Naturalism in Question*, ed. by De Caro & Macarthur, pp91-105

[102] Akeel Bilgrami, 'Intentionality and Norms', in *Naturalism in Question*, ed. by De Caro & Macarthur, pp125-151

[103] Sidney Hook, 'Naturalism and Democracy', in *Naturalism and the Human Spirit*, ed. by Krikorian, p45

[104] We owe this formulation to Mario De Caro. See: Mario De Caro, 'Introduction: Putnam's Philosophy and Metaphilosophy', in Hilary Putnam, *Naturalism, Realism, and Normativity*, ed. by Mario De Caro (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 2016), p6

to the deliverances of science and common sense. They therefore envision a very different relationship between naturalism and science than that advocated by scientific naturalists.

In this section we will discuss this relationship under three heads. In section 1.3.1.1 we will consider some varieties of scientism, and some of its consequences, and we will look at the liberal naturalist critique of that thesis. In section 1.3.1.2 we will consider the liberal naturalist critique of hyperscientific realism, which is itself a natural consequence of strong versions of scientism. Finally, in section 1.3.1.3, we will discuss the disunity of science thesis, paying special attention to John Dupre's exposition of it in De Caro and MacArthur's anthology and elsewhere. Our reasons for examining the liberal naturalist critique of scientific naturalism are twofold. Firstly, it is largely through its opposition to scientific naturalism, as established in this critique, that liberal naturalism is defined. Understanding it is therefore essential to grasping what is distinctive about the liberal naturalist position. Secondly, as we shall see in chapter 2, the liberal naturalist critique of scientific naturalism overlaps at several points with James's critique of scientificism. We will argue that James's critique, like that of the liberal naturalists, does not evince hostility towards naturalism, but only expresses his frustration with a particularly austere form of it.

1.3.1.1. Critique of Scientism

We have said that scientism stands for the claim that "only science can provide us with knowledge of reality". There are however a number of distinct varieties of scientism that are worth distinguishing between. Varieties of scientism differ first, according to their strength, second, according to their liberality or austerity (or broadness/narrowness[105]), and third, according to their scope. As regards strength, they may claim, i) that only science can *reliably* provide us with knowledge of reality (weak scientism), ii) that only science can provide us with knowledge of reality (scientism), or iii) that only science can provide us with knowledge and *understanding* of reality (strong scientism)[106]. The liberality or austerity of doctrines of scientism refers to the range of sciences they include as possible providers of knowledge. Thus, we may say that liberal scientism includes the human and social sciences; regular scientism (or just 'scientism') includes only the natural sciences, of physics, chemistry, and biology; and austere scientism says that *physics alone* can provide knowledge of reality. Finally, doctrines of scientism vary as to their

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[105] We owe this formulation to David Macarthur. See: David Macarthur, 'Taking the Human Sciences Seriously', in *Naturalism and Normativity*, ed. by De Caro & Macarthur, pp123-141

[106] 'Understanding' here signifies a less detached/theoretical and more intuitive/practical sense of knowledge. Thus, we might say that acquaintance with the art of the ancient Greeks gives us an *understanding* of their culture that purely scientific knowledge cannot touch.

scope. There can be scientism about metaphysics, scientism about ethics, and scientism about reality as a whole.

The new naturalists, we may say, were mostly proponents of weak liberal scientism about reality as a whole, but they were particularly concerned with the application of the methods of science to 'the human spirit'. Wilfrid Sellars and Willard van Orman Quine would probably be classified as proponents of austere scientism about reality as a whole. Someone like Sam Harris, as regards his project in *The Moral Landscape*, might be said to advocate liberal scientism about ethics[107]. James Ladyman and Don Ross, in their recent polemic *Everything Must Go*, advocate austere scientism about metaphysics[108]. Finally, Alex Rosenberg is a well-known contemporary proponent of strong austere scientism about reality as a whole[109]. Liberal naturalists stand opposed to all these forms of scientism. At the very least they wish to include such enterprises as history and the humanities as possible providers of knowledge of reality[110]. Many would contend that such things as art, religion, and common-sense are providers, if not of knowledge, then at least of *understanding* of reality[111]. Accordingly, they view philosophy as basically autonomous from science. This does not mean that philosophers ought not to respect the findings of science, and even to imitate its methods to some degree; it means that philosophy has a right to exist as an independent enterprise, with a subject matter of its own. Furthermore, they see it as a significant role of philosophy, pace Sellars and Quine, to attempt to reconcile the scientific and manifest images; to fit such phenomena as intentionality, normativity, and phenomenal consciousness *into* nature, rather than eliminating them from it. In what follows we will consider some of the prima facie difficulties with scientism, and some of the detailed arguments against it.

As soon as one thinks about scientism for a moment, one begins to spot certain prima facie difficulties with the doctrine. Chief among these are the fact that it discounts all sorts of seemingly bona fide instances of knowledge as genuine examples of knowledge. If anything more than weak scientism is true, then beliefs based on perception, memory, and introspection do not count as knowledge. You do not *know*, for instance, that you are reading this dissertation. You do not even know that you are having a *conscious experience* of reading this dissertation. Indeed,

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[107] Sam Harris, *The Moral Landscape* (New York: Free Press, 2010)

[108] Ladyman & Ross, *Everything Must Go: Metaphysics Naturalized*

[109] Alex Rosenberg, *The Atheist's Guide to Reality* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2011); see also: Alex Rosenberg, 'Strong Scientism and Its Research Agenda', in *Science Unlimited?*, ed. by Maarten Boudry & Massimo Pigliucci (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2017), pp203-224

[110] See: MacArthur, 'Taking the Human Sciences Seriously', in *Naturalism and Normativity*, ed. by De Caro & Macarthur, pp123-141; Philip Kitcher, 'The Trouble with Scientism: Why History and the Humanities Are Also a Form of Knowledge', in *Science Unlimited?*, ed. by Boudry & Pigliucci, pp109-120

[111] See: Massimo Pigliucci, 'Scientism and Pseudoscience: In Defense of Demarcation Projects', in *Science Unlimited?*, ed. by Boudry & Pigliucci, pp185-202

contra Descartes, you do not even know that you exist. Neither, by the way, do beliefs based on

basic logical and mathematical intuitions count as knowledge. You do not know that Socrates is

mortal, even if you know that Socrates is a man and that all men are mortal. And the same goes

for beliefs based on ethical, aesthetic, and religious intuitions: that murdering children is wrong,

and that it is not beautiful or holy. This, of course, is a highly counter-intuitive result, and explains

the rejection of scientism among the vast majority of human beings. Philosophical critics of

scientism are not of course content to reject it on the basis of counter-intuitiveness alone; rather,

they formulate explicit arguments against it. We will consider two such arguments in the

remainder of this section: first, 'the fundamental argument', and second, 'the argument from

non-scientific values/principles in science'.

i)   The Fundamental Argument

Versions of the fundamental argument against scientism have been suggested or implied for over

a century, but the philosopher Rik Peels was the first person to name it, and to formulate it as an

explicit argument[112]. His own formulation, which takes the form of a reductio ad absurdum, is

rather long and technical, so we present a shortened version below:

- P1: Scientism holds that only science can provide us with knowledge of reality.

- P2: In order for a belief-source to count as a provider of knowledge, belief-sources which
    it presupposes upon must count as providers of knowledge.

- P3: Science presupposes such belief-sources as perception, memory, and
    logical/mathematical intuitions.

- P4: Science counts as a provider of knowledge.

- P5: Perception, memory, and logical/mathematical intuitions count as providers of
    knowledge

- C2: Scientism is absurd.

The argument, we contend, is valid. The conclusion follows from the premises. Furthermore, P1

is simply a statement of the thesis of scientism, P4 is implied by P1, and P5 is entailed by P2, P3,

and P4. The weight of the argument therefore rests entirely on P2 and P3. Of these, P3 is hardly

controversial[113]. P2 is a little trickier, but Peels argues convincingly that familiar considerations of

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[112] Rik Peels, 'The Fundamental Argument Against Scientism', in *Science Unlimited?*, ed. by Boudry & Pigliucci, pp165-184

[113] Consider the following: "[A]stronomers cannot investigate supernova S Andromedae if they do not rely on visual perceptions when the make observations through a telescope. A biologist investigating the rhinoceros hornbill, one of Borneo's many birds, in the rainforest will inevitably use her auditory perception. A chemist cannot continue her research on the molecular structure of a newfound substance if

so-called Gettier cases make it highly plausible[114]. If premises 2 and 3 hold, then scientism looks to be in a bad spot. The proponent of scientism can however modify the doctrine so as to evade the fundamental argument. Instead of scientism, he can endorse scientism 2.0: 'only science and the belief-sources it presupposes can provide us with knowledge of reality'. Scientism 2.0 concedes that perception, memory, and logical/mathematical intuition count as potential providers of knowledge, but it excludes ethical, aesthetic, and religious intuitions. This leads us to our second argument, according to which science itself involves certain ethical/aesthetic intuitions, and so those intuitions ought not to be discounted as potential providers of knowledge, or as contributors to belief-sources that are providers of knowledge.

ii)   The argument from non-scientific values/principles in science

The argument in this case takes exactly the same form as the fundamental argument except that it substitutes 'non-scientific values/principles' for 'perception, memory, and logical/mathematical intuitions'. The key premise that needs defending is now premise 3, which reads: 'Science presupposes non-scientific values/principles as sources of belief'. Two questions immediately arise in connection with this premise. *How* does science presuppose non-scientific values/principles, and *which* non-scientific values/principles does it presuppose? Various answers to these questions are possible. According to early philosophers of science like Charles Churchman (a student of William James at Harvard) and Richard Rudner, science presupposes certain epistemic values in deciding the evidential value of particular results[115]. Thomas Kuhn later acknowledged the role of epistemic values in theory selection, but argued that science could remain objective provided it did not appeal to non-epistemic values[116]. Subsequent philosophers have challenged the notion that there is any definite boundary between epistemic and non-epistemic values, and have argued that scientists' choices of epistemic values are often shaped by

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she does not rely on her memory of what she did yesterday or even a few seconds ago. And a mathematician working on her proof for the Riemann hypothesis can do her work only if she trusts her basic mathematical intuitions about calculation." See: Peels, 'The Fundamental Argument Against Scientism', in *Science Unlimited?*, ed. by Boudry & Pigliucci, p166.

[114] "Imagine, for example, that there is a dog in the field in front of me, but that I take it to be a sheep and, therefore, believe that there is a sheep in the field. My belief that there is a sheep in the field, though, happens to be true, because, unbeknownst to me, there is a sheep behind a large rock in the field. In that case, I do not know that there is a sheep in the field, even though my belief is true … Thus, it is hard to see how a belief can constitute knowledge if it is based on a belief that fails to be an instance of knowledge." See: Peels, 'The Fundamental Argument Against Scientism', in *Science Unlimited?*, ed. by Boudry & Pigliucci, p171.

[115] Charles Churchman, 'Statistics, Pragmatics, Induction', *Philosophy of Science*, 15 (1948), pp249-268; Richard Rudner, 'The Scientist Qua Scientist Makes Value Judgements', *Philosophy of Science*, 20 (1953), pp1-6

[116] Thomas Kuhn, 'Objectivity, Value Judgement, and Theory Choice', in *The Essential Tension*, ed. by Thomas Kuhn (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1977) pp320-339

social values[117]. More recently it has been argued that certain aesthetic values have a place in theory choice too[118]. Finally, according to the influential feminist critique of science, science presupposes social values which further the agenda of powerful institutions; e.g. science itself and the institutions which support it[119]. In this last case of course, it can hardly be argued that the values in question contribute to the *success* of science as a knowledge producing enterprise, but it is worth mentioning all the same. The overall point is that the ideal of science as a value-free enterprise is a false one.

If the above arguments are convincing, then scientism is already on shaky ground. In the final part of this section (1.3.1.3) we will investigate the disunity of science thesis, which itself constitutes a powerful argument against scientism. If, after all, "there is no clear, uncontroversial, and useful definition of science to do the substantial work scientific naturalists require of it", then there can be no sense in saying that only science can provide us with knowledge of reality. But first, we will look at the liberal naturalist critique of hyperscientific realism. The disunity thesis, we shall see, bears on that critique also.

1.3.1.2. Critique of Hyperscientific Realism

Next, we wish to consider the liberal naturalist critique of hyperscientific realism. First, we must map out the doctrine of scientific realism in more detail. As with scientism, a number of varieties and permutations of the doctrine are possible. We have already noted the distinction between scientific realism, which says that entities postulated by science really exist, and hyperscientific realism, which says that *only* entities postulated by science really exist. Doctrines of realism also differ, like doctrines of scientism, as regards their liberality or austerity. Thus, liberal scientific realism says that entities postulated by *all* sciences, including the human and social sciences, really exist; regular scientific realism (or just 'scientific realism') says that entities postulated by the natural sciences really exist; and austere scientific realism says that entities postulated by physics really exist. This may also be expressed in terms of the belief that the *kinds* of entities postulated by the relevant sciences constitute 'natural kinds' (as opposed to mere patterns[120]).

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[117] Phyllis Rooney, 'On Values in Science: Is the Epistemic/Non-Epistemic Distinction Useful?', *PSA: Proceedings of the Biennial Meeting of the Philosophy of Science Association*, 1 (1992), pp13-22
[118] James McAllister, 'Is Beauty a Sign of Truth in Scientific Theories?', *American Scientist*, 86 (1998), pp174-183
[119] *Feminism and Science*, ed. by Evelyn Keller & Helen Longino (Oxford: OUP, 1996)
[120] Daniel Dennett for instance argues that certain things which philosophers usually take to be natural kinds ought really to be understood as 'real patterns'; i.e. real patterns of lower-level phenomena. See: Daniel Dennett, 'Real Patterns', *The Journal of Philosophy*, 88 (1991) pp27-51. Dennett's discussion pertains specifically to certain putative psychological kinds such as beliefs. For a more wide-ranging discussion see: Ladyman & Ross, *Everything Must Go*, pp190-257.

Thirdly, doctrines of realism can differ in assigning more or less weight to the notion of the convergent nature of scientific truth. Some realists will want to claim that the entities postulated by *today's* science really exist; others – so-called 'convergent realists' – will be more cautious, and say that science is *converging* on theories whose postulated entities will exist. Finally, certain philosophers endorse what is called 'structural realism'. Structural realists hold that the structural properties (as opposed to supposedly intrinsic properties, and opposed to entities) described by physics really exist.

Thus, we may say that Roy Wood Sellars endorsed liberal scientific realism; the instrumentalists and positivists of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century endorsed scientific antirealism; and Wilfrid Sellars endorsed austere hyperscientific realism. Alex Rosenberg is an example of a contemporary proponent of austere hyperscientific realism who gives relatively little weight to the notion of the convergent nature of scientific knowledge. He holds that only the most basic entities described by physics, substantially as they are described by *today's* physics, really exist[121]. Liberal naturalists are typically scientific realists of some description, but they are united in laying great weight on the notion of the convergent nature of scientific knowledge, and in rejecting *hyper*scientific realism. In the remainder of this section we will briefly consider a pair of famous arguments against realism that serve to establish the importance of the notion of the convergent nature of scientific knowledge. Then, in section 1.3.1.3, we will investigate the disunity of science thesis, which cuts against doctrines of hyperscientific realism.

i)   The Argument from Underdetermination

The argument from underdetermination generally takes Pierre Duhem's famous underdetermination thesis as its starting point. In *The Aim and Structure of Physical Theory* Duhem argued that physical theories are underdetermined by data in at least two respects[122]. First, scientific data consists in highly *precise* and accordingly *approximate* measurements taken using scientific instruments. This approximate data must then be made determinate by the use of averages etc., and translated into a symbolic form wherein it can become part of a physical theory. Any given data set, Duhem insists, because of its approximate nature, is susceptible to an infinite number of different and incompatible symbolic translations (i.e. an infinite number of theoretical formulations)[123]. The theory, therefore, is underdetermined by the data. Secondly, and more importantly, Duhem argues that any given hypothesis in physics presupposes a large

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[121] A. Rosenberg, *The Atheist's Guide to Reality*, p21
[122] Pierre Duhem, *The Aim and Structure of Physical Theory*, trans. by Philip Wiener (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1954)
[123] Duhem, p152

number of auxiliary theories and hypotheses. No set of data therefore, can directly verify or

falsify a single hypothesis. The most it can do is show that at least one hypothesis in a given

theory-group is false. Thus, even when one is sure that hypothesis A fits the data better than

hypothesis B (where both A and B presuppose theory-group X), one cannot possibly be sure that

an entirely different theory-group, Y, will not generate hypotheses that fit the data just as well as

A[124]. According to the argument from underdetermination, this creates a presumptive concern

for realism. If, for any given set of data, there are multiple hypotheses/theory-groups that fit that

data equally well, and if, moreover, these hypotheses/theory-groups differ in their description of

postulated entities/properties, then why should we suppose that a given theory's description is

correct/realistic?[125]

ii)   The Pessimistic Meta-Induction

The next argument we wish to discuss is called a pessimistic induction or a pessimistic meta-

induction. In full, it is referred to as 'the pessimistic meta-induction from the history of science to

scientific anti-realism'. Hilary Putnam gives a classic summary in an article entitled 'What is

Realism?'[126]. The history of science contains numerous examples of theories whose terms turned

out, after subsequent discoveries, not to refer to any existing entities (i.e. the ether and

phlogiston). "What if this keeps happening?", Putnam asks; "What if *all* the theoretical entities

postulated by one generation … invariably "don't exist" from the standpoint of later science?"[127]:

> [T]he following meta-induction becomes overwhelmingly compelling: *just as no term*
> *used in the science of 50* (or whatever) *years ago referred, so it will turn out that no*
> *term used now* (except maybe observation terms, if there are such) *refers*.[128]

Putnam suggests that the force of this argument is curbed to some degree if we employ the

principle of charity in interpreting the reference of terms in scientific theories. Consider the

following. Bohr did not assign electrons the property of complementarity of position and

momentum, whereas current theories do. Strictly speaking therefore, we might wish to say that

Bohr's term 'electron' did not refer to the same entity as our term 'electron'; indeed, that from

the standpoint of current science, Bohr's term 'electron' did not refer to anything at all. However,

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[124] Duhem, p187. For an illuminating example, see Dupre's discussion of Leverrier's and Adams's prediction
of the existence and orbit of Neptune (section 1.3.1.3).

[125] We note that the underdetermination thesis is also often invoked as a part of the argument from non-
scientific values/principles in science against scientism. It is because scientific theories are
underdetermined by data that there is a gap, as it were, through which for non-scientific factors to enter
into the equation.

[126] Hilary Putnam, 'What is Realism?', *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society*, 76 (1975), pp177-194

[127] H. Putnam, 'What is Realism?', p183

[128] H. Putnam, 'What is Realism?', p184

Bohr's electrons shared various properties in common with our current electrons: one to each hydrogen atom, negative unit charge, appropriate mass, etc. If we employ the principle of charity, Putnam suggests, it does not seem unreasonable to identify the referent of Bohr's term 'electron' with that of current science. At the same time however, there are clearly instances in which the principle of charity cannot be so reasonably employed. Phlogiston and the ether would be two such instances; Larry Laudan lists various others in his widely-read article, 'A Confutation of Convergent Realism'[129]. In these cases, the referents of terms in successful scientific theories really did turn out simply not to exist. The convergence of scientific knowledge is not always a smooth process. At the same time as we employ the principle of charity therefore, we ought also to employ a precautionary principle. We should not be over-zealous about declaring the reality of entities postulated by current scientific theories, and we should not be overly confident about how closely current theories approximate to the truth.

iii)   Structural Realism

The aforementioned 'structural realists' take a message from the critique of scientific realism. Even if the entities postulated by older theories tend not to be preserved in newer theories, *something*, at any rate, *is* preserved. This something (or these somethings), they contend, are the relational or structural properties of the states of affairs described by the theories. We find the roots of this contention already in Poincaré:

> [T]here is in them [older theories] something which usually survives. If one of them has taught us a true relation, this relation is definitively acquired, and it will be found again in a new disguise in the other theories which will successively come to reign in place of the old.[130]

Building on this insight, John Worrall coined the term 'structural realism' in his 1989 article, 'Structural Realism: The Best of Both Worlds?'[131]. Since then a number of philosophers have contributed to the development of structural realism into a rigorous and systematic position[132]. We suggest that it is a natural fit for liberal naturalists because it allows, potentially, for a more

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[129] Larry Laudan, 'A Confutation of Convergent Realism', *Philosophy of Science*, 48 (1981), pp19-49 (p33)
[130] Henri Poincaré, *The Foundations of Science*, trans. by George Bruce Halsted (New York: The Science Press, 1921), p351
[131] John Worall, 'Structural Realism: The Best of Both Worlds', *Dialectica*, 43 (1989), pp99-124
[132] For instance: Ladyman & Ross, *Everything Must Go*, pp66-129; Simon Saunders, 'To What Physics Corresponds', in *Correspondence, Invariance, and Heuristics*, ed. by Steven French & Harmke Kamminga (Dordrecht: Kluwer, 1993), pp295-326; Harvey Brown, 'Correspondence, Invariance, and Heuristics in the Emergence of Special Relativity', in *Correspondence, Invariance, and Heuristics*, ed. by French & Kamminga, pp227-260; Jonathan Bain & John Norton, 'What Should Philosophers of Science Learn from the History of the Electron?', in *Histories of the Electron*, ed. by Jed Buchwald & Andrew Warwick (Cambridge MA: The MIT Press, 2001), pp451-465; Holger Lyre, 'Holism and Structuralism in U(1) Gauge Theory', *Studies in History and Philosophy of Modern Physics*, 35 (2004), pp643-670.

reconciliatory approach to the relation between the scientific and manifest images. The scientific image, according to structuralism, is an image of the *structural properties* of the world. And structural properties, by stipulation, may coexist with (may even *require*) *intrinsic properties*. This leaves open the possibility that the properties of the manifest image which liberal naturalists wish to preserve may have the status of intrinsic properties. Now, however, is not the time to consider the details of how such a reconciliation might be affected. Instead, we move on to the disunity of science thesis, which, we said, constitutes a powerful argument against both scientism and hyperscientific realism.

1.3.1.3. The Disunity of Science

Of the contributors to De Caro and MacArthur's anthology, the key defender of the disunity thesis is John Dupre. He elects to analyse it negatively, in terms of its opposition to a counter-thesis; namely that of the 'unity of science'. The renowned biologist Richard Lewontin articulates the unity thesis in common-sense terms when he says that "[h]istorians of science, epistemologists, and, when they are in a contemplative mood, natural scientists picture science as having a single mode or form."[133] According to Dupre, a number of different versions of the unity thesis are possible, but the most prevalent asserts unity on the basis of a shared 'scientific method'. The most popular candidate for such a method, in recent decades, is usually taken to be falsificationism. But according to Dupre, the notion that scientific method consists in falsification has been on shaky ground for decades. As Thomas Kuhn (building on the work of Duhem) is credited with having shown, actual as opposed to idealized scientific practice simply does not proceed by falsification[134]. Any scientific theory will have a large number of premises and presuppositions. As such, any supposed falsification of a theory – any negative result of an experiment – may point to any one of a number of faulty premises rather than to the falsity of the theory itself. Upon finding negative results scientists will typically seek, and often find, possible faulty premises of a theory rather than abandoning the theory:

> A classic case is that of the inference by Leverrier and Adams from unexplained irregularities in the orbit of Uranus to the existence of the planet Neptune. These irregularities were not, needless to say, taken as refuting Newtonian mechanics, but rather as motivating a search for the erroneous assumption, a search that culminated in the prediction of the existence and orbit of Neptune.[135]

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[133] Richard Lewontin, 'Facts and the Factitious in Natural Science', *Critical Inquiry,* 18 (1991), pp140-153 (p141)

[134] Thomas Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996)

[135] John Dupre, *The Disorder of Things* (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 1993), p231

Dupre insists that no serious rivals to falsificationism have been developed since. And this, he thinks, is not particularly surprising. Different scientific projects are developed in order to answer very different questions, and their methods must differ accordingly. This is especially true in the modern day, in which advances in technology have allowed for the development of entirely novel kinds of scientific methodology[136].

The solution, Dupre thinks, is to treat science as a family-resemblance concept[137]. This means abandoning the search for some set of essential properties that a thing must possess in order to be called 'scientific', and instead allowing that "there will be a number, perhaps an indefinite number, of features characteristic of parts of science, and every part of science will have some of these features, but very probably none will have all."[138] This does not of course mean that Dupre considers astrology, for instance, to have the same epistemic status as physics. Rather, he suggests that all knowledge-producing enterprises, including scientific ones, should be judged on the basis of their actual epistemic virtues; virtues like "sensitivity to empirical fact, plausible background assumptions, coherence with other things we know, exposure to criticism from the widest variety of sources, and no doubt others"[139]. This has immediate consequences for the theses of scientism and hyperscientific realism, and for the methodological thesis of naturalism. If there is no clear definition of science, then there is little sense in claiming that only science can provide us with knowledge of reality, or in claiming that only entities postulated by science really exist. Dupre thinks that disunity should encourage us to accept all sufficiently epistemically virtuous knowledge-producing enterprises as potentially providing knowledge of reality. Likewise, we might suppose, it should encourage us to accept entities/properties postulated by epistemically virtuous knowledge-producing enterprises as potentially real (colours, numbers, values, etc.). As regards the methodological thesis of naturalism, it means that although philosophy may aspire to some of the same epistemic virtues that the sciences embody, and perhaps to imitate some of the *methods* (in the plural) utilized by the sciences, little is gained by claiming any radical continuity between philosophy and science.

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[136] See: Dupre, 'The Miracle of Monism', in *Naturalism in Question*, ed. by De Caro & Macarthur, pp43-46
[137] Wittgenstein famously argued that certain general concepts are applicable not because their referents share a single essence but because they partake of a single set of overlapping 'family resemblances': "We are inclined to think that there must be something in common to all games, say, and that this common property is the justification for applying the term "game" to the various games; whereas games form a *family* the members of which have family likenesses. Some of them have the same nose, others the same eyebrows and others again the same way of walking; and these likenesses overlap." See: Ludwig Wittgenstein, *The Blue and Brown Books* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1958), p16
[138] Dupre, *The Disorder of Things*, p242
[139] Dupre, *The Disorder of Things*, p243

1.3.2. Liberal Naturalism and Emergence

Liberal naturalists are committed to a "nonreductive attitude" towards normativity (and also towards intentionality and consciousness[140]). In many cases, this nonreductive attitude rises to the level of an explicit commitment to the epistemological and/or ontological irreducibility of these phenomena. Another way of putting this, in the terms of contemporary analytic philosophy, is to say that these phenomena are weakly (i.e. epistemologically) and/or strongly (i.e. ontologically) emergent. Emergence, we may say, is the opposite of reducibility. To the extent, therefore, that liberal naturalism is characterised by a comparatively nonreductive attitude, it is characterised by a comparatively emergentistic attitude. The concept of emergence, we suggest, and its associated terminology, is of great use in capturing what is distinctive about liberal naturalism. In this section we therefore propose to investigate liberal naturalism through the lens of emergence and emergentism. Our reasons for doing so are threefold. Firstly, in emergentism we find many of the key doctrines of liberal naturalism brought together in a single well-established philosophical tradition, with conceptual tools already at hand for dealing with the relevant ideas, problems, and distinctions. Secondly, in section 1.4, on 'Radical Liberal Naturalism', we are going to attempt to establish the possibility of an even more liberal version of naturalism, and we think that it is best distinguished from liberal naturalism in terms of its endorsement, and liberal naturalism's rejection, of certain classic emergentist doctrines. Thirdly, the emergentist tradition, the origins of which are commonly dated to 1843 (with the publication of John Stuart Mill's *A System of Logic*[141]), provides an ideal bridge between James and his contemporaries and the more modern varieties of naturalism[142]. Indeed, a number of commentators note elements of emergentist doctrines in James's philosophy, with Brian McLaughlin even naming him (along with Roy Wood Sellars) as an American counterpart of the British Emergentists[143].

The concept of emergence, in its most basic sense, may be said to express the intuition that certain entities are 'more than the sums of their parts'. These entities, it says, or certain of their properties, are *emergent* from their parts, or from the properties of their parts. Such

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[140] De Caro & Macarthur, 'Introduction: The Nature of Naturalism', in *Naturalism in Question*, ed. by De Caro & Macarthur, p14

[141] John Stuart Mill, *A System of Logic* (New York: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1889)

[142] For an illuminating discussion of the historical relationship between the Pragmatic and Emergentist traditions that touches on James's indebtedness to early emergentists like Mill and Fechner, see: Charbel Niño El-Hani & Sami Pihlström, 'Emergence Theories and Pragmatic Realism', *Essays in Philosophy*, 3 (2002), article 3, <http://commons.pacificu.edu/eip/vol3/iss2/3>

[143] Brian McLaughlin, 'The Rise and Fall of British Emergentism', in *Emergence: Contemporary Readings in Philosophy and Science*, ed. by Bedau & Humphreys, pp19-59 (p25)

entities/properties are taken to be in some sense *dependent* on their parts, and in some sense *autonomous* from them[144]. The exact sense of this dependence/autonomy differs from one doctrine of emergentism to the next[145]. Two broad notions of emergence are commonly invoked in contemporary philosophy: weak emergence and strong emergence. Weakly emergent entities/properties are dependent on their parts in the sense of being ontologically reducible to them, and autonomous in the sense of being epistemologically irreducible to them. Strongly emergent entities/properties are dependent on their parts in the sense of supervening on them[146], and autonomous in the sense of being both ontologically and epistemologically irreducible to them. According to some philosophers, strongly emergent entities/properties must also possess macro-causal power over and above the causal power of their parts. It is however conceivable that an entity/property could be strongly emergent in the sense of being ontologically irreducible to its parts without possessing any macro causal power, as per epiphenomenalism. We may think epiphenomenalism crude and implausible, but it is certainly conceivable, and philosophers not infrequently commit themselves to it unintentionally, so we will generally employ the notion of strong emergence in the sense described above, distinguishing it from the often-attendant doctrine of macro-causation[147].

The doctrine of emergence first came to the fore with the tradition of British Emergentism in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. With the rise of reductionism in the twentieth century, it entered a period of dormancy. In recent decades there has been a marked resurgence of interest in the concept of emergence. Some form of emergentism is now endorsed by the majority of professional philosophers. However, questions about how best to understand emergence, and about how prevalent emergent phenomena are, are still hotly debated. There are those – perhaps the majority – who endorse weak emergentism about particular phenomena, but who reject strong emergentism and macro-causation. Most scientific naturalists and a few liberal naturalists are in this category. Then there are those who endorse strong emergentism about particular phenomena, but who reject macro-causation. It appears that the majority of

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[144] We owe this formulation to Mark Bedau. See: Mark Bedau, 'Downward Causation and Autonomy in Weak Emergence', in *Emergence: Contemporary Readings in Philosophy and Science*, ed. by Bedau & Humphreys, pp155-188 (pp155-157)

[145] For an excellent and exhaustive review of contemporary notions of emergence that highlights various technical issues and distinctions in the doctrine, see: Achim Stephan, 'Varieties of Emergence in Artificial and Natural Systems', *Zeitschrift für Naturforschung C*, 53 (1998), pp639-656

[146] See the 'List of Abbreviations' for details.

[147] Jaegwon Kim notes that some of the British Emergentists defined their position in contradistinction to epiphenomenalism, as essentially entailing the attribution of macro-causal power to emergent entities/properties. In the interest of clarity, we prefer to distinguish between doctrines of strong emergentism and macro-causation. See: Jaegwon Kim, 'Making Sense of Emergence', in *Emergence: Contemporary Readings in Philosophy and Science*, ed. by Bedau & Humphreys, pp127-153 (p129)

liberal naturalists are in this camp. Finally, there are those who endorse both strong emergentism and macro-causation. Of these, some are more conservative, holding that only phenomenal consciousness, or only mental phenomena are strongly emergent/causally powerful[148], and others endorse something closer to classic British Emergentism, with various 'natural levels' of causally powerful entities[149].

Regarding the contributors to De Caro and Macarthur's anthology, we may say the following: Hilary Putnam is a weak emergentist about intentionality and ethical norms[150]; Donald Davidson is a weak emergentist about mental phenomena and norms of rationality[151]; David Macarthur is a weak emergentist about the phenomena of psychology and sociology[152]; John Dupre is at least a weak emergentist, and possibly a strong emergentist, about the phenomena of biology[153]; Mario De Caro and Alberto Voltolini are strong emergentists about modal properties[154]; John McDowell is a strong emergentist about normativity[155]; Akeel Bilgrami is a strong emergentist about intentionality and normativity, and may attribute macro-causal power to them[156]; Erin Kelly is a strong emergentist about ethical norms[157]; Jennifer Hornsby seems to be a strong emergentist about agency (which would presumably involve a commitment to macro-causation)[158]; and Carol Rovane is a strong emergentist about, and attributor of macro-causal power to, persons and personal identity[159]. A key commonality among the liberal naturalists, we contend, is their

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[148] See for instance: David Chalmers, 'Strong and Weak Emergence', in *The Re-Emergence of Emergence*, ed. by Philip Clayton & Paul Davies (Oxford: OUP, 2006), pp244-254

[149] See for instance: Roger Sperry, 'Mind-Brain Interaction: Mentalism, Yes; Dualism, No', in *Neuroscience*, 5 (1980), pp195-206; Roger Sperry, 'In Defense of Mentalism and Emergent Interaction', *The Journal of Mind and Behaviour*, 12 (1991), pp221-246

[150] H. Putnam, 'The Content and Appeal of "Naturalism", in *Naturalism in Question*, ed. by De Caro & Macarthur, pp59-70

[151] Davidson, 'Could There Be a Science of Rationality?', in *Naturalism in Question*, ed. by De Caro & Macarthur, pp152-169

[152] Macarthur, 'Taking the Human Sciences Seriously', in *Naturalism and Normativity*, ed. by De Caro & Macarthur, pp123-141

[153] Dupre, 'The Miracle of Monism', in *Naturalism in Question*, ed. by De Caro & Macarthur, pp36-58; John Dupre, 'How to be Naturalistic Without Being Simplistic in the Study of Human Nature', in *Naturalism and Normativity*, ed. by De Caro & Macarthur, pp289-303

[154] Mario De Caro & Alberto Voltolini, 'Is Liberal Naturalism Possible?', in *Naturalism and Normativity*, ed. by De Caro & Macarthur, pp69-86

[155] McDowell, 'Naturalism in the Philosophy of Mind', in *Naturalism in Question*, ed. by De Caro & Macarthur, pp91-105

[156] Bilgrami, 'Intentionality and Norms', in *Naturalism in Question*, ed. by De Caro & Macarthur, pp125-151

[157] Erin Kelly, 'Against Naturalism in Ethics', in *Naturalism in Question*, ed. by De Caro & Macarthur, pp259-274; Erin Kelly & Lionel McPherson, 'The Naturalist Gap in Ethics', in *Naturalism and Normativity*, ed. by De Caro & Macarthur, pp193-204

[158] Jennifer Hornsby, 'Agency and Alienation', in *Naturalism in Question*, ed. by De Caro & Macarthur, pp173-187

[159] Carol Rovane, 'A Nonnaturalist Account of Personal Identity', in *Naturalism in Question*, ed. by De Caro & Macarthur, pp231-258

endorsement of at least weak emergentism and often of strong emergentism about intentionality and normativity. Strangely, none of the contributors explicitly address the phenomenon of consciousness (perhaps because it is so well covered elsewhere), but a number of philosophers who are prima facie locatable in the liberal naturalist tradition view consciousness as an emergent phenomenon. As such we propose, in what follows, to give a brief overview of the liberal naturalist's conception of intentionality, normativity, and consciousness.

1.3.2.1. Intentionality

Intentionality, to give a brief and simplistic definition, may be characterised as 'aboutness'. It is "the power of minds and mental states to be about, to represent, or to stand for, things, properties and states of affairs"[160]. Franz Brentano, who is credited with having first articulated the notion, famously claimed that it was an essential characteristic of mental phenomena, and a characteristic essentially lacking from physical phenomena[161]. From this he concluded that intentionality was in principle irreducible to physical phenomena, and that an autonomous science of intentionality – i.e. phenomenology – was therefore required to investigate it. As Quine was later to point out, however, it is possible to draw a quite contrary conclusion from Brentano's thesis:

> One may accept the Brentano thesis as either showing the indispensability of intentional idioms and the importance of an autonomous science of intention, or as showing the baselessness of intentional idioms and the emptiness of a science of intention. My attitude, unlike Brentano's, is the second.[162]

For Quine, as for contemporary scientific naturalists, the notion of the irreducibility of intentionality is problematic. This is because intentionality, as common-sense conceives it, looks to be a very unusual sort of property by the standards of modern science. Alex Rosenberg puts the problem in the following way. Intentionality, he says, requires that one clump of stuff – a collection of neural connections in the human brain – be *about* another clump of stuff – a physical object outside the brain – and requires that it do so all by itself and without the aid of an interpreter. This, he thinks, is impossible:

> Physics has ruled out the existence of clumps of matter of the required sort. There are just fermions and bosons and combinations of them. None of that stuff is just, all

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[160] Pierre Jacob, 'Intentionality', *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. by Edward N. Zalta (Spring 2019 Edition) <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2019/entries/intentionality/> [accessed: 19/10/2019]

[161] Franz Brentano, *Psychology from an Empirical Standpoint*, trans. by Antos C. Rancurello, D. B. Terrell & Linda L. McAlister (London: Routledge, 1995), p88

[162] Willard Van Orman Quine, *Word and Object* (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 1998), p221

by itself, about any other stuff. … So, when consciousness assures us that we have thoughts *about* stuff, it has to be wrong.[163]

Scientific naturalists, therefore, typically take a reductionist stance towards intentionality, either eliminating it outright or attempting to provide a reductive analysis of it that does not compromise on a physicalist ontology. Liberal naturalists, by contrast, are typically more concerned to accommodate the common-sense notion of intentionality, with Akeel Bilgrami for instance arguing that intentional properties are strongly emergent from physical properties[164].

1.3.2.2. Normativity

If intentionality can be simplistically characterized as 'aboutness' then normativity can be simplistically characterized as 'oughtness'. It is, we might say, the power of events, entities, and states of affairs to establish obligations. More generally, it is anything that pertains to obligating, justifying, warranting, meriting, or otherwise rationally/ethically requiring. Wilfrid Sellars famously characterized phenomena that involve normativity in terms of their belonging in 'the logical space of reasons'[165]. John McDowell, building on this notion, developed the distinction between the 'space of reasons' and the 'space of nature'. Objects in 'the space of reasons' hang together by essentially normative relations of rational justification or warrant. Objects in the space of nature hang together by the essentially nomological relations studied by the natural sciences. My reason for making coffee – that I am feeling sleepy and would like to feel more awake – does not cause me to make coffee in the way that gravity causes an apple to fall to the ground. I am responsive to reasons, and so might be persuaded not to make coffee, but to make tea instead, or to go without. In other words, my coffee-making behaviour involves a normative element. By contrast, normativity plays no role in the behaviour of the apple falling to the ground. Gravity is not a reason to which the apple is responsive; it is a strict law that the apple obeys irrespective of its capacities. It would be absurd to offer the fact of gravity as a rational justification for an action, just as it would be absurd to offer a reason or intention as a strict law bound cause of some physical event. "The contrast", McDowell suggests, "is such as to suggest that the content of concepts that belong in the space of reasons, such as the concept of knowledge, cannot be captured in terms of concepts that belong in the contrasting logical space, the space of placement in nature"[166].

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[163] A. Rosenberg, *The Atheist's Guide to Reality*, p179
[164] Bilgrami, 'Intentionality and Norms', in *Naturalism in Question,* ed. by De Caro & Macarthur, pp125-151
[165] W. Sellars, 'Empiricism and the Philosophy of Mind', in *Science, Perception and Reality*, p169
[166] McDowell, 'Naturalism in the Philosophy of Mind', in *Naturalism in Question*, ed. by De Caro & Macarthur, p91

Now, this seeming irreducibility of normativity gives rise to a dilemma much like the one discussed above, with reference to intentionality. One may interpret McDowell's thesis either as mandating the autonomous study of normativity, or as showing normativity to be baseless and empty. Scientific naturalists, fearing that the former option may require the postulation of queer quasi-platonistic metaphysical entities, typically take the latter[167]. Liberal naturalists, unencumbered by such fears, typically take the former. Thus, McDowell himself proposes a "naturalized Platonism", in which the space of reasons, although sui generis and irreducible, is only accessible to natural beings who have acquired the appropriate conceptual capacities and have been educated in their use. The space of reasons, he says, "could not float free of potentialities that belong to a normal human organism", and this, he thinks "gives human reason enough of a foothold in the realm of law to satisfy any proper respect for modern natural science"[168]. McDowell suggests that reasons and values could be understood analogously to secondary qualities: as dispositional properties of objects/states of affairs to merit, in conjunction with appropriately educated cognitive capacities, certain evaluative judgements[169]. This analysis, we contend, is easily construed in emergentist terms.

1.3.2.3. Consciousness

When speaking about consciousness in the context of the emergentist/reductionist debate it is important to distinguish between two popular senses of the term. On the one hand there is the common-sense or functional notion of consciousness, according to which it is one special function of the brain among others; implicated, perhaps, in cognition or in wakefulness. On the other, there is the philosophical notion of 'phenomenal consciousness'; of the qualitative character or what-it-is-likeness of conscious experience. This latter notion is perhaps best construed through Frank Jackson's well-known 'knowledge argument', which goes as follows. Imagine a super-scientist called Mary who has spent her entire life in a completely black and white room, containing only black and white objects. Mary uses completed versions of the natural sciences to learn absolutely everything there is to know about the physical properties of colour and colour experience. Then Mary leaves the black and white room and sees a rose for the first time. In

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[167] Mackie's fears about the 'queerness' of objective values are a typical expression of this: "If there were objective values, then they would be entities or qualities or relations of a very strange sort, utterly different from anything else in the universe. Correspondingly, if we were aware of them, it would have to be by some special faculty of moral perception or intuition, utterly different from our ordinary ways of knowing everything else." See: John Mackie, 'The Subjectivity of Values', in *Essays in Moral Realism*, ed. by Sayre-McCord, p111. This essay originally appeared as chapter 1 of: John Mackie, *Ethics: Inventing Right and Wrong* (London: Penguin, 1977)

[168] John McDowell, *Mind and World* (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 1996) p84

[169] John McDowell, 'Values and Secondary Qualities', in *Essays in Moral Realism*, ed. by Sayre-McCord, p175

seeing the rose Mary learns something completely new: she learns *what it is like* to see red[170].
The knowledge argument uses colour experience as an example, but there is of course a what-it-is-likeness for every modality of sensory experience, as well as for certain kinds of non-sensory experience like the experience of emotions. These what-it-is-likenesses – the redness of red, the softness of soft, the burnt-toastness of the smell of burnt toast, etc. – are called qualia or phenomenal properties. When we say that liberal naturalists have a non-reductive attitude towards consciousness, we are talking about phenomenal consciousness. On this point they once again stand opposed to the majority of scientific naturalists, who argue that phenomenal consciousness is some kind of illusion, or, what amounts to the same thing, that it can be reduced to something non-phenomenal/non-experiential[171].

Galen Strawson may be said to have well expressed the liberal naturalist's attitude on this matter in his 2011 APA address on 'Real Naturalism':

> [R]eal naturalism is directly opposed to the wildly anti-naturalistic doctrine now commonly known as "naturalism," which has for the last fifty years or so treated its first and fundamental datum – experience – as if it were its greatest problem, and has tried to deal with it by questioning its existence, more or less covertly, or at least questioning its claim to be, in a fundamental respect, exactly as it seems, and indeed is. Real naturalists know there's no warrant for leaping over their starting data – experience itself – into a theory of the nature of the physical from which it follows that some sort of reductive or irrealist account of experience must be true. This leap is not only wild metaphysics; it also has no positive warrant in physics, nor in any position that can legitimately claim to be naturalistic.[172]

The only alternatives to a reductive approach according to Strawson are either to conceive of consciousness as fundamental, or to conceive of it as emergent. In the former case we get panpsychism; in the latter, emergentism or property-dualism.

Liberal naturalists then, may be said to endorse, in addition to the causal closure of nature (CCN), some or all of the following theses:

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[170] Frank Jackson, 'Epiphenomenal Qualia', *The Philosophical Quarterly*, 32 (1982), pp127-136; Frank Jackson, 'What Mary Didn't Know', *The Journal of Philosophy*, 83 (1986), pp291-295

[171] Oftentimes such denials of phenomenal consciousness come in the form of what has come to be called 'illusionism', whose proponents prefer to speak of consciousness as being in some sense illusory, rather than simply non-existent. The upshot, however, is the same. In either case consciousness is supposed to be something it is not; something that can be unproblematically reduced to the physical. See for instance: Susan Blackmore, 'The Grand Illusion: Why Consciousness Exists Only When You Look For It', in *New Scientist*, 174 (2002), pp26-29. The likes of Dennett and Rosenberg offer essentially similar views. See: Dennett, *Consciousness Explained*; Rosenberg, *The Atheist's Guide to Reality*.

[172] Galen Strawson, 'Real Naturalism', *Proceedings and Addresses of the American Philosophical Association*, 86 (2012), pp125-154 (p142)

The Disunity of Science (DSCI): There is no single method or form that unites the sciences and demarcates them from non-sciences.

Weak Emergentism (WE): Theories/discourse about certain entities/properties is not reducible to theories/discourse about their parts/properties of their parts.

Strong Emergentism (SE): Certain entities/properties are not reducible to their parts/properties of their parts.

1.4. Radical Liberal Naturalism

Liberal naturalists, we said in the last section, are committed to a non-reductive attitude towards intentionality, normativity, and consciousness. They endorse, at the very least, the weak emergence all of these phenomena; and most endorse the strong emergence of some them. However, they generally stop short, we said, of attributing macro-causal power to emergent phenomena. They say, for instance, that normativity is irreducible, and that there are sui generis reasons and values in nature, but they will not say that reasons and values have causal power over and above the micro-physical phenomena on which they supervene[173]. This is by no means universally true of all liberal naturalists, but it does seem to be the norm. Some, indeed, seem to be strongly against any such notion of macro-causation. Others only imply such a notion, not always obviously aware that they have done so. Even those more explicitly in favour tend to express their views tentatively and often obscurely. This issue, we suggest, is something of a philosophical elephant in the room of liberal naturalism, introducing tacit tensions and ambiguities into the movement. It will be helpful therefore – for the purposes of this project at any rate – to introduce a further distinction in the concept of naturalism. We propose to call the form of liberal naturalism which explicitly rejects CCP, and which endorses doctrines of strong emergentism and macro-causation, 'radical liberal naturalism'. In what follows we will investigate these key tenets in more detail. We will aim to show that radical liberal naturalism is a valid and coherent doctrine. This will be a pivotal part of our overall argument, because ultimately, we wish to claim that James can be classified as a naturalist of this kind.

1.4.1. The Question of Causal Closure

The doctrine of the causal closure of the physical states that all causal power is confined to the lowest level of natural phenomena, conceived by the majority of naturalists in terms of the elementary particles and forces described by the science of physics. According to a popular narrative the progressively unanimous acceptance of CCP among philosophers and scientists has occurred largely as a result of developments in the natural sciences. Some of the earliest arguments concerning causal closure are framed in terms of Newtonian physics. Thus, those who rejected CCP tended to postulate some non-physical force or forces – for instance a vital force – that acted upon particular configurations of matter. At its inception, Newtonian physics was

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[173] McDowell for instance is ambiguous on this point. Howard Robinson, however, claims to have asked him directly whether he endorses CCP, and claims that McDowell answered that he does not. See: Howard Robinson, 'The Causal Power of Structure and the Role of the Intellect', online video recording, university of oxford, 2014, <https://podcasts.ox.ac.uk/causal-power-structure-and-role-intellect> [accessed: 28/08/2018]

perfectly amenable to such hypotheses, and indeed they were freely indulged in by scientists. However, with the quantum mechanical revolution and subsequent advances it became apparent that chemical phenomena and the majority of biological phenomena could be explained without appeal to configurational forces. By the mid twentieth century a relative scientific consensus had been reached: configurational forces were simply obsolete. The philosopher David Papineau thinks that this inductive argument is among the most powerful arguments for CCP:

> Over the last hundred and fifty years a great deal has come to be known about the workings of biological systems (including brains), and there has been no indication that anything other than basic physical forces is needed to account for their operation. In particular, the twentieth century has seen an explosion of knowledge about processes occurring within cells, and here too there is no evidence of anything other than familiar physical chemistry. The result has been that the overwhelming majority of scientists now reject vital and mental forces, and accept the causal closure of the physical realm.[174]

This narrative has indeed proved forceful for many philosophers and scientists. Others however are prevented from feeling its force, usually by an unshakable intuition that certain higher-level phenomena (typically mental phenomena) are strongly emergent and causally powerful. In order to get a firmer grasp on just what CCP (or its rejection) entails, we will consider a pair of popular metaphysical arguments for the doctrine – the 'downward causation argument' and the 'causal exclusion argument', – first formulated by the philosopher Jaegwon Kim.

1.4.1.1. The Downward Causation Argument

The downward causation argument is supposed to show that macro-causation – i.e. any causal process not occurring at the very bottom level – can only be realized through 'downward causation'. In other words, it is supposed to show that causal chains originating above the bottom level must go *through* the bottom level in order to produce their effects; i.e. that there are no causal chains going directly from one higher-level entity/property to another. The causal exclusion argument, in turn, is supposed to show that any putative instance of downward causation is circumvented by bottom-level processes. Let us first consider the downward causation argument.

Kim begins the argument by defining a doctrine of 'mereological supervenience', which he assumes will be accepted by most emergentists:

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[174] David Papineau, 'The Causal Closure of the Physical and Naturalism', in *The Oxford Handbook of Philosophy of Mind*, ed. by Brian McLaughlin, Ansgar Beckermann & Sven Walter (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), p57

> [Mereological Supervenience] Systems with an identical total microstructural property have all other properties in common. Equivalently, all properties of a physical system supervene on, or are determined by, its total microstructural property.[175]

Kim stipulates that the relation of supervenience/emergence is not causal, but that a supervenience/emergence base is 'nomologically sufficient' to instantiate an emergent entity/property. There are, he says, three ways that emergents might manifest macro-causal powers: i) same-level causation, ii) downward causation, and iii) upward causation. The first part of the downward causation argument involves showing that upward causation entails same-level causation (we have provided original diagrams below to illustrate Kim's argument):

> Suppose that a property M, at a certain level L, causes another property M+, at level L + 1. Assume that M+ emerges, or results, from a property M* at level L (M* therefore is on the same level as M). Now we immediately see a tension in this situation when we ask: "What is responsible for this occurrence of M+? What explains M+'s instantiation on this occasion?" For in this picture there initially are two competing answers: First, M+ is there because, *ex hypothesi*, M caused it; second, M+ is there because its emergence base M* has been realized. Given its emergence base M*, M+ must of necessity be instantiated, no matter what conditions preceded it [mereological supervenience] … This apparently puts M's claim to have caused M+ in jeopardy. I believe the only coherent description of the situation that respects M's causal claim is this: M causes M+ by causing its base condition M*. But M's causation of M* is an instance of same-level causation. This shows that upward causation entails same-level causation…[176]
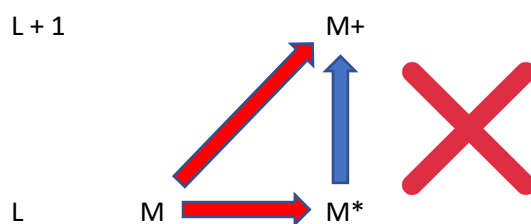
Fig. 1   **Fig. 2**
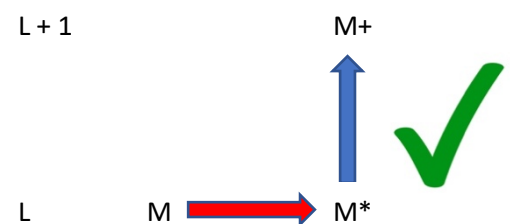
In other words: according to mereological supervenience, the existence of a supervenience base (M*) necessitates the instantiation of a supervenient property (M+). But if M+ is already necessarily instantiated by the mere existence of M*, then the putative upward causal action of M upon M+ is redundant (fig. 1). Rather than speaking of M causing M+ through some upward

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[175] Jaegwon Kim, 'Making Sense of Emergence', in *Emergence: Contemporary Readings in Philosophy and Science*, ed. by Bedau & Humphreys, p130

[176] Kim, 'Making Sense of Emergence', in *Emergence: Contemporary Readings in Philosophy and Science*, ed. by Bedau & Humphreys, p142

causal activity, we should say that M causes M+ by causing M*, which necessarily instantiates M+ (fig. 2).

The second part of the downward causation argument involves showing that same-level causation entails downward causation:

> Suppose M causes M* where both are at level L. But M* itself arises out of a set of properties M- at level L – 1. When we ponder the question how M* gets to be instantiated on this occasion, again we come to the conclusion that M caused M* to be instantiated on this occasion by causing M-, its base condition, to be instantiated. But M's causation of M- is downward causation.[177]

Fig. 3   **Fig. 4**

L + 1   M+   L + 1   M+

L   M ➡ M*   ❌   L   M   M*   ✅

L – 1   M-   L – 1   M-
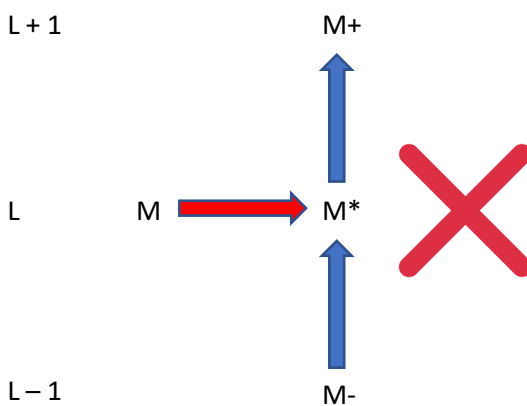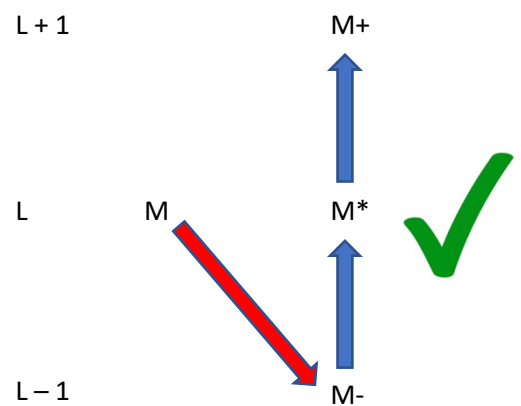
Here the reasoning is precisely the same as in the previous case. The putative same-level causal action of M upon M* is made redundant by the fact that M* is already necessarily instantiated by the existence of M- (fig. 3). The only sensible way to tell this causal story is to say that M causes M* by causing M-, which necessarily instantiates M* (fig. 4). The foregoing leads Kim to formulate what he calls 'the principle of downward causation': "To cause any property (except those at the very bottom level) to be instantiated, you must cause the basal conditions from which it arises (either as an emergent or as a resultant)."[178]

1.4.1.2. The Causal Exclusion Argument

The downward causation argument, as we have said, paves the way for the 'causal exclusion argument'. In the following discussion Kim somewhat unhelpfully switches the symbols he is using, making P the supervenience base of M and P* the supervenience base of M*. Our diagrams below will hopefully clear up any confusion. "The critical question", Kim says, "that

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[177] Kim, 'Making Sense of Emergence', in *Emergence: Contemporary Readings in Philosophy and Science*, ed. by Bedau & Humphreys, pp142-143

[178] Kim, 'Making Sense of Emergence', in *Emergence: Contemporary Readings in Philosophy and Science*, ed. by Bedau & Humphreys, p143

motivates the argument is this: if an emergent, M, emerges from basal condition P, why can't P

displace M as a cause of any putative effect of M?":

> For if causation is understood as nomological (law based) sufficiency, P, as M's
> emergence base, is nomologically sufficient for it, and M, as P*'s cause, is
> nomologically sufficient for P*. Hence, P is nomologically sufficient for P* and hence
> qualifies as its cause. … Moreover it is not possible to understand the situation as
> involving a causal chain from P to P* with M as an intermediate causal link. The
> reason is that the emergence relation from P to M cannot be viewed as causal. This
> appears to make the emergent property M otiose and dispensable as a cause of P*; it
> seems that we can explain the occurrence of P* simply in terms of P, without
> invoking M at all.[179]

Fig. 5
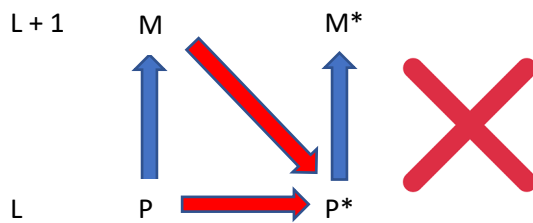
Fig. 6
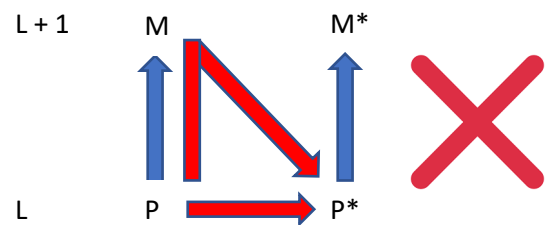
Fig. 7
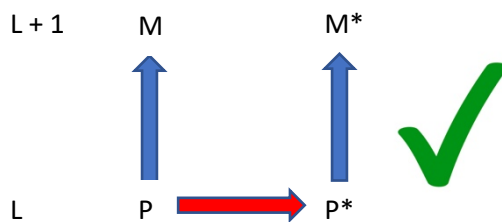
In other words, if P is nomologically sufficient for M, and M is the putative cause of P*, then P is

nomologically sufficient for P*. But if this is so, then why not simply cut out the middle man, and

suppose that P is the direct *cause* of P* (fig. 7)? Why invoke the downward causal action of M

upon P* (figs. 5 & 6) when the whole story can be told at the level of the Ps?

1.4.1.3. Response

The causal exclusion argument seems at first glance like a strong one, and is touted by numerous

contemporary philosophers as decisive on this matter. However, close examination of the

argument reveals that erroneous reasoning and/or logical sleight of hand is at work in it. Consider

the following. Kim, at the outset, stipulates that the emergence relation is not a causal one, but

that it does imply 'nomological sufficiency'. This allows him to deny the possibility of a causal

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[179] Kim, 'Making Sense of Emergence', in *Emergence: Contemporary Readings in Philosophy and Science*, ed. by Bedau & Humphreys, p149

chain going from P through M to P*. There can be no such causal chain because "the emergence relation from P to M cannot be viewed as causal". However, he asks us, at the same time, to understand causation *in terms of* nomological sufficiency, and tells us that P, being nomologically sufficient for M, and transitively, for P*, qualifies as the cause of P*. Now, Kim cannot be saying that nomological sufficiency *entails* causal sufficiency, because then the original stipulation about the emergence relation being non-causal is either meaningless or hopelessly ad hoc. Rather, he appears to be saying that, given nomological sufficiency, causal sufficiency comes for free; and that, in the interests of being economical, we ought to assume it in this case. But then the argument does not show that downward causation is impossible or incoherent, as Kim seems to think it does; it only shows that it is unnecessary. It is only likely to be convincing, therefore, to someone who already endorses CCP for independent reasons[180].

We may summarise as follows. If nomological sufficiency entails causal sufficiency, then we ought to suppose that the emergence relation is (at least partially) a causal relation, in which case we may suppose that downward causation involves a causal chain from P through M to P* (fig. 8). If nomological sufficiency does *not* entail causal sufficiency, then we are free to suppose that M exerts a downward causal influence upon P* (fig. 9). These two possibilities are illustrated in the diagrams below (orange arrows indicate partial as opposed to sufficient causal influence):

Fig. 8
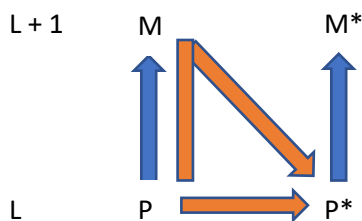
Fig. 9
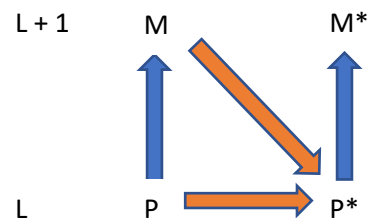
The causal exclusion argument clearly fails to demonstrate that macro-causation is impossible or incoherent. The question remains, however, as to what, precisely, the modus operandi of macro-causation might be, and of whether there is any empirical evidence for it. This is the issue to which we turn in the next section.

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[180] We note that Kim advances multiple versions of the causal exclusion argument, and that some do not purport to prove CCP. Some aim merely to explicate the physicalist intuition that macro-causation is superfluous. See for instance: Jaegwon Kim, *Mind in a Physical World* (Cambridge MA: The MIT Press, 1998), p37. This version of the argument however, with its appeals to the concept of nomological sufficiency, aims at something stronger.

1.4.2. Approaches to Macro-Causation

We begin the present section by attempting to clear up one or two confusions surrounding the notion of downward causation. Proponents of the doctrine do not all agree as to what it entails, and as to which natural processes potentially qualify as instances of it. The likes of Roger Sperry, George Ellis, and Helen Steward for example, seem to think that something like the way the shape of a ball influences the movements of its constituent molecules should count as an instance of downward causation[181]. To others, this is evidently a case in which putative macro-causal power reduces to the micro-level. An excellent paper by Brian Davies sheds valuable light on this matter. To begin with, he says, the ball example is most certainly a dead end:

> Sometimes physicists use the language of whole-part causation for ease of description. For example, a ball rolling down a hill implies that each of the ball's atoms is accelerated according to the state of the ball as a whole. But it would be an abuse of language to say that the rotating ball *caused* a specific atom to move the way it did; after all, the ball *is* the sum of its atoms. What makes the concept 'ball' relevant in this case is the existence of (non-local) constraints that lock the many degrees of freedom together, so that the atoms of the ball move as a coherent whole and not independently. But the forces that implement these constraints are themselves local fields, so in this case whole-part causation is effectively trivial in nature.[182]

Any putative instance of downward causation involving non-local principles/constraints is going to be trivial so long as it is granted that those non-local principles/constraints are realized by familiar physical forces. What is required, according to Davies, for the notion of macro-causation to get off the ground, is either the introduction of "explicit top-down physical forces" or a transformation of "the fundamental categories of causation"[183]. This of course means that any non-trivial doctrine of macro-causation is going to require a relatively radical departure from the current scientific consensus (hence, our decision to call any form of naturalism which endorses such a doctrine '*radical* liberal naturalism'). We have no intention of obscuring the view we are discussing with false claims of scientific acceptability. That being said, to say something is not currently accepted by scientists is not at all the same as saying that it is physically impossible. In what follows we will consider two approaches to macro-causation that are, we contend,

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[181] Roger Sperry, 'A Modified Concept of Consciousness', in *Psychological Review*, 76 (1969), pp532-536 (p534); George Ellis, 'On the Nature of Emergent Reality', in *The Re-Emergence of Emergence*, ed. by Clayton & Davies, pp79-107; Helen Steward, *A Metaphysics for Freedom* (Oxford: OUP, 2012) pp233-243
[182] Paul Davies, 'The Physics of Downward Causation', in *The Re-Emergence of Emergence*, ed. by Clayton & Davies, pp35-51 (p41)
[183] Davies, 'The Physics of Downward Causation', in *The Re-Emergence of Emergence*, ed. by Clayton & Davies, p51

meaningful, coherent, and possibly true. We begin, in the next section, with the British Emergentist approach.

1.4.2.1. The British Emergentist Approach

Emergentism, as we noted in the previous section, is generally thought to have originated with John Stuart Mill's *A System of Logic*. It was here that Mill set forth his principle of the 'composition of causes', and his notions of homopathic and heteropathic effects/laws. Briefly, the principle of the composition of causes is said to hold in cases where "the joint effect of several causes is identical with the sum of their separate effects", and not to hold in cases where the joint effect of several causes is not identical with (i.e. is *more than*) the sum of their separate effects[184]. Mill calls effects which conform to the principle (i.e. effects that are identical with the sum of their causes) 'homopathic effects', and effects which fail to conform to the principle (i.e. effects that are more than the sum of their causes) 'heteropathic effects'. Accordingly, 'homopathic laws' are laws describing the relation of causes to homopathic effects and 'heteropathic laws' and laws describing the relation of causes to heteropathic effects. Mill thinks that the phenomena/laws of chemistry, biology, and psychology are heteropathic in this sense; in other words, that they are emergent. He thinks, moreover, that the 'action' of the various kinds of heteropathic phenomena must be understood as being governed by distinct forces; i.e. chemical forces, biological forces, psychological forces, etc. These forces are not intended to involve anything spooky; they are conceived, like other forces in physics, wholly in terms of their effects on the motion of matter. They are best understood as applying to particular "collocations" of 'agents' or 'powers'[185]; i.e. to particular configurations of matter. This makes them instances of what Brian McLaughlin, in an excellent essay on the subject, calls 'configurational forces'; forces which endow certain configurations of matter with macro-causal power[186].

The above constitutes a very brief summary of the core emergentist position. Subsequent developments, though important, were not particularly substantive. After Mill, G. H. Lewes actually coined the term 'emergent'[187]; Samuel Alexander first spoke of emergent 'qualities' (i.e. properties)[188]; Lloyd Morgan applied the concept to the evolution of the cosmos[189]; and Broad

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[184] Mill, *A System of Logic*, p267
[185] Mill, *A System of Logic,* p332
[186] McLaughlin, 'The Rise and Fall of British Emergentism', in *Emergence: Contemporary Readings in Philosophy and Science*, ed. by Bedau & Humphreys, pp19-59
[187] George Henry Lewes, *Problems of Life and Mind* (Boston: Houghton, Osgood, and Company, 1879)
[188] Samuel Alexander, *Space, Time, and Deity*, 2 vols (London: Macmillan and Co., 1927)
[189] Conwy Lloyd Morgan, *Emergent Evolution* (London: Williams and Norgate, 1927)

gave the doctrine its first systematic formulation in *The Mind and its Place in Nature*[190]. The work of this series of thinkers, from Mill to Broad, constitutes the tradition of British Emergentism. As we mentioned in the previous section, McLaughlin names both Roy Wood Sellars and William James as American counterparts to the British Emergentists. He provides the following helpful summary of the core doctrines of the tradition: i) "that everything is made of matter", ii) "that matter is grainy … that it bottoms out into elementary particles", iii) that "nothing happens, no change occurs, without some motion of elementary particles", iv) that "all motion is to the beat of the laws of mechanics", v) that "there is a hierarchy of levels of organizational complexity of material particles that includes, in ascending order, the strictly physical, the chemical, the biological, and the psychological level", vi) that "[t]here are certain kinds of material substances specific to each level" which are "wholly composed of kinds of lower-levels, ultimately of kinds of elementary material particles", and vii) that "there are certain properties [i.e. emergent properties] specific to the kinds of substances of a given level"[191]. He also shows that the British Emergentists were committed to the doctrine that emergent properties possess macro causal power, but for some reason omits this from the above list.

We may reconstruct British Emergentism's account of macro-causation as follows. There are, besides the fundamental forces already accepted in physics, a number of additional fundamental forces. Unlike the currently accepted fundamental forces, whose foci are elementary particles, the foci of these additional forces are *configurations* of elementary particles; e.g. molecules, cells, complexes of neurons, etc. These configurations, as foci for these new forces, make possible novel motions/interactions of elementary particles. These novel motions/interactions, and the novel higher-level behaviours that result, are governed by novel laws not reducible to the existing laws of physics. At no point in this story do higher-level entities produce effects by means of mysterious non-physical impulses; all their effects are realised through the motions of elementary particles. Neither, strictly speaking, are higher-level entities capable of same-level causal interactions; the flow of causal power always goes via elementary particles, as per Kim's principle of downward causation. The following diagram illustrates this account:

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[190] Charlie Dunbar Broad, *The Mind and Its Place in Nature* (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trübner & Co., 1925)

[191] McLaughlin, 'The Rise and Fall of British Emergentism', in *Emergence: Contemporary Readings in Philosophy and Science*, ed. by Bedau & Humphreys, pp19-20

Fig. 10

Psychology	Neurons/Mental States	Neurons/Mental States
Biology	Cells	Cells
Chemistry	Molecules	Molecules
Physics	Particles	Particles
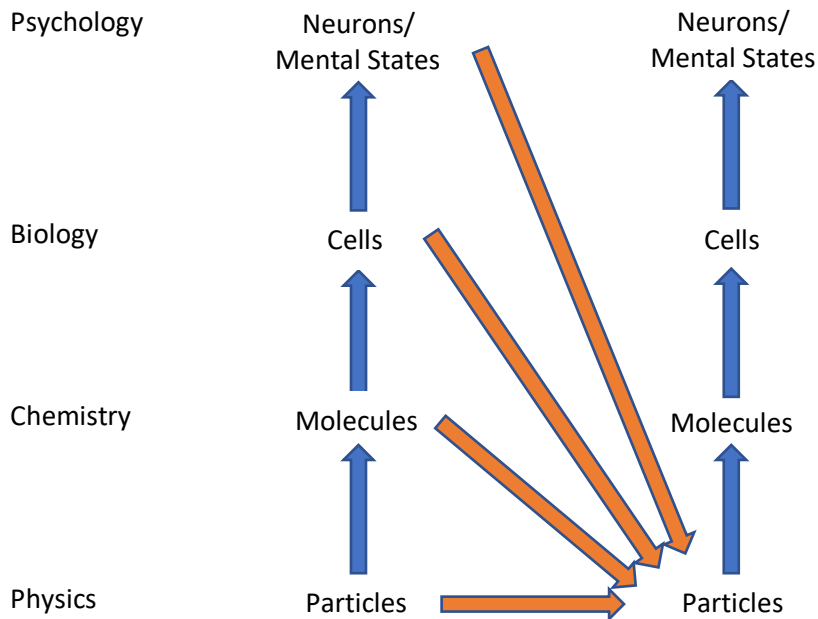
The above account obviously raises questions about the combability of emergentism with physics, in which regard McLaughlin offers the following analysis. Firstly, he says, physics allows for force generating properties that are possessed by certain kinds of matter and not others (e.g. electrons do not exert the strong nuclear force); the case of force generating properties possessed by certain *configurations* of matter is not radically different[192]. Moreover, since forces combine by vector addition, physics can, in theory, accommodate additional fundamental forces without implying any violation or interruption of existing forces[193]. Secondly, there is no reason to suppose that configurational forces should not conform to the laws of motion, including the conservation of momentum. Neither is there any reason to suppose that they should violate other conservation principles; i.e. of mass, energy, or (with the advent of Relativity theory) mass-energy[194]. Finally, quantum mechanics presents no special difficulties for emergentism; the Schrodinger equation says nothing about what kinds of forces there are, and although the Hamiltonian operator is concerned with energy rather than force, the emergentists could just as well speak of kinds of energy specific to certain configurations of matter as kinds of forces/force

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[192] McLaughlin, 'The Rise and Fall of British Emergentism', in *Emergence: Contemporary Readings in Philosophy and Science*, ed. by Bedau & Humphreys, p35
[193] McLaughlin, 'The Rise and Fall of British Emergentism', in *Emergence: Contemporary Readings in Philosophy and Science*, ed. by Bedau & Humphreys, pp35-36
[194] McLaughlin, 'The Rise and Fall of British Emergentism', in *Emergence: Contemporary Readings in Philosophy and Science*, ed. by Bedau & Humphreys, pp36-37

generating properties[195]. McLaughlin concludes therefore that the doctrines of British Emergentism are not in conflict with physics in any formal/mathematical sense.

However, although not in *formal* conflict with physics, McLaughlin does think that British Emergentism came, at a certain point, to be in *empirical* conflict with physics. The conflict in question, he says, had to do with certain discoveries in quantum mechanics. In June 1922, just months before Broad's publication of *Mind and its Place in Nature*, Niels Bohr gave the series of lectures at Gottingen in which he outlined the application of his solar system model of the atom to the phenomena of chemistry[196]. The periodicity of the periodic table, and various chemical properties of the elements, were to be explained in terms of the electrons in the outermost orbits of atoms. The first decisive step had thereby been taken towards the reduction of chemistry and chemical bonding (taken by emergentists to be the paradigmatic instance of a heteropathic effect) to physics. Within a decade the quantum mechanical revolution had reached a crescendo, and its influence had spread into biology. It was not long before the hypothesis of configurational forces, and with it the whole tradition of British Emergentism, was abandoned by most philosophers and scientists. Jaegwon Kim notes that the fall of emergentism coincided exactly with the rise of positivism and reductionism, as championed by such thinkers as Carl Hempel and Ernest Nagel[197]. We note also that it coincided with the fall of Roy Wood Sellars's evolutionary naturalism, and with the rise of the 'new naturalism', as exemplified in Krikorian's anthology.

For some decades following the quantum mechanical revolution emergentism lay dormant. Mclaughlin suggests that Broad's magnum opus was the last major work to be published in the emergentist tradition until Sperry began writing on the topic in the 1950s. When the re-emergence of emergence began, it was likewise catalysed by developments in science and philosophy. Firstly, philosophers and scientists began to note serious limitations to the reductionist project. Theory reductions of the kind advocated by Nagel became rare, and could not be produced in cases where they were expected[198]. By the end of the 20th century, even most hard-line scientific naturalists had abandoned strong versions of PER[199]. Secondly, the scientific study of complex and chaotic systems (for which epistemological reduction was out of the

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[195] McLaughlin, 'The Rise and Fall of British Emergentism', in *Emergence: Contemporary Readings in Philosophy and Science*, ed. by Bedau & Humphreys, pp22-23; p49
[196] See: Helge Kragh, 'Niels Bohr's Second Atomic Theory', *Historical Studies in the Physical Sciences*, 10 (1979), pp123-186
[197] Kim, 'Making Sense of Emergence', in *Emergence: Contemporary Readings in Philosophy and Science*, ed. by Bedau & Humphreys, p127
[198] See: Sahotra Sarkar, 'Models of Reduction and Categories of Reductionism', *Synthese*, 91 (1992), pp167-194
[199] See: Ned Block, 'Anti-Reductionism Slaps Back', *Philosophical Perspectives*, 11 (1997), pp107-132

question and ontological reduction was, for some at least, in doubt), became an increasingly active area of research[200]. And thirdly, recognition among philosophers of the special difficulties of reduction in the case of certain mental phenomena (especially phenomenal consciousness) became commonplace[201]. This has led to the situation of the present day, in which, as Jaegwon Kim puts it, "we now see an increasing, and unapologetic, use of expressions like "emergent property," "emergent phenomenon," and "emergent law," substantially in the sense intended by the classic emergentists, not only in philosophical writings but in primary scientific literature as well."[202] This re-emergence of emergence, we would like to point out, coincides, more or less, with the development of liberal forms of naturalism. If what we have been saying about the relationship between these doctrines is correct, this is not surprising. In the next section we shall consider 'the quantum approach' to macro-causation. To be clear, we take this approach too, to be consistent with a broadly emergentist model of macro-causation, as represented in figs. 8 and 9 above (section 1.4.1.3).

1.4.2.2. The Quantum Approach

Quantum physics is a branch of the science of physics and a body of physical theories that attempt to describe physical phenomena at the smallest scales. It originated with a series of experiments at the turn of the twentieth century and was given roughly its present formalisation by a group of physicists including Erwin Schrödinger and Werner Heisenberg in the mid-1920s. We often hear it said that the development of quantum physics heralded a revolution in our understanding of the physical world. This is due mainly to the fact that the experiments and theories of quantum physics reveal and describe fundamentally new (from the point of view of classical physics) types of behaviour and interaction among physical phenomena at small scales. To describe all of these phenomena accurately and in detail would certainly go beyond the scope of this thesis. As such we will attempt, as far as possible, to refrain from using too much technical terminology, and to describe the relevant concepts in natural language. The first key thing that we need to understand is that the science of quantum physics is supposed to confirm the reality of ontological indeterminism. There are events, according to quantum mechanics, that have a variety of possible outcomes. Quantum approaches to macro-causation claim that higher-

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[200] For a popular account of the rise of the science of complexity see: M. Mitchell Waldrop, *Complexity: The Emerging Science at the Edge of Order and Chaos* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1992)

[201] See: Jackson, 'Epiphenomenal Qualia'; Howard Robinson, *Matter and Sense* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982); Thomas Nagel, 'What is it Like to Be a Bat?', *Philosophical Review*, 83 (1974), pp435-450; David Chalmers, 'Facing Up to the Hard Problem of Consciousness', *Journal of Consciousness Studies*, 2 (1995), pp200-219, etc.

[202] Kim, 'Making Sense of Emergence', in *Emergence: Contemporary Readings in Philosophy and Science*, ed. by Bedau & Humphreys, p128

level/emergent/mental phenomena realize their causal power by operating on this space of possibilities. In what follows we will examine one of the more popular proposals regarding how this is supposed to occur in the realm of mental phenomena; that of the physicist Henry Stapp[203]. But first, we must give a brief summary of the concept of quantum indeterminism.

The concept of chance or random events is by no means a new one. Lucretius famously proposed that atoms in the void were subject to what he called the 'clinamen', a random swerve that would cause them to deviate from their linear trajectories and collide with one another in various ways[204]. Of course, a great many ordinary people have believed in chance and chaos for millennia, but the idea has usually been regarded with suspicion among philosophical and scientific types. The majority of western philosophers have, for one reason or another, been determinists. According to a stereotypical but plausible narrative this has to do with their generally possessing a certain intellectual temperament that predisposes them to find randomness and chance fundamentally irrational[205]. It is possible that many scientists share this temperament, but scientists also have independent reasons for rejecting the existence of chance events. It is clearly a sound methodological principle when investigating natural phenomena to assume that any given event has a cause. If scientists threw up their hands in dismay and cried 'randomness!' every time the cause of some natural event failed to reveal itself, then the scientific enterprise would not have advanced very far. Instead scientists sensibly assume that every natural event has a definite cause in some other natural event and proceed to propose hypotheses and devise experiments that will allow them to discover those causes. The existence of random events has thus been denied, on methodological grounds, by the majority of scientists since Newton. But as Heisenberg explains, the quantum mechanical revolution brought an end to this status quo:

> Let us consider a radium atom, which can emit an alpha particle. The time for the emission of the alpha particle cannot be predicted. We can only say that in the

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[203] Stapp is a proponent of the 'von Neumann interpretation' of quantum mechanics, according to which the consciousness of an observer is a necessary component in wave-function collapse. This interpretation is highly controversial among contemporary physicists, most preferring the 'Copenhagen interpretation'. We have chosen to investigate Stapp's proposal not because we consider it to be the most viable, but because we think it has the greatest affinity with James's model of mental causation. We note that it is perfectly possible to dissociate the essential components of Stapp's proposal from the von Neumann interpretation of quantum mechanics. When we speak of consciousness causing wave function collapse in what follows we take it that consciousness does so not by virtue of being *aware* of the state of the quantum system (as per the von Neumann interpretation), but by virtue of its physical characteristics.

[204] Lucretius, *On the Nature of Things*, trans. by Charles Frederick Johnson (New York: De Witt C. Lent & Company, 1872), pp84-85. For an interesting discussion of the relation of the clinamen to quantum indeterminism, see: Ilya Prigogine, *The End of Certainty* (New York: The Free Press, 1997), pp9-56

[205] As we shall see in Chapter two, William James did about as much as anyone to popularize this narrative, a version of which he presents in *The Will to Believe* and in *Pragmatism*.

average the emission will take place in about two thousand years. Therefore, when we observe the emission we do not actually look for a foregoing event from which the emission must according to a law follow. … we know that a foregoing event as cause for the emission at a given time cannot be found.[206]

That events like these are ontically indeterministic, and cannot be construed as merely unpredictable as a result of human ignorance, is now the overwhelming consensus among physicists[207]. This consensus is accepted by the majority of contemporary philosophers calling themselves naturalists. We will therefore assume for the sake of argument that this consensus is correct.

Quantum physics then, says that nature contains events for which there is not a sufficient physical cause. This however is not to say that those events are completely *random*; rather, it is to say that they are inherently *probabilistic*. When the emission of an alpha particle by a radium atom will occur is not a complete mystery; we know that it will occur, on average, *in about two thousand years*. Indeed, quantum theory provides incredibly accurate predictions about the probabilities with which these events will occur. Such events are described by a 'wavefunction' which assigns certain probability amplitudes to possible outcomes of the events. Prior to any definite outcome, the system is conceived of as being in a state of potential. Potential in this context is to be understood, according to Heisenberg, as a distinct ontological category; "a strange kind of physical reality just in the middle between possibility and reality"; "a quantitative version of the old concept of 'potentia' in Aristotelean philosophy"[208]. One of the peculiar features of the inherently probabilistic events described by quantum theory is that their behaviour changes in unexpected ways in response to measurement or observation[209]. Measurement is said to cause the wavefunction to 'collapse', causing just one of the many possible outcomes of the event to become actual. It is the outcome of such collapses that is held to be indeterminate in the most popular interpretations of quantum theory. Thus, quantum approaches to macro-causation generally appeal to the collapses of wavefunctions as the loci for

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[206] Werner Heisenberg, *Physics and Philosophy* (London: Penguin Books, 2000), p49
[207] Indeterminacy resulting from the so-called 'measurement problem' is not, as is sometimes assumed, an instance of 'the observer effect' (whereby the act of measurement interferes with the state of a system). Rather, it is supposed to be an intrinsic feature of quantum systems themselves. Furthermore, a number of so called 'no hidden variables' theorems are supposed to rule out the possibility, even in principle, that hidden variables might explain the indeterministic behaviour of entities at the quantum level. See: Wayne Myrvold, 'Philosophical Issues in Quantum Theory', *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. by Edward N. Zalta (Fall 2018 Edition) <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2018/entries/qt-issues/> [accessed: 01/11/2019]
[208] Heisenberg, p11
[209] As we have said already in footnote 203, we intend everything in this discussion to be compatible with interpretations of quantum mechanics that do not invoke the consciousness of an observer as a necessary component in quantum measurement.

macro-causal influences. Before we consider such approaches in detail, we must address one last relevant concept: the phenomenon of 'quantum decoherence'.

As we move from the microscopic to the macroscopic scale, quantum events/entities become subject to a phenomenon known as decoherence. Decoherence refers to the apparent disappearance of indeterminacy and other typical characteristics of quantum phenomena at macroscopic scales. It is because of decoherence that our predictions of macroscopic phenomena like the orbits of comets are not upset by quantum indeterminacy. In order, therefore, for macro-causation to utilize wavefunction collapse as a mechanism for producing its influence, quantum decoherence will somehow have to be circumvented. There will have to be some mechanism for amplifying the effects of indeterminate events up to the macroscopic scale. Such mechanisms are known to exist. Consider the following examples provided by George Ellis, of the mammalian eye and biological evolution respectively:

> In some species the eye can detect individual photons falling on the retina. The photon is absorbed by a molecule of rhodopsin, eventually resulting in a nervous impulse coming out of the opposite end of the cell with an energy at least a million times that contained in the original photon.[210]

The trajectories of photons are subject to quantum indeterminacy. Thus, a photon headed towards the retina of a mammalian eye will be in a state of superposition described by a wavefunction, with certain probability amplitudes assigned to each of a number of possible landing sites on the retina. The collapse of the photon's wavefunction will result in its landing at one of these sites rather than the others. If therefore a macro-causal process was able to influence which possibility was actualized, the effect of that macro-causal influence could then be amplified up to the macroscopic level – to the visual experience of the mammal in question – via the mechanism Ellis describes.

> A second example has been presented by Ian Percival, who states that "DNA responds to quantum events, as when mutations are produced by single photons, with consequences that may be macroscopic—leukemia for example." In this case the amplifier is the developmental process by which the information in DNA is read out in the course of the organism's developmental history. […] Indeed, mutations caused by cosmic rays may well have played a significant role in evolutionary history.[211]

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[210] George Ellis, 'Quantum Theory and the Macroscopic World', in *Quantum Mechanics: Scientific Perspectives on Divine Action*, ed. by Robert J. Russell, Kirk Wegter McNelly & John Polkinghorne (Berkeley, CA: Center for Theology and the Natural Sciences, 2001), p260.

[211] Ellis, 'Quantum Theory and the Macroscopic World', p260. The relevant quotation from Percival can be found in: Ian Percival, 'Quantum Records', in *Quantum Chaos – Quantum Measurement*, ed. by Predrag

Both of these cases involve a number of common factors: i) an environment in which quantum phenomena are able to occur in relative isolation without being subject to decoherence, ii) a mesoscopic trigger sensitive enough to be affected by the relevant phenomena, and iii) a mechanism whereby said triggering can lead to macroscopic effects. With this in mind, we move on to consider Henry Stapp's proposal.

What Stapp proposes is that such amplification mechanisms may exist in the human brain, and that they may be the realizers of the macro-causal power of human consciousness. He supposes that a variety of the relevant sort of mechanisms may exist in the brain, but for mainly methodological reasons singles out mechanisms governing the release of neurotransmitters in nerve terminals as a likely candidate:

> Nerve terminals are essential connecting links between nerve cells. The general way they work is reasonably well understood. When an action potential travelling along a nerve fibre reaches a nerve terminal, a host of ion channels open. Calcium ions enter through these channels into the interior of the terminal. These ions migrate from the channel exits to release sites on vesicles containing neurotransmitter molecules. A triggering effect of the calcium ions causes these contents to be dumped into the synaptic cleft that separates this terminal from a neighbouring neuron, and these neurotransmitter molecules influence the tendencies of that neighbouring neuron.
>
> At their narrowest points, calcium ion channels are less than a nanometre in diameter ... This extreme smallness of the opening in the calcium ion channels has profound quantum mechanical implications. The narrowness of the channel restricts the lateral spatial dimension. Consequently, the lateral velocity is forced by the quantum uncertainty principle to become large. This causes the quantum cloud of possibilities associated with the calcium ion to fan out over an increasing area as it moves away from the tiny channel to the target region where the ion will be absorbed as a whole, or not absorbed at all, on some small triggering site. This spreading of this ion wave packet means that the ion may or may not be absorbed on the small triggering site. Accordingly, the contents of the vesicle may or may not be released.[212]

In other words, calcium ions, upon exiting ion channels, are in a state of superposition, with probability amplitudes assigned to different possible trajectories (and so different landing-sites on vesicles). It is at this point, Stapp thinks, that the action of consciousness causally influences the collapse of the calcium ion's wavefunction, determining whether or not the calcium ion hits or misses certain triggering sites, and so whether or not certain neurotransmitters are released. This

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Cvitanovic, Ian Percival, & Andreas Wirzba (Dordrecht: Springer Science & Business Media, 1992), pp199-204 (p201)

[212] Jeffrey M. Schwartz, H. Stapp, & Mario Beauregard, 'Quantum Physics in Neuroscience and Psychology: a Neurophysical Model of Mind-Brain Interaction', *Philosophical Transactions: Biological Sciences*, 360 (2005), pp1309-1327 (pp1318-1319)

in turn may have a relatively large effect on an individual's behaviour. The following diagram illustrates this proposal with respect to the flow of causal influence:

Fig. 12

Conscious act

Neuro-physiological event → Calcium ion wavefunction collapse → Release of neurotransmitter → Behaviour
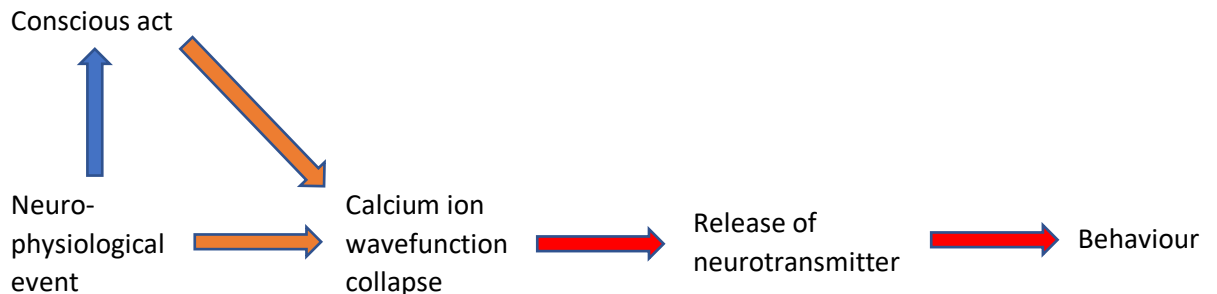
We note that the above diagram is highly simplified. It implies that individual conscious acts are correlated with individual neurophysiological events. The real situation, if this proposal turned out to be true, might be much more complex. It might be, for example, that conscious acts are emergent from groups of neurophysiological events. The basic causal story of the quantum approach is, in any case, essentially consistent with the broad emergentist framework. Certain lower-level events are caused partially by other lower-level events and partially by higher-level events. Provided we have no prior commitment to CCP, there is nothing incoherent or illogical about this story. The key differences between this and the British Emergentist approach are i) that Stapp does not invoke any configurational or other fundamental forces in accounting for macro-causal activity, and ii) that Stapp's model has a much narrower sphere of application; applying only to systems in which the relevant sort of quantum-event-involving processes occur, and in which their effects can be amplified by appropriate mechanisms. That being said, there is no reason to think that the two approaches are mutually exclusive. One could, on the quantum approach, invoke emergent laws which govern the exercise of quantum-process-involving macro-causal power.

The important point is that radical liberal naturalists, in addition to at least the causal closure of nature (CCN) and strong emergentism (SE), endorse the thesis of macro-causation:

Macro-Causation (MC): Certain strongly emergent entities/properties possess causal power over and above their parts/properties of their parts.

1.5. Religious Naturalism

In his recent book *Where the Conflict Really Lies*, Alvin Plantinga gives expression to a widely held view when he says the following:

> Now central to the great monotheistic religions – Christianity, Judaism, Islam – is the thought that there is such a person as God: a personal agent who has created the world and is all-powerful, all-knowing, and perfectly good. I take naturalism to be the thought that there is no such person as God, or anything like God. Naturalism is stronger than atheism: you can be an atheist without rising to the full heights (sinking to the lowest depths?) of naturalism; but you can't be a naturalist without being an atheist.[213]

Naturalism, according to Plantinga, is stronger than atheism. He thinks that you cannot be a naturalist without also being an atheist. This, he says, is because naturalists are committed to CCN, and therefore to the rejection of a supernatural being. He therefore implies that any God worthy of the name must necessarily be supernatural. This is a view that the present thesis seeks to challenge. As we have noted, William James once thought to classify his view as 'theistic naturalism' (a classification which we intend to resurrect in chapter 3). He believed in a finite God, existing within the natural world, and yet endowed with personality, and possessed of abundant power and goodness. In what follows we will attempt to challenge the perception, well expressed by Plantinga, that naturalism is necessarily in conflict with religion. In doing so we will draw upon the tradition of religious naturalism, the very existence of which is a testament to the superficiality of this conflict.

1.5.1. The Varieties of Naturalism

In an article entitled 'Varieties of Naturalism' written for the *Oxford Handbook of Religion and Science*, Owen Flanagan suggests that the "common core" of naturalism is the rejection of supernaturalism[214]. However, he goes on to say that it is only one particular form of supernaturalism that is really problematic:

> Let me be clear about a matter of considerable importance: the objectionable form of 'supernaturalism' is one according to which (i) there exists a 'supernatural being or beings' or 'power(s)' outside the natural world; (ii) this 'being' or 'power' has causal commerce with the world; (iii) the grounds for belief in both the 'supernatural being'

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[213] Alvin Plantinga, *Where the Conflict Really Lies* (Oxford: OUP, 2011), p. ix
[214] Owen Flanagan, 'Varieties of Naturalism', in *The Oxford Handbook of Religion and Science*, ed. by Philip Clayton, pp432-433

and its causal commerce cannot be seen, discovered, or inferred by way of any known and reliable epistemic method.[215]

It is perfectly possible, Flanagan thinks, to embrace a form of spirituality whilst rejecting the conjunction of (i) – (iii):

> I myself am religious: a Celtic-Catholic-Buddhist. And I see my ethical commitments as supported and enhanced by deep transcendental cognitive convictions and emotions that powerfully ground a conviction that I am part of a whole, inextricably connected to everything else that there is. But I reject (i) – (iii).[216]

Religious individuals who reject the conjunction of (i) – (iii), like Flanagan, may legitimately call themselves 'religious naturalists'. We can say that religious naturalists, in addition to endorsing (at least) CCN, endorse an existential thesis:

Existential Thesis of Religious Naturalism (ETRN): Nature, or something within nature, merits a religious response[217].

Religious naturalism, like its secular counterpart, includes a wide spectrum of positions, from the more austere to the more expansive. Flanagan himself, in addition to being a religious naturalist, is also a scientific naturalist, endorsing CCP, POR, SCI, and MTN. He is certainly on the austere end of the spectrum of religious naturalism. He is joined there by thinkers like Ursula Goodenough[218], Willem Drees[219], and Jerome Stone[220]. Towards the middle of the spectrum we find thinkers like Loyal Rue[221] and Donald Crosby[222] (possibly Andrei Buckareff is in this category too[223]). And at the liberal end we find the likes of Arthur Peacocke[224], Philip Clayton[225], and David Ray Griffin[226]. In recent years they have been joined by a growing contingent of analytic philosophers, with Mark

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[215] Flanagan, 'Varieties of Naturalism', in *The Oxford Handbook of Religion and Science*, ed. by Clayton, p433

[216] Flanagan, 'Varieties of Naturalism', in *The Oxford Handbook of Religion and Science*, ed. by Clayton, p436

[217] We cannot enter here into a discussion of what precisely constitutes a 'religious response', or of whether such a concept is valid. For the purposes of this discussion we take 'religion' to be a family resemblance concept along similar lines to those advocated by Benson Saler. See: Benson Saler, 'Conceptualizing Religion: Some Recent Reflections', *Religion*, 38 (2008), pp219-225

[218] Ursula Goodenough, *The Sacred Depths of Nature* (New York: OUP, 1998)

[219] Willem Drees, *Religion, Science and Naturalism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996)

[220] Jerome Stone, *Religious Naturalism Today: The Rebirth of a Forgotten Alternative* (New York: SUNY Press, 2009)

[221] Loyal Rue, *Religion is Not About God* (USA: Rutgers University Press, 2006)

[222] Donald Crosbie, *A Religion of Nature* (Albany: SUNY Press, 2002)

[223] Andrei Buckareff, 'Theological Realism, Divine Action, and Divine Location', in *Alternative Concepts of God*, ed. by Andrei Buckareff & Yujin Nagasawa (Oxford: OUP, 2016), pp213-233

[224] Arthur Peacocke, *Theology for a Scientific Age* (UK: Augsburg Fortress Publishers, 1993)

[225] Philip Clayton, *Adventures in the Spirit: God, World, Divine Action* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2008)

[226] David Ray Griffin, *Panentheism and Scientific Naturalism* (Claremont: Process Century Press, 2014)

Johnston[227], Thomas Nagel[228], Peter Forrest[229], and Sam Coleman[230] (to name a few), defending relatively liberal doctrines of religious naturalism. The following tabulated schema illustrates the possible varieties of naturalism and religious naturalism[231]:

Fig. 13	Varieties of Naturalism	
	Scientific Naturalism	**Scientific Religious Naturalism**
Theses	CCN, CCP, SCI, MTN, PER, POR, HSR	CCN, CCP, SCI, MTN, PER, POR, HSR, ETRN
Exponents	Sellars and Quine	Flanagan and Goodenough
	Liberal Naturalism	**Liberal Religious Naturalism**
Theses	CCN, CCP, DSCI, WE/SE	CCN, CCP, DSCI, WE/SE, ETRN
Exponents	John McDowell	Loyal Rue
	Radical Liberal Naturalism	**Radical Religious Naturalism**
Theses	CCN, DSCI, WE, SE, MC	CCN, DSCI, WE, SE, MC, ETRN
Exponents	Roy Wood Sellars	Arthur Peacocke

In each case the religious naturalisms differ from their non-religious counterparts only in endorsing the existential thesis of religious naturalism. There does not seem to be anything logically problematic about this thesis. We take it therefore that if the non-religious naturalisms are legitimate philosophical positions, then the religious naturalisms are likewise legitimate. In the case of positions like those advocated by Owen Flanagan and Loyal Rue this claim is not likely to be controversial. In the case of positions like those advocated by Arthur Peacocke and Philip Clayton on the other hand, many non-religious naturalists will have serious doubts. In what follows we will investigate some doctrines of radical religious naturalism in more detail, and attempt to dispel lingering doubts as to their naturalistic credentials.

1.5.2. Radical Religious Naturalism

Within the category of radical religious naturalism, there are, as there are within every category of naturalism we have delineated, a large spectrum of possible positions. These positions, we may say, can be arranged from weak to strong along any number of possible axes. One such axis that is relevant to the present discussion is that of personality; i.e. the extent to which personality

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[227] Mark Johnston, *Saving God* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009)
[228] Thomas Nagel, *Mind and Cosmos* (New York: OUP, 2012)
[229] Peter Forrest, 'The Personal Pantheist Conception of God', in *Alternative Concepts of God*, ed. by Buckareff & Nagasawa, pp21-40
[230] Sam Coleman, 'Personhood, Consciousness, and God: How to be a Proper Pantheist', *International Journal for Philosophy of Religion*, 85 (2019), pp77-98
[231] See the 'List of Abbreviations' for details.

is attributed to a religious object/objects. On the weak end of the spectrum we find positions which invoke a mere property of holiness, sacredness, deity, etc. as the object of religious devotion. Thus, the British Emergentist Samuel Alexander proposed that deity is an emergent property from certain configurations of mental entities. We may call such positions 'impersonal religious naturalisms'. On the strong end of the spectrum we find positions which invoke a God or Gods, construed in personal terms, as the object of religious devotion. Thus, one may endorse pantheism or panentheism, and say that God is identical with or emergent from the universe as a whole; or one may endorse a finite theism, for which God is identical with or emergent from some *portion* of the universe. Such positions may be called 'theistic religious naturalisms'. Another relevant axis is that of the degree of temporality attributed to the divine being/property. Thus, on the weak end of the spectrum we have positions which hold that deity or God emerges from the universe only gradually, in step with cosmic evolution. In extreme cases it may be held that deity or God is not yet even close to fully emerging; that the future emergent God stands to the present universe as a present human being stands to the primordial slime four billion years ago. We may call such positions 'temporal religious naturalisms'. At the strong end of the spectrum we find positions which hold that God or deity emerges instantaneously – already complete – at the beginning of the universe; or even that God precedes the universe in time and/or ontological priority. We may call such positions 'atemporal religious naturalisms'[232]. Now, the doctrines we wish to consider in the present section occupy the strong end of the spectrum on the axes of both personality and temporality. In other words, they are atemporal theistic religious naturalisms. In addition, being *radical* religious naturalisms, they attribute macro-causal power to their religious objects. Such doctrines are undoubtedly the most controversial from the point of view of the broader naturalistic tradition. If therefore we can establish the naturalistic credentials of such doctrines, we will thereby have established the general validity of the category of radical religious naturalism. Let us therefore consider the doctrines of radical religious naturalism presented by Arthur Peacocke and Philip Clayton, both of whom explicitly invoke doctrines of emergentism and macro-causation in formulating their positions.

To begin with let us note that there are differences in the ways that Peacocke and Clayton present their positions. For the most part these differences revolve around the way in which they conceive of divine action. For Peacocke, divine action occurs exclusively through what he calls 'whole-part influence' or 'top-down causation'. He cites self-organizing systems (e.g. sand dunes

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[232] For a relevant discussion of the theological applications of doctrines of emergence, see: Niels Henrik Gregersen, 'Emergence: What is at Stake for Religious Reflection', in *The Re-Emergence of Emergence*, ed. by Clayton & Davies, pp279-302.

and flocks of birds) and dissipative systems (e.g. storm systems and organisms) as examples of phenomena that exhibit this kind of causation, as in the following passage:

> In these examples [self-organizing/dissipative systems], the ordinary physico-chemical descriptions of the interactions at the micro-level simply cannot account for the observed phenomena. It is clear that what the parts … are doing and why the patterns they form are what they are [is] *because* of their incorporation into the system-as-a-whole – in fact these are patterns *within* the systems in question. … The parts would not be behaving as observed if they were not parts of that particular system (the 'whole'). The state of the system-as-a-whole is influencing (i.e. acting like a 'cause' on) what the parts, the constituents, actually do.[233]

Construed in this way, whole-part influence sounds suspiciously like what we saw Brian Davies, in section 1.4, dismissing as a trivial effect of 'non-local constraints' on a system. Non-local constraints, he explained, restrict the degrees of freedom of the constituents of a system; as the shape of a ball restricts the motion of its constituent particles. But such constraints, he insisted, are wholly realized or implemented by familiar physical forces acting on elementary particles. If this reading of Peacocke's proposal is correct, then his doctrine of divine action looks defunct from a scientific perspective. What he requires, on Davies' analysis, are emergent configurational forces; in other words, something like the British Emergentist approach. This approach, we contend, fits Peacocke's view perfectly well, for he views nature as organized into a hierarchy of natural levels – physico-chemical, biological, mental, etc. – each with its relative reality and sphere of macro-causal influence. Seeing as he explicitly rejects the quantum approach to macro-causation, something like this would appear to be his best option. In any case, his account of macro-causation fits into the broad emergentist framework we described in section 1.4. The following annotated diagram which he provides makes this clear:

Fig. 14
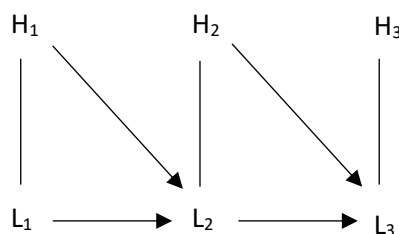
> The vertical lines in the figure represent the mereological relation between the state of the whole system H and the entities of which it is constituted at the lower level L at particular times (1, 2, 3 …). The diagonal arrow implies that the holistic state H_2

[233] Arthur Peacocke, 'Emergence, Mind, and Divine Action: The Hierarchy of the Sciences in Relation to the Human Mind-Brain-Body', in *The Re-Emergence of Emergence*, ed. by Clayton & Davies, pp257-278 (p263)

(which is composed of constituents L$_2$) is determined by ('caused by'), and is a consequence of, the holistic state H$_1$ jointly with L$_1$.[234]

Clayton, in contrast to Peacocke, does not reject the quantum approach. He thinks that it serves as a valuable supplement to something like Peacocke's account[235]. God, on his view, is able to influence the collapse of the wavefunctions of any and all quantum events in the universe, determining which possible outcomes of the events are actualised. As we noted in section 1.4, quantum approaches to macro-causation require some mechanism for amplifying the effects of quantum events. Clayton suggests that quantum divine action takes place largely through the loci of biological evolution and human brains, where, if Eliis's analysis and Stapp's proposal prove sound, mechanisms for amplification do exist[236]. Clayton's view therefore also fits into the emergentist framework we discussed in section 1.4. Something like the following diagram, we suggest, can be taken to represent his and Peacocke's concept of divine action:

Fig. 15

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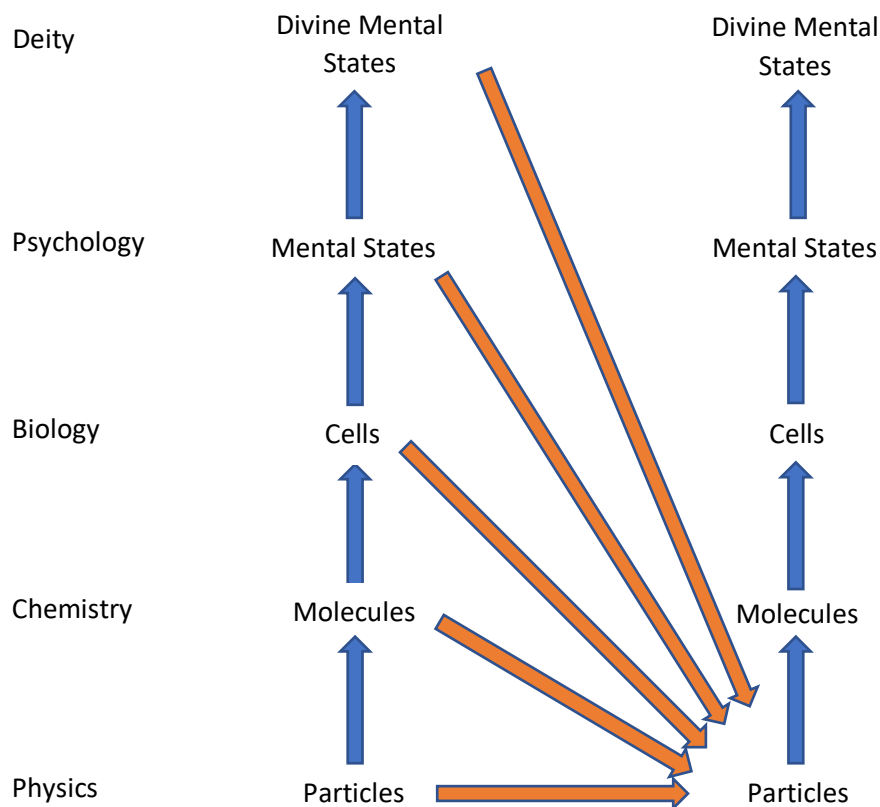
[234] Peacocke, 'Emergence, Mind, and Divine Action: The Hierarchy of the Sciences in Relation to the Human Mind-Brain-Body', in *The Re-Emergence of Emergence*, ed. by Clayton & Davies, p265
[235] Clayton, *Adventures in the Spirit*, pp192-195
[236] Clayton, *Adventures in the Spirit*, pp197-200. See also: Philip Clayton, *God and Contemporary Science* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1997), pp181-183

God, on this view, is strongly emergent from the configuration of elementary particles that constitutes the totality of the universe. This configuration, since the beginning of the universe, has given rise to emergent properties/laws, and to emergent macroscopic activity at the level of the universe as a whole. This activity will manifest, in the long run, in a cosmic tendency towards the realization of God's purposes and intentions. Alternatively, or in addition, God, as an emergent entity, can influence the outcomes of quantum events within his body (the universe) – for example, those underlying human mental activity and genetic mutation – in such a way as to guide biological and cultural evolution in accordance with his purposes and intentions. Something like this would appear to capture what Peacocke and Clayton have in mind. Talk of purposes and intentions should not be allowed to muddle this account. On the view we are considering God's purposes and intentions, just like human purposes and intentions, are emergent from configurations of elementary particles. In the case of human purposes, those configurations occur within the brains of biological organisms; in God's case they will presumably occur elsewhere in the wider universe, disguised as some cosmic process with whose outward appearance they have nothing to do. We can expect God's purposes to be as different from human purposes as their respective emergence bases are different from one other; which is to say, so different as to be almost unrecognizable. Thus, such talk of purposes and intentions should be taken in a highly analogical sense.

The above account, we contend, deserves to maintain its naturalistic credentials. It does not assert the existence of a supernatural being existing outside the universe; it does not assert that a supernatural being has causal commerce with the universe; and it does not assert that justification for the belief in a divine being cannot be gotten through reliable epistemic methods. What it does assert is that the universe, like a human organism, has something analogous to a mind, and something analogous to purposes, which, like a human organism, it tends to realize through natural macro-causal processes. This idea may seem farfetched to some people – it may even seem ugly and immoral – but this, we insist, does not bear on its naturalistic credentials. Some scientific naturalists, after all, are appalled by *liberal* naturalism, and deny *its* naturalistic credentials. Some liberal naturalists are appalled by *radical* liberal naturalism, and deny *its* naturalistic credentials. Some radical liberal naturalists are appalled by *religious* naturalism, and deny *its* naturalistic credentials. And some religious naturalists, no doubt, are appalled by *radical religious* naturalism, and deny *its* naturalistic credentials. Where then, ought we to draw the line?

The simple fact is that all of these positions, insofar as they are logically coherent and endorse CCN, are forms of naturalism[237].

1.5.4. Locating James

Having now thoroughly mapped the conceptual space of philosophical naturalism, we come to the question of where to locate William James with respect to our schema. James, we would like to suggest, was a radical religious naturalist. He endorsed a weak version of the methodological thesis of naturalism, constantly appealing to science and imitating its methods in various respects throughout his career. He developed a critique of what he called 'scientificism' that overlaps significantly with the liberal naturalists' critique of scientific naturalism. He took an approach to intentionality, normativity, and consciousness that is likewise deeply consonant with that of liberal naturalism. He articulated a doctrine of emergentism essentially similar to that of the British Emergentists, and a doctrine of macro-causation consistent with the strictures of radical liberal naturalism. Finally, he set forth a doctrine of 'pluralistic pantheism' (or theistic naturalism) similar in many respects to that of Peacock and Clayton[238]. Our task in chapter 2 will be to provide the textual evidence to support this provisional assessment.

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[237] This line of thought is well expressed in Fiona Ellis's *God, Value, and Nature*. Ellis also develops a schema of progressively expansive naturalisms not dissimilar to our own. See: Fiona Ellis, *God, Value, and Nature* (Oxford: OUP, 2014)

[238] We should note however that James's theistic naturalism differs from both Peacocke and Clayton's in being temporal (holding that God has a history and is undergoing a process of progressive self-realization), and in making God emergent from a *portion* of the universe rather than from the universe as a whole.

Chapter 2 – The Development of James's Naturalism

Having now established the varieties of naturalism, and acquainted ourselves with the necessary concepts and terminology, our task in chapter 2 will be to trace the development of James's worldview in relation to naturalism. Investigating every facet of James's philosophy is obviously out of the question here, so we will limit ourselves to considering certain key naturalistic themes in his work. However, taking our cue from Perry and Myers, we will be investigating these themes through a chronological treatment of his core texts[239]. Thus, in section 2.2, on *The Principles*, we will – in addition to demonstrating the widely recognized methodological naturalism of that text – unearth James's doctrine of the strong emergence of mental phenomena, and examine his doctrine of mental causation. This is of vital importance to our thesis, for these two doctrines will serve, in chapter 3, as models for reconstructing James's broader doctrines of emergentism and macro-causation. In section 2.3, on *The Will to Believe*, we will turn our attention to James's critique of scientificism, and the exposition of his ethical philosophy in 'The Moral Philosopher and the Moral Life'. Regarding the former, we shall see that James's critique foreshadowed the liberal naturalists' critique of scientific naturalism in almost every important respect. We will argue that it ought to be read in a similar vein, not as an attack on naturalism per se, but as a rejection of a particularly austere form of it. Regarding the latter we shall see that James's early ethical philosophy consisted in an overtly naturalistic part and seemingly non-naturalistic religious part. We will indicate the terms of our proposed reconciliation of these parts, awaiting a fuller treatment in chapter 3. In section 2.4, on *The Varieties*, we will mount a thorough investigation of James's views on religious experience. We shall see that this text is, in many respects, much more naturalistic than is usually supposed. James's basic commitment to the psychological/pragmatic methods, his insistence on the empirical testing of religious hypotheses/experiences, his steps towards the development of a science of religions, and his psycho-biological explanation of religious experience are all profoundly naturalistic. Besides these points however, our main aim in section 2.4 will be to demonstrate the superficiality of James's commitment to 'piecemeal supernaturalism'. We shall see that he only defined himself as such in contradistinction to an austere mechanical naturalism that endorses the causal closure of the physical. He remained committed to the causal closure of nature. According to our schema, therefore, his position is to be classified as a form of radical religious naturalism. In section 2.5, on the *Essays in Radical*

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[239] Taking a chronological approach has the obvious advantage of giving us a more accurate sense of the *development* of James's thought. Although we will be emphasizing the point less than some commentators, we recognize that James's worldview did not come about instantaneously, and that certain later parts may supersede certain earlier parts, etc.

Empiricism, we will be concerned to establish the outcome of James's widely acknowledged 'break with dualism'. We will argue in favour of a panpsychist interpretation of the doctrine of pure experience, according to which the inner nature of external realities is constituted of phenomenal consciousness. Together with our treatment of PU in section 2.7, this discussion will serve as the foundation for our reconstruction of James's panpsychism in chapter 3. In section 2.6, on *Pragmatism*, we will consider James's account of the pragmatic method, and the pragmatic theory of truth. We shall see that the former, with its insistence on the continuity of philosophy with science, is totally consonant with the methodological thesis of naturalism. Regarding the latter, we shall first argue against idealist readings of the theory, which are sometimes thought to constitute a point of conflict between pragmatism and naturalism, and second, we shall present a novel reading of the theory as an evolutionary theory of cognition, according to which 'truths' amount to adaptive heuristics for dealing with our environment. On the basis of this reading we will show how the pragmatic theory of truth works to undermine scientism, and to establish the potential cognitive value of religion/religious experience. Finally, in section 2.7, we will investigate James's transition from the 'piecemeal supernaturalism' of *The Varieties* to the 'pluralistic pantheism' of *A Pluralistic Universe*. Our main aim in this section will be to show how James's adoption of panpsychism allowed him to defend a doctrine of finite theism, according to which God's consciousness constitutes the inner nature of a certain portion of the physical universe. This discussion will serve as the foundation for chapter 3, which will seek to demonstrate that James's finite theism, supported by reconstructed doctrines of panpsychism and emergentism, is consistent with the strictures of radical religious naturalism. Before we move on to the substance of chapter 2, we will address some preliminary considerations regarding the interpretation of James.

2.1. Preliminary Considerations

In interpreting the work of any philosopher certain key questions are bound to arise. To what extent did the philosopher's ideas change in the course of their career? Did later ideas come to supersede earlier ones? To what extent are his/her ideas – in their most mature, unified form – actually consistent with one another? Are there brute inconsistencies/errors that cannot be interpreted away? How are the philosopher's works to be weighted? Are certain of the works more canonical and others more experimental, etc.? Ought we to take a more descriptive or a more constructive approach in interpreting a given philosopher's work? These questions, we suggest, may be grouped together under four headings: i) unity vs disunity, ii) consistency vs

inconsistency, iii) weighting, and iv) description vs construction. In what follows we will attempt to address all of these issues as they pertain to James, and to our interpretation of him.

i)   Unity vs Disunity

We begin with the question of unity vs disunity in James's work. At the most basic level, this issue concerns the development of James's professional interests and motivations. For instance, Perry states, in his seminal study, that James's thought can be divided into three distinct but overlapping phases: the first psychological, the second ethical/religious, and the third philosophical/metaphysical[240]. Thus, PP and the lectures on exceptional mental states fall into the first period; WB, *Human Immortality*, and VRE fall into the second, and ERE, *Pragmatism*, and PU fall into the third. Although the majority of commentators assent to this schema in broad outline, it is important to note its potentially distorting effects. To begin with, PP (and some of the articles that preceded it) contains much that is philosophical, including discussions of epiphenomenalism and panpsychism, and germinal forms of the doctrines of the mother sea of consciousness, pure experience, and the pragmatic theory of truth[241]. Secondly, despite his occasional suggestion to the contrary, James's psychological interests extended well into his middle and late periods, as is evident in VRE, and as can be seen also in ERE and *Pragmatism*[242]. And thirdly James's religious interests continued to be relevant in his very last published works; i.e. in PU, and in some of his articles on mysticism[243].

Beyond the development of James's broad professional interests, this issue of unity vs disunity touches a number of more specific debates in James scholarship. Bruce Wilshire for instance insists that the publication of *Psychology: Briefer Course* signals James's turning his back on the naturalistic approach of PP[244]. Almost all commentators agree that ERE heralds James's formal 'break with dualism' (although they disagree as to what James replaced it with). Suckiel and

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[240] Perry, *The Thought and Character of William James*, II, p363
[241] See chapters V and VI of *The Principles*, on 'The Automaton-Theory' and 'The Mind-Stuff Theory' for discussions of epiphenomenalism and panpsychism. For reference to the "anima mundi thinking in all of us" which is likely a precursor to the mother-sea, see: James, *The Principles*, I, p346. For a discussion of James's sensationism which prefigures the neutral monism of ERE, see: James, *The Principles*, I, p304. And for comments on cognition that clearly anticipate the pragmatic theory of truth, see: James, *The Principles*, I, p471.
[242] A number of commentators have insisted that ERE ought to be interpreted in the light of PP, and even that it should be viewed as an extension/completion of certain doctrines of PP. See for instance: Bird, *William James*, pp72-92; Taylor, *William James on Consciousness Beyond the Margin*, pp128-134
[243] See for instance: 'A Suggestion About Mysticism' and 'A Pluralistic Mystic', in: *The Works of William James: Essays in Philosophy*, ed. by Burkhardt, pp157-165; pp172-190
[244] Bruce Wilshire, 'Protophenomenology in the Psychology of William James', *Transactions of the Charles S. Peirce Society*, 5 (1969), pp25-43

Slater both argue that VRE constitutes a reversal of certain doctrines of WB[245]; and Slater further argues that VRE signals a transition from a more traditional theism to a pluralistic approach to religion[246]. Finally, James himself acknowledged that his reading of Bergson's *Creative Evolution*[247] in 1907 allowed him to finally resolve the combination problem and embrace the pluralistic pantheism of PU[248]. Several commentators have interpreted this as entailing his conversion to panpsychism[249].

However, despite these various claims regarding development and disunity, a thorough examination of James's corpus leaves little doubt as to the underlying theoretical unity of his work. Jeremy Carrette has characterised this underlying unity by likening James's philosophy to a spiral which periodically cycles round to the same themes and concerns throughout his career[250]. All of his most competent commentators have stressed this fact, emphasizing the presence of later ideas in PP and in the articles/letters that preceded it. In particular we note our agreement with David Lamberth (and Perry and Myers) that the chief doctrines of radical empiricism had taken shape by 1895, and that texts like VRE ought to be interpreted in light of those doctrines[251].

ii)   Consistency vs Inconsistency

Next, we address the issue of internal consistency. James may well have the honour of being the most respected and influential philosopher to be most often accused of inconsistency. It has become a trope in James scholarship to note that James was 'not a systematic thinker' and to comment on his 'vague and impressionistic style'[252]. Thus, Myers noted apparent conflicts between his doctrines of mental causation and substance monism; between his integral and deflationary accounts of the self in PP; and between his notions of the privacy of consciousness

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[245] Ellen Suckiel, *Heaven's Champion* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1996), pp106-112; Michael Slater, *William James on Ethics and Faith* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), pp153-154

[246] Slater, *William James on Ethics and Faith*, p71

[247] Henri Bergson, *Creative Evolution*, trans. by Arthur Mitchell (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1911)

[248] James, *A Pluralistic Universe*, p214

[249] See for instance: Marcus Ford, *William James's Philosophy* (Amherst: The University of Massachusetts Press, 1982); Timothy Sprigge, *James and Bradley*, pp134-137; Bruce Kuklick, *A History of Philosophy in America: 1720-2000* (Oxford: OUP, 2001), pp173-174

[250] Jeremy Carrette, *William James's Hidden Religious Imagination* (Oxon: Routledge, 2013), p7

[251] David Lamberth, *William James and the Metaphysics of Experience* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), p9

[252] Comments like these are utterly ubiquitous. To cite a few examples at random: Charlene Haddock Seigfried, *William James's Radical Reconstruction of Philosophy* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1990), p9; Bird, *William James*, p13; Gale, *The Divided Self of William James*, p19. William Gavin has centred a whole book-length study of James around the notion of 'the vague' (not, of course, intended in a pejorative sense). See: Gavin, *William James and the Reinstatement of the Vague*, pp1-13

and the publicity of pure experience (in PP and ERE respectively)[253]. In the realm of epistemology both Rorty and Gale have suggested a conflict between the pragmatic theory of truth and the religious realism of VRE[254]; Ford and Bird find a conflict between the pragmatic theory of truth and panpsychism[255]; and Putnam finds a conflict between the pragmatic theory of truth and an underlying account of objective truth[256]. In the realm of religion and ethics Gale and Slater note a conflict between James's naturalistic ethics and his deontological/religious ethics[257].

Gale and Cooper have each attempted to develop overarching solutions to these inconsistencies. According to Gale the inconsistencies are not so much internal to James's philosophy as they are internal to James himself. James, says Gale, possessed a divided self. He was half 'Promethean Pragmatist', half 'Anti-Promethean Mystic'. As a pragmatist he tended towards naturalism, relativism, and moral strenuousness; as a mystic he tended towards supernaturalism, absolutism, and moral relaxation. He did in fact possess, as it were, two philosophies, each consistent in itself, but inconsistent with the other[258]. Cooper rejects Gale's solution. He thinks that James's apparent inconsistencies result from the fact that his philosophy has a 'two-level' structure. It consists in an empirical level, devoted to scientific and naturalistic hypotheses, and a metaphysical level, devoted to over-beliefs. His naturalistic psychology, utilitarian ethics, and pragmatic theory of truth belong to the empirical level; his neutral monism, deontological ethics, and metaphysical realism belong on the metaphysical level[259]. We tend to agree more (though by no means completely) with Cooper on this issue. James's supposed inconsistencies are frequently over-emphasized, and often serve to justify lazy interpretations of his work.

iii)   Weighting

There are a number of views among scholars concerning how to weight James's works when interpreting his philosophy. First of all, we may distinguish between selective vs holistic approaches to weighting his work. According to philosophers in the selective camp, like Rorty, Cooper, and Schwarz, we may legitimately give precedence to some particular subset of James's

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[253] Gerald Myers, *William James: His Life and Thought* (London: Yale University Press, 1986), p58; p61; p311
[254] Richard Rorty, 'Some Inconsistencies in James's Varieties', in *William James and A Science of Religions*, ed. by Wayne Proudfoot (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004), pp86-97; Gale, *The Divided Self of William James*, p19
[255] Ford, pp2-3; Bird, *William James*, p8
[256] Hilary Putnam, 'James's Theory of Truth', in *The Cambridge Companion to William James*, ed. by R. A. Putnam, pp166-185
[257] Gale, *The Divided Self of William James*, p48; Slater, *William James on Ethics and Faith*, p74
[258] Gale, *The Divided Self of William James*, p19
[259] Wesley Cooper, *The Unity of William James's Thought* (Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press, 2002), pp36-71

work; his naturalistic work, his religious work, his best work, etc.[260] According to those in the holistic camp, like Perry, Myers, Gale, Taylor, Carrette, and Campbell, the selective approach is bound to have a distorting effect on our understanding of James. We ought, rather, to consider James's entire corpus in attempting to provide an informed interpretation of his worldview[261]. Within the holistic camp, there are those like Myers and Taylor who give precedence to James's earlier work, and those like Gale and Lamberth, who give precedence to the later work. There are also those who give precedence to his published work, and those who give precedence to his letters and notes[262].

For our part we think that the issue of weighting is a relatively straightforward one. We must assess James's entire corpus, and give precedence to his later published works. Selective studies of individual works may be tremendously interesting and useful, but they will not give an accurate impression of James's overall worldview. Of particular note in regard to our own weighting of James's work is the emphasis we place, with David Lamberth, on PU. This is James's last complete work, and there is no good reason to suppose that is does not represent the most definitive statement of his mature philosophical views. As such, chapter 3 of this thesis will be largely centred around it.

iv)   Description vs Construction

The issue of description vs construction in the interpretation of James is a particularly tricky one. This is so for a number of reasons. Firstly, James was a prolific philosopher with wide-ranging interests, publishing a large volume of work on a variety of subjects. Second, much of his work was conducted in the form of public lectures and addresses, ill-suited to dealing with technicalities or to attaining perfect philosophic clarity. And thirdly, because James was a conscious innovator in philosophy, standing outside of any established tradition, and therefore not easily susceptible to analysis in terms of traditional hermeneutical strategies. Among commentators on James's work we may say that the likes of Perry, Myers, Lamberth, and Campbell tend to employ a more descriptive approach, while Ford, Bird, Suckiel, Seigfried,

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[260] See for instance: Cooper, *The Unity of William James's Thought*, p34

[261] See: Gale, *The Divided Self of William James*, p21; Taylor, *William James on Consciousness Beyond the Margin*, p7; Jeremy Carrette, 'Introduction', in *William James and the Varieties of Religious Experience*, ed. by Jeremy Carrette (London: Routledge, 2005), pp1-7

[262] Daniel Bjork for instance insists that James is more unguarded and authentic in his letters. See: Daniel Bjork, *William James: The Center of His Vision* (Washington: American Psychological Association, 1997), p. xvi. Gale retorts that we ought to respect James's intentions/judgement as a philosopher, and as a curator of his own work. See: Gale, *The Divided Self of William James*, p21

Sprigge, Gale, and Cooper tend to employ a more constructive approach[263]. Most of the more recent commentaries come from a constructive angle. This may be because Perry and Myers succeeded so admirably on the descriptive front. It may also be because *systematic* presentation of James's ideas requires some efforts in the way of construction. Bird for instance has argued that James's anti-intellectualism manifests in an aversion to systematic argument, and that if systematization of his ideas is to be achieved, as is desirable, then it must be imposed to some degree from without[264]. Seigfried meanwhile has argued that the supposed dichotomy between descriptive and constructive interpretation is a mistake. Descriptive interpretations are inevitably selective, and are therefore bound to reflect the author's biases just as much as constructive interpretations (sometimes more so, on account of their pretence to neutrality). The answer, she thinks, is to provide a constructive interpretation that is as transparent and self-reflexive as possible[265]. We ourselves have elected to take a more descriptive approach in chapter 2 and a more constructive approach in chapter 3. All in all, we will tend towards construction. We are seeking, as we said in the introduction, to develop a 'Jamesian naturalism' rather than to show that 'James was a naturalist'. With these preliminary considerations settled, let us now move on to the substance of our interpretation.

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[263] Campbell represents the extreme of the descriptive approach. His recent book *Experiencing William James* almost amounts to a synoptic edition of James's works. Dozens of individual quotations from James appear on every page, and he rarely ventures his own opinions/interpretations, let alone those of other commentators. See: James Campbell, *Experiencing William James* (London: Virginia University Press, 2017). Seigfried on the other hand represents the extreme of the constructive approach. She aims not only to reconstruct James's philosophy in such a way that "James as the authoritative controller of the true meaning of the texts is de-centered"; but also, to "reconstruct the reconstruction" so as to "overcome the limitations of the original text". See: Seigfried, p2

[264] Bird, *William James*, p13

[265] Seigfried, pp4-8

2.2. The Principles of Psychology

The Principles of Psychology is counted by many as James's greatest work. It is certainly by far and away his most substantial work, containing twenty-eight mostly very long chapters devoted to a range of subjects spanning the philosophy of mind, the philosophy of psychology, physiological psychology, descriptive psychology, clinical psychology, and applied psychology. The rough structure of the book is as follows. James begins with various discussions of the methods of psychology and of basic principles/facts of physiological psychology. He then proceeds to a philosophical discussion of the relation between the mind and brain, the apparent purpose of which is to head off certain metaphysical questions at the outset. Following this he launches into a series of descriptive psychological accounts of our various mental faculties – attention, conception, memory, sensation, emotion, etc. – in each case attempting, through the use of experimental evidence and introspective analysis, to connect the faculties in question with physiological processes in the brain[266]. Although the greater part of the principles is devoted to descriptive and physiological psychology, our own investigation will be more or less confined to the relatively few chapters which discuss philosophy of psychology and philosophy of mind. In section 2.2.1 we will discuss James's general approach to psychology, which we hold, along with many of James's commentators, to be basically naturalistic. In section 2.2.2, we will consider what James says in PP about the relation between the mind and the brain. Taking our cue from the suggestions of Graham Bird, Timothy Sprigge, and Brian McLaughlin, we will try to show that James articulated a doctrine of emergentism in PP. Finally, in section 2.2.3 we will investigate James's doctrine of freewill/mental causation as it appears in PP. As we have said, these two doctrines (of emergentism and mental causation) are vital to our interpretation, as they will serve as the basis for important discussions in chapter 3.

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[266] Certain chapters stand out as exceptions to this general pattern. The chapter on 'The Stream of Thought', being concerned with a descriptive account of conscious experience *in general*, is relatively light on physiological detail, and may be said to be more purely phenomenological. Chapters eight, ten, and twenty-seven, on 'The Relations of Minds to Other Things', 'The Consciousness of Self', and 'Hypnotism', contain lengthy discussions of hysteria and the phenomenon of 'split-off consciousness' and may be said to fall more under the heading of clinical psychology. Chapters eleven and twenty-six, on 'Attention' and 'Will', contain discussions of freewill and mental causation, and as such stray back into philosophy of mind. And chapters twenty-one and twenty-eight, on 'The Perception of Reality' and 'Necessary Truths and the Effects of Experience' delve into epistemology.

2.2.1. Science and Methodological Naturalism in *The Principles*

2.2.1.1. The Methodological Ban on Metaphysics

In the preface to *The Principles* James informs the reader that he will keep "close to the point of view of natural science throughout the book"[267]. For James natural science is defined in part by its exclusion of metaphysics. It must "assume certain data uncritically" and refrain from metaphysical discussions of that data[268]. The data of psychology are, according to James: "(1) *thoughts and feelings*, and (2) *a physical world* in time and space with which they coexist, and which (3) *they know*"[269]. Psychology ought not to seek any philosophical foundation or justification for this data. It ought not concern itself with questions of epistemology; of how knowledge is possible, or of what is the precise nature of the relation between the mind and external reality. As such, James contends that "psychology, when she has ascertained the empirical correlation of the various sorts of thought or feeling with definite conditions of the brain, can go no further – can go no further, that is, as a natural science"[270].

James's separation in PP of psychology and metaphysics might at first be thought to imply a rejection of the methodological thesis of naturalism; namely, of the continuity between philosophy and science. This, however, would be a drastically mistaken reading of his position. Although James wishes to ban metaphysics from psychology, he says nothing about banning psychology, or science in general, from metaphysics. Indeed, his various forays into metaphysics in PP evince a strong commitment to the methodological thesis. He draws amply from science in all of these instances, and is clearly concerned to achieve consistency with science. Moreover, the metaphysics he wishes to ban from psychology is not the metaphysics of today, which under the auspices of the analytic tradition has become well-defined and methodical, but a metaphysics still contaminated with much unbridled apriori speculation, trading in absolutes and immortal souls. All in all, James's attitude regarding the relation between science and philosophy in PP is very much consistent with contemporary naturalism[271].

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[267] William James, *The Principles of Psychology*, 2 vols (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1890) I, p. v
[268] James, *The Principles*, I, p. v-vi
[269] James, *The Principles*, I, p. vi
[270] James, *The Principles*, I, p. vi
[271] For an excellent in-depth discussion of the methodology of PP that touches on its relationship to contemporary debates in naturalism and the philosophy of science, see: Alexander Klein, 'Divide et Impera! William James's Pragmatist Tradition in the Philosophy of Science', *Philosophical Topics*, 36 (2008), pp129-166

2.2.1.2. Psycho-physical Parallelism

James opens the first chapter of PP with a discussion of 'The Scope of Psychology'. He begins by summarising some of the doctrines and methods of what were then the two leading schools of thought in psychology: spiritualism and associationism. Spiritualism postulates the personal soul as a substantial entity in which our various mental states inhere; associationism assumes that mental states are composed of elementary mental atoms or 'simple ideas'[272]. The battle between these two schools, and the ultimate insufficiency of them both, is one of the key threads that runs through *The Principles*. James thinks that many of the doctrines of these schools, and many of the disagreements between them, are largely metaphysical; they revolve around broad issues in epistemology and ontology. They can be avoided or circumvented if we pay closer attention to the actual facts of experience and physiology. And this is precisely the path that psychology, in James's opinion, ought to take.

The key fact with which psychology must begin is "The fact that the brain is the one immediate bodily condition of the mental operations"[273]. This fact entails something about the appropriate methodology of psychology. First, psychology ought to postulate a general law: "that no mental modification ever occurs which is not accompanied or followed by a bodily change"[274] (in other words, psychology ought to assume a theory of psycho-physical parallelism). Second, psychology ought to involve a certain amount of brain physiology[275]. Accordingly, in every chapter of PP which treats of some definite faculty of the mind – attention, memory, sensation, imagination, etc. – James devotes ample space to physiological theories and explanations of the faculty in question[276].

2.2.1.3. The Method of Introspection

James's discussion of the methods of psychology continues in chapter seven, on 'The Methods and Snares of Psychology'. Here James reiterates his methodological ban on metaphysics, outlines the various methods that may be utilized to discover psychological facts, and warns of some possible 'snares' into which psychologists are liable to fall. Of particular interest to us is

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[272] James, *The Principles*, I, pp1-2
[273] James, *The Principles*, I, p4
[274] James, *The Principles*, I, p5
[275] James, *The Principles*, I, p5
[276] For an informed and up-to-date discussion of James's views regarding the relation between physiological and psychological phenomena see: Jay Schulkin, 'Psychobiology: A Jamesian Self-regulatory View', in *Naturalism and Pragmatism* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), pp122-144

James's discussion of the methods of psychology. This is because it reveals his attitude towards introspection, a method which many contemporary naturalists regard as epistemically dubious[277].

According to James the methods of psychology are: i) Introspective Observation, ii) The Experimental Method, and iii) The Comparative Method. Of these, he says, introspection "*is what we have to rely on first and foremost and always*"[278]. It involves looking into our own mind and reporting what we discover there. What we discover, according to James, are "states of consciousness"[279]. He declares that the existence of such states "has never been doubted by any critic"[280]. As we have seen, James could not have made this declaration if he were writing today, for it is now not uncommon to find philosophers expressing doubt about the existence of phenomenal consciousness. Scarcely able to conceive of such doubts however, James assumes that introspection is at least possible. The real question for him is whether it is fallible, or rather, how fallible it is. He quotes the remark of Auguste Comte, that introspection is problematic because it involves dividing oneself in two (in order to examine the one half with the other), which is both intellectually demanding, and modifies the state one is trying to observe[281]. He then quotes Mill's reply that no such division is required when one introspects just after the fact, using fresh memories of the states in question[282]. James endorses Mill's view. A state of consciousness, he thinks, cannot be its own object. As such, all introspection occurs after the fact; it is really *retrospection*. It is therefore liable to all the errors and inaccuracies that ordinary observation and memory are liable to[283]. But introspection is still foundational. It cannot be avoided, and we have no grounds for disregarding it altogether. Gerald Myers and Richard Gale both find introspection to be central in James's philosophy[284]. We shall see later for example that James uses the structure of his own stream of consciousness – as revealed through introspection – as a model for the inner structure of external realities.

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[277] See for instance: A. Rosenberg, *The Atheist's Guide to Reality*, pp146-163

[278] James, *The Principles*, I, p185

[279] James, *The Principles*, I, p185

[280] James, *The Principles*, I, p185

[281] James, *The Principles*, I, p188. The relevant quotation is from: Auguste Comte, *The Positive Philosophy* (New York: Calvin Blanchard, 1858)

[282] James, *The Principles*, I, p189. The relevant quotation is from: John Stuart Mill, *Auguste Comte and Positivism* (London: Trübner, 1882)

[283] James, *The Principles*, I, p191

[284] See: Gerald Myers, 'Pragmatism and Introspective Psychology', in *The Cambridge Companion to William James*, ed. by R. A. Putnam, pp11-24; Gale, *The Divided Self of William James*, p222

2.2.1.4. Esse Est Sentiri

Connected with James's views on introspection is his so-called 'esse est sentiri' doctrine. James articulates this doctrine in chapter six of PP, on 'The Mind-Stuff Theory', in the context of a discussion of whether or not unconscious mental states exist. The theory of unconscious mental states holds that there are mental states which lack conscious/phenomenal properties, and that these mental states may serve as a kind of intermediary between matter and conscious mental states. James rejects this theory, and spends a large portion of chapter six arguing against ten supposed proofs of it. He repeatedly offers variations of the same four replies to these proofs: i) the relevant states are conscious, but occur so quickly and/or inattentively that no memory of them remains, ii) the relevant states are conscious, but the memory of them is lost in "rapid oblivescence", as commonly occurs in the aftermath of dreams, iii) the relevant states are conscious, but they exist in a split-off condition, and iv) the relevant states are not mental phenomena at all; they are purely physiological processes[285]. James resists the notion of unconscious mental states because he finds it intuitively incoherent. He thinks that mental phenomena *just are* conscious:

> There is only one 'phase' in which an idea can be, and that is a fully conscious condition. If it is not in that condition, then it is not at all. Something else is, in its place. The something else may be a merely physical brain process, or it may be another conscious idea.[286]

Thus, James insists "that esse in our mental life is sentiri, and that an idea must consciously be felt as what it is"[287]. This doctrine, we may say, has two parts. First, that the esse of mental phenomena is their sentiri, and second, that the qualities of mental phenomena are necessarily precisely what they are consciously felt to be. It is worth unpacking these ideas briefly.

To begin with, we note that the Latin term 'sentiri' has connotations of sense perception, but that James is clearly not saying that the essence of mental phenomena is to be sensed via the sense organs. Rather, as the above quote implies, he is saying that the essence of mental phenomena is to be *conscious*. Neither is he using the term 'conscious' here in the sense of his later *Essays in Radical Empiricism*, to stand purely for the function of knowing. Rather, we contend, James is saying that the essence of mental phenomena is to be *phenomenally conscious* (i.e. to have phenomenal properties/conscious qualities/qualia, etc.). As to the second part of the esse est sentiri doctrine, according to which the qualities of mental phenomena are precisely what they

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[285] James, *The Principles*, I, pp164-176
[286] James, *The Principles*, I, p173
[287] James, *The Principles*, I, p172

are felt to be, this is intended to capture the intuition that one cannot be wrong about the quality of what one is consciously experiencing. Thus, one cannot be mistaken about a claim of the form 'I am having a conscious experience of X'. Granted, the conscious experience may be hallucinatory, and the *object* of the experience may not exist, but the conscious experience itself is precisely what it is, and cannot be otherwise. James invokes the esse est sentiri doctrine to justify the claim that mental states are, as they are consciously felt to be, *integral things not made of parts*.

2.2.2. Consciousness and the Brain

2.2.2.1. The Integral Nature of Consciousness

Without a doubt one of the most important notions in James's work – one which we will return to repeatedly throughout this dissertation – is that of the integral nature of consciousness. It was in PP that James first introduced this idea, expressing it in terms of the claim that "consciousness … is itself an integral thing not made of parts"[288]. This claim is explicated in chapter nine of PP, on 'The Stream of Thought', in which James outlines five key characteristics of human consciousness that can be discovered through introspection. Of these five, the first three together may be said to constitute the integral nature of consciousness. The first characteristic is that "Every thought tends to be part of a personal consciousness"[289]. The important point about this characteristic, for our purposes, is the fact that streams of consciousness are said to be "ejective" to one another; that is, they are said to have definite boundaries[290]. The second characteristic is that "Within each personal consciousness thought is always changing"[291]. By this James means that "no state once gone can recur and be identical with what it was before"[292]. This is so, he contends, because every element in a state of consciousness is in some sense shaped or coloured by every other. In other words, a state of consciousness constitutes a total gestalt whose 'elements', though we may distinguish them conceptually, cannot be adequately analysed in isolation from the whole[293]. The third characteristic is that "Within each personal consciousness thought is sensibly continuous"[294]. It is with reference to this characteristic that James introduces

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[288] James, *The Principles*, I, p177
[289] James, *The Principles*, I, p225
[290] James, *The Principles*, I, p321
[291] James, *The Principles*, I, p225
[292] James, *The Principles*, I, p230
[293] We take this notion of "gestalt quality" from Timothy Sprigge's discussion of holistic relations in *The Vindication of Absolute Idealism*. See: Timothy Sprigge, *The Vindication of Absolute Idealism* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1983), pp116-121; p214. Sprigge applies this same notion to the thought of James and Bradley in *American Truth and British Reality*. See: Sprigge, *James and Bradley*, p83; p427
[294] James, *The Principles*, I, p225

his famous metaphor of 'the stream of consciousness'. The point of this metaphor is to counteract the notion, popular at the time of his writing, that consciousness breaks down into discrete states or instants that hang together by external (non-experiential) relations. James insists that the relations between 'states' of consciousness are themselves parts of consciousness, and that consciousness is therefore sensibly continuous. In fact, to speak of 'states' of consciousness at all is rather like speaking of cross sections of a stream or river; it is a conceptual abstraction that fails to capture the reality of the phenomenon in question.

This then, is what James means by the claim that consciousness is an integral thing not made of parts. He means that: i) it has a boundary, ii) it constitutes a total gestalt that cannot be analysed into isolated elements, and iii) it is sensibly continuous (we will group both ii and iii together under the concept of the 'unity' of consciousness). He implies, as we shall see, that these properties of consciousness are strongly emergent; or, what amounts to the same thing, that consciousness, insofar as it possesses these properties, is itself a strongly emergent phenomenon. Let us call this the 'integral nature of consciousness thesis', or INC for short.

INC: The human stream of consciousness possesses a strongly emergent boundary/unity.

INC, James tells us, when held in conjunction with the doctrines of psycho-physical parallelism and mereological atomism (roughly equivalent to POR: see the next section), gives rise to a certain difficulty; namely the "difficulty of stating the connection between mind and brain"[295].

2.2.2.2. The Problem of stating the Connection Between Mind and Brain

The difficulty (or problem) of stating the connection between mind and brain turns on the presumed truth of a doctrine known today as 'mereological atomism'. According to this doctrine, in James's words: "Nothing is but the everlasting atoms. When grouped in a certain way, we name them this 'thing' or that; but the thing we name has no existence out of our mind"[296]. In other words, such things as cells, brains, and organisms are not genuine individuals; they are just patterns of atoms picked out by the mind. The problem arises when we consider this doctrine in conjunction with James's parallelism, and his claim that consciousness is integral or holistic. Given psychophysical parallelism, every mental fact must correspond to some physical fact. But if consciousness is essentially integral or holistic, and physical facts are essentially atomistic, then how are we to envision this correspondence? The natural supposition, according to James, is that consciousness corresponds to "the entire activity of the brain"[297]. But if mereological atomism is

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[295] James, *The Principles*, I, p176
[296] James, *The Principles*, I, p161
[297] James, *The Principles*, I, p177

true, then the term 'the brain' is "a fiction of popular speech", which "cannot serve as the objectively real counterpart to any psychic state whatever"[298]. This constitutes the problem of stating the connection between mind and brain (PCMB). Let us briefly unpack this problem.

What James seems to be saying is that the brain, in order to serve as the counterpart to human consciousness, would have to be a genuine entity in its own right, and not merely an aggregate of atoms. An aggregate of physical atoms, we might suppose, could only serve as the counterpart to an aggregate of mental atoms, and not to an integral consciousness. The implication, we contend, is that there is some sort of structural mismatch between an integral consciousness and an atomistic brain, and that this structural mismatch violates parallelism. Another way of putting this would be to say that parallelism carries with it the requirement that physical facts must be structurally isomorphic with their mental counterparts (and vice versa). We will call this the psycho-physical structural isomorphism requirement (PPSI for short).

PPSI: Physical facts must be structurally isomorphic with their mental counterparts.

PPSI is generally supposed to be a requirement of psychophysical identity theories. It makes perfect sense therefore in the context of a strict theory of psychophysical parallelism. And so, the problem can be stated thus:

PCMB: every fact about the mind must correspond with some fact about the brain (parallelism) with which it is structurally isomorphic (PPSI); but the mind being holistic (INC) and the brain atomistic (mereological atomism/POR), structural isomorphism fails to hold between them.

At the time of his writing PP, James could see only two workable solutions to PCMB. The first was to embrace the 'material-monad theory', attributed to Leibniz, according to which the total stream of consciousness corresponds to a single mereological atom[299]. This theory, according to James, although free from logical contradiction, involves such staggering "physiological improbability" that it is not worth seriously considering[300]. The other possibility was to fall back upon an attenuated version of the 'soul-theory', according to which the total stream of consciousness – although its elements, once abstracted from it conceptually, correspond with elements of the brain – does not, as a whole, correspond with the brain as a whole. This solution, in other words, would involve making an exception to his parallelism (and so to PPSI). In PP this

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[298] James, *The Principles*, I, p178
[299] James, *The Principles*, I, pp179-180
[300] James, *The Principles*, I, p181

was the path James reluctantly took, even while insisting that it represented only a "provisional halting place" from which no empirical conclusions could be drawn[301].

2.2.2.3. The "Emergence" of Integral Consciousness

It may seem strange to describe the above position as a version of "the soul-theory". James is not suggesting, after all, that the total stream of consciousness is ontologically independent of the brain. In the terminology of contemporary analytic philosophy, it would seem more appropriate to describe James's view as a version of property dualism or emergentism, for which the total stream of consciousness, although not identical or strictly parallel with the brain, is nevertheless dependent on it in some respect. This reading is all but confirmed by a tremendously important passage in a footnote to chapter six of PP. Before we quote that passage however, we must provide some context.

Chapter six of PP is concerned with 'The Mind-Stuff Theory' (otherwise known as panpsychism), and its relevance to psychology. We will be discussing panpsychism, and James's ultimate conversion to it, in much greater detail in chapter 3. To avoid redundancy, we will therefore confine ourselves at this stage to providing only what context is required for the present discussion. The following will suffice. In the context of his investigation into panpsychism James considers the theory of 'psychic summation', according to which higher mental states are produced by combining lower ones together. It is here that he introduces his famous combination problem. The combination problem, as we shall see in chapter 3, has much in common with PCMB. It may be stated thus: just as an atomistic *brain* cannot serve as the physical *counterpart* to an integral consciousness (PCMB), so an atomistic *consciousness* cannot be regarded as *identical* to an integral consciousness. It is at this point that the footnote to which we have alluded occurs. The relevant passage is the following one:

> We say the two sorts of fact [atomistic facts and integral facts] are not identical: a higher state is not a lot of lower states; it is itself. When, however, a lot of lower states have come together, or when certain brain-conditions occur together … we have not for a moment pretended that a higher state may not **emerge**. In fact it does **emerge** under those conditions … But such **emergence** is that of a new psychic entity, and is toto coelo different from such an 'integration' of the lower states as the mind-stuff theory affirms.[302] [our emphasis]

An integral consciousness cannot be identical or strictly parallel with an atomistic brain/consciousness, but it can – indeed it *does – emerge* from an atomistic brain/consciousness.

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[301] James, *The Principles*, I, p182
[302] James, *The Principles*, I, p162

We note that George Henry Lewes, who was himself a prominent psychologist, and who introduced the concept of emergence into philosophy, is referenced in PP no fewer than fourteen times[303]. Indeed, it was Lewes, and not James, who coined the term 'Stream of Consciousness'; and in the very same work – *Problems of Life and Mind* – in which he introduced the concept of emergence[304]. James, then, evidently made close study of this text. It is perfectly possible, we contend, that he picked up the term 'emergence' from Lewes and consciously employed it in a manner consistent with its intended usage.

An illuminating passage from the final chapter of PP lends further support to this view. In the passage in question James is attempting to describe the relationship between 'passive associative experience' and 'free mental play'. The latter stands to the former, he says, as the 'internal forces' at work in material objects stand to the 'outward forces' with fashion them. In parsing this analogy, he says the following:

> What happens in the brain after [passive, associative] experience has done its utmost is what happens in every material mass which has been fashioned by an outward force … The fashioning from without brings the elements into collocations which set new internal forces free to exert their effects in turn. [305]

James here distinguishes between 'outward forces' which act on all matter invariantly (i.e. familiar physical forces) and 'new internal forces' which arise only when matter is organized into particular 'collocations'. This use of the highly specific term "collocations" may well be a direct reference to Mill, who employed the same term in his account of heteropathic forces in *A System of Logic*[306]. We contend that what James is describing here are precisely the configurational forces of British Emergentism. He goes on to say:

> The higher thought processes owe their being to causes which correspond far more to the sourings and fermentations of dough, the setting of mortar, of the subsistence of sediments in mixtures, than to the manipulations by which these physical aggregates came to be compounded.[307]

In other words, such phenomena as fermentation, the setting of mortar, and, James suggests, the higher thought processes, are governed by higher-level configurational forces. The reference to the 'sourings and fermentations of dough' here is particularly significant. Throughout James's

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[303] See: James, *The Principles*, I, p9; p74; p78; p84; p134; p164; pp270-271; p442; p446. And: James, *The Principles*, II, p107; 198; p400; 678; p681

[304] See: J. Gill Holland, 'George Henry Lewes and "Stream of Consciousness": The First Use of the Term in English', *South Atlantic Review*, 51 (1986), pp31-39

[305] James, *The Principles*, II, p638

[306] Mill, *A System of Logic*, p332

[307] James, *The Principles*, II, p638

lifetime a lively public debate raged over the nature of the fermentation process, with scientists like Liebig and Wohler arguing that it was the result of simple chemical reactions, and scientists like Cagniard-Latour, Schwann, and Pasteur arguing that it involved higher level configurational forces[308]. James would almost certainly have been aware of this debate. It is probable that the above passage is, directly or indirectly, a reference to it. There can be little doubt therefore as to the nature of James's account. He may call it a version of the soul-theory, but by the lights of contemporary philosophy it is essentially a doctrine of emergentism.

2.2.2.4. The Vanishing Subject

That the soul-theory (or emergentism) constituted the most economical solution to the problem of stating the connection between mind and brain was, for James, a metaphysical conclusion. Psychology, strictly speaking, had no use for such a conclusion, and could get along perfectly well without it. Indeed, when James attempts to analyse the soul or 'spiritual self' in purely psychological terms, he finds that it threatens to disappear altogether. He experiences his soul, he says, as "a constant play of furtherances and hindrances" in his thought; of "tendencies that run with desire, and tendencies which run the other way"; and of the "incessant reactions of my spontaneity upon them, welcoming or opposing, appropriating or disowning, striving with or against, saying yes or no"[309]. But in all of this, James says, he cannot detect "any purely spiritual element at all"[310]. What he detects is something altogether different:

> *Whenever my introspective glance succeeds in turning around quickly enough to catch one of these manifestations of spontaneity in the act, all it can ever feel distinctly is some bodily process, for the most part taking place within the head.*[311]

James elaborates, describing the different intra-cephalic sensations that typically attend exercises of one's different mental faculties. Acts of visual attention are felt as "a fluctuating play of pressures, convergences, divergences and accommodations in my eyeballs"; acts of remembering are felt as a "rolling outwards and upwards of the eyeballs"; acts of mental attention and reasoning are felt as "alterations of direction in movements occurring inside the head"; acts of assent and dissent are felt as "the opening and closing of the glottis" and the "movement of the muscles of the brow and eyelids"; and acts of effort are felt as "contractions of the jaw-muscles

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[308] William Bechtel & Robert C. Richardson, 'Emergent Phenomena and Complex Systems', in *Emergence or Reduction? Essays on the Prospects of Nonreductive Physicalism*, ed. by Ansgar Beckermann, Hans Flohr & Jaegwon Kim (New York: Walter de Gruyter, 1992), pp257-288
[309] James, *The Principles*, I, pp299
[310] James, *The Principles*, I, p300
[311] James, *The Principles*, I, p300

and of those of respiration"[312]. James is convinced that the feeling he has of his own soul is wholly exhausted by these intra-cephalic sensations; i.e. it is *nothing but* intra-cephalic sensations. If this is correct, he thinks, then it follows that the soul is essentially a physiological phenomenon whose activity ought to obey the reflex type[313].

Dewey famously interprets the above account as a "reduction of the subject to a vanishing point"[314]. He thinks that this is a key example of the "naturalistic strain" in PP[315]. "If it had been consistently developed", he says, "it would have resulted in a biological behaviouristic account of psychological phenomena"[316], for which the subject is "identified with the organism", and for which the organism has "no existence save in interaction with environing conditions"[317]. For Dewey, James's account of the spiritual self is just one key example of the naturalistic strain in PP. He thinks that naturalistic tendencies run throughout the text; in James's behaviouristic definition of mental phenomena; in his empirical treatment of personal identity; in his flirtations with neutral monism; and in his repeated suggestions in various places that physiological explanations of mental phenomena may usurp higher level explanations. As we mentioned in the introduction, thinkers like Richard Gale doubt that James's naturalistic strain is as prominent as Dewey suggests. Gale argues that James's apparent flirtations with neutral monism in PP are superficial and that the ultimate thrust of the text is in the direction of interactionist dualism[318]. The most convincing support for Gale's reading comes from chapters eleven and twenty-six of PP, on 'Attention' and 'Will', which we will discuss in the next section.

2.2.3. Freewill

2.2.3.1. The Evolution of Mental Causation

Consciousness, for James, is an integral thing not made of parts. It is, metaphysically speaking, something over and above the atoms that constitute the human brain. The question which this naturally raises is this: does consciousness possess causal power over and above the brain? The answer to this question was by no means obvious to James. In the following quote we see him wondering whether mental phenomena are causally excluded, as per Kim's argument:

> If neural action is as complicated as mind; and if in the sympathetic system and lower spinal cord we see what, so far as we know, is unconscious neural action executing

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[312] James, *The Principles*, I, pp300-301
[313] James, *The Principles*, I, pp301-302
[314] Dewey, 'The Vanishing Subject in the Psychology of James', p589
[315] Dewey, 'The Vanishing Subject in the Psychology of James', p591
[316] Dewey, 'The Vanishing Subject in the Psychology of James', p591
[317] Dewey, 'The Vanishing Subject in the Psychology of James', p589
[318] Gale, *The Divided Self of William James*, p52

deeds that to all outward intent may be called intelligent; what is there to hinder us from supposing that even where we know consciousness to be there, the still more complicated neural action which we believe to be its inseparable companion is alone and of itself the real agent of whatever intelligent deeds may appear?[319]

The position that results from accepting this line of reasoning is called epiphenomenalism, characterised by Huxley as the view that consciousness is "as completely without power of modifying that working [of the body], as the steam-whistle which accompanies the work of a locomotive engine is without influence upon its machinery"[320]. It is a view that was widely reviled by James's philosophical contemporaries at the time of his writing PP, but James himself was prescient enough to see its attractiveness and importance (he even reveals in a footnote that as a medical student in 1869 he once drafted an essay in support of the theory[321]). We know however that by the time of his reading of Renouvier in 1872 he was ready to abandon epiphenomenalism and to embrace a doctrine of freewill. In chapter five, on 'The Automaton-Theory', he outlines an important argument against epiphenomenalism; one which sheds light on his conception of the macro-causal power of consciousness.

- P1: consciousness is unevenly distributed in the animal kingdom, some animals possessing more of it and some less.

- P2: it therefore appears to be "an organ, superadded to the other organs which maintain the animal in the struggle for existence"[322].

- P3: like any other organ or biological function, consciousness must have been selected for in the evolutionary process.

- P4: in order to have been selected for, consciousness must confer an adaptive advantage upon organisms possessing it.

- P5: in order to confer an adaptive advantage, consciousness must be causally efficacious.

- C: consciousness is causally efficacious.

James speculates that organisms, in order to achieve greater flexibility of action, had to become more complex, and that with greater complexity came greater instability. The outcomes of events in the brain of a highly complex and therefore highly unstable organism are like the throws of a

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[319] James, *The Principles*, I, p129

[320] James, *The Principles*, I, p131. This quotation is from: Thomas Huxley, 'On the Hypothesis that Animals are Automata, and Its History', *Fortnightly Review*, 95 (1874), pp555-580

[321] James, *The Principles*, I, p130

[322] James, *The Principles*, I, p138

dice. Consciousness, he suggests, evolved in order to "load the dice" so as to bring about actions favourable to the organism[323].

2.2.3.2. The Role of Indeterminism

James develops this account further in chapter twenty-six. There he tells us that if consciousness is to possess macro-causal power, then the outcomes of conscious acts will have to be indeterministic[324]. There will have to be a range of "*genuine possibles*" available, of which a conscious act will "make one effective"[325]. In other words, conscious acts will bring about effects in the physical world by influencing the outcomes of indeterministic events in the brain and nervous system:

> The soul *presents* nothing herself; *creates* nothing; is at the mercy of the material forces for all *possibilities*; but amongst these possibilities she selects; and by reinforcing one and checking others, she figures not as an 'epiphenomenon,'…[326]

"And although", James says, "such quickening of one idea might be *morally* and *historically* momentous, yet, if considered *dynamically*, it would be an operation among those physiological infinitesimals which calculation must forever neglect"[327]. He elaborates on this comment, saying that measurement of the relevant psychic and neural 'quantities' is "forever beyond human reach", and adding that "No serious psychologist or physiologist will venture even to suggest a notion of how they might be practically made"[328]. James may have been being overly pessimistic here, but he has not been proved wrong just yet. There are still a host of relevant physiological variables that cannot be measured sufficiently accurately to decide the issue in question. As such, James says, neither science nor psychology can resolve the question of freewill. Rather, he tells

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[323] James, *The Principles*, I, p140. We note that James combines this argument for the macro-causal power of consciousness with an argument from non-emergence for panpsychism. According to this argument from non-emergence, consciousness is a fundamental property rather than an emergent one, and has existed alongside matter since the origin of the universe (see section 3.1.2.1). Therefore, this statement – that consciousness evolved in order to load the dice – should not be taken to imply that consciousness evolved from a state of affairs in which no consciousness was present. Rather, it should be read in the same way that we read the statement: 'the human body evolved in order to stand and walk upright'. The human body, evidently, was already present before evolution bore it upon this particular course; just so, consciousness was already present before it evolved the particular macro-causal capacities that it possesses.

[324] James, *The Principles*, II, p571

[325] James, *The Principles*, II, pp576-577

[326] James, *The Principles*, II, p584

[327] James, *The Principles*, II, p577

[328] James, *The Principles*, II, p572

us, in terms that look forward to *The Will to Believe*, the question must be settled on ethical grounds[329].

2.2.3.3. The Phenomenon of Effort

The final part of James's doctrine of freewill involves his account of the phenomenon of effort. He begins this account by noting the familiar distinction between volition and action. Volition is the process whereby an idea comes into the mind and is maintained there; action is the name we give to the subsequent discharge of motor activity. From a lengthy discussion of the physiological correlates of volition and action (which we cannot go into in detail) James concludes that "The movements which ensue [upon having the idea of a given movement] are exclusively physiological phenomena, following according to physiological laws upon the neural events to which the idea corresponds"[330]. In other words, *action* is a purely physiological phenomenon, involving no violation of CCP. It is therefore in the processes involved in *volition* rather than those involved in action that we must seek the locus of mental causation. Specifically, we must look to the *maintaining* of ideas in the mind. *Which* ideas occur to us, James says, is, like motor activity, a function of physiological processes in the brain, but the *amount of effort* we exercise in maintaining ideas, once they have occurred, might not be[331]. As to how the effort to attend to an idea would bring about significant effects, James offers the following speculation:

> It would deepen and prolong the stay in consciousness of innumerable ideas which else would fade more quickly away. The delay thus gained might not be more than a second in duration – but that second might be critical; for in the constant rising and falling of considerations in the mind, where two associated systems of them are nearly in equilibrium it is often a matter of but a second more or less of attention at the outset, whether one system shall gain force to occupy the field and develop itself, and exclude the other, or be excluded itself by the other.[332]

Timothy Sprigge provides the following helpful summary (which we present in the form of a diagram below) of the causal picture implied by James's account of freewill in PP:

> At any one moment there is a brain state N1 and a simultaneous state of consciousness C1, the nature of which is largely but not entirely settled by the character of N1 but is partly somehow self-chosen (in virtue of the different degrees of attention given to the various contents of C1 which are settled by N1). Then at the next moment there is a brain state N2, the character of which is largely due to N1, and various purely physical inputs to the brain, but is also influenced by the self-chosen features of C1. Simultaneous to N2 is a state of consciousness C2 related to it as C1 was to N1. And N2 and C2 are followed, God willing, by an N3 and C3 which

[329] James, *The Principles*, II, p573
[330] James, *The Principles*, II, p560
[331] James, *The Principles*, II, p571
[332] James, *The Principles*, I, p453

stand in the same way to them as they do to N1 and C1. And so the process goes on.[333]

Fig. 16
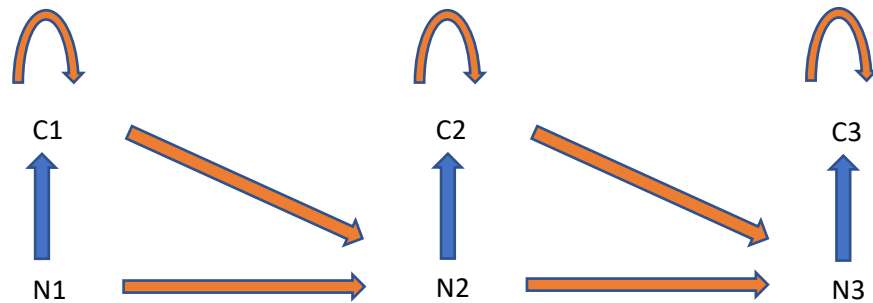
It is worth pointing out here, though we will discuss it in more detail later, how closely James's account maps onto that of Henry Stapp, which we investigated in chapter one. Recall that for Stapp consciousness causes effects in the physical world by influencing the outcomes of indeterministic events in the brain – the collapses of calcium ion wavefunctions – and thereby the release of neurotransmitters and the behaviour of the organism. It seems very likely that something like Stapp's proposal would be agreeable to James. If we suppose that calcium ion wavefunction collapses are the physiological correlates of exertions of effort, then their accounts fit together remarkably well. We will take up this discussion once more in chapter three.

2.2.4. Conclusions

PP can sometimes seem to be a rather contradictory text; not in the sense of being self-contradictory perhaps, but rather in the sense of embodying methods and motives which do not seem to belong together. James employed a methodological psycho-physical parallelism in PP, only to abandon it in the sections on free will; he insisted on the separation of psychology and metaphysics, and then felt compelled to write several long metaphysical chapters; the book clearly embodies the naturalistic spirit, but at the same time betrays sympathy for the likes of freewill, spiritualism, and theism or pantheism. These seeming tensions are reflected in the contradictory responses PP has received. Royce called James "a naturalist" in his review of the book[334]; Peirce called him "materialistic to the core"[335]; and Shadworth Hodgson thought that, despite James's best efforts, PP had lent powerful support to the automaton-theory[336]. We have

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[333]Sprigge, *James & Bradley*, p70

[334] Josiah Royce, 'A New Study of Psychology', *International Review of Ethics*, 1 (1891), pp143-169

[335] Charles Sanders Peirce, 'Review of William James's "The Principles of Psychology"', *The Nation*, 53 (1891), pp15/32-33

[336] *The Correspondence of William James*, ed. by Ignas K. Skrupskelis & Elizabeth M. Berkeley, 12 vols (London: University Press of Virginia, 1999) VII, p190

already seen that John Dewey found ample evidence for a "naturalistic strain" in PP, and was practically converted from Hegelianism to naturalism by his reading of it. More recently Ralph Barton Perry has concluded that PP "betrayed a leaning toward a naturalistic metaphysics"[337], and numerous modern commentators have agreed with him[338]. Meanwhile G. Stanley Hall detected in PP a yearning for an old-fashioned idea of the soul[339], James Ward was exasperated by the "penchant for spiritualism" it demonstrated[340], and contemporary analytic philosophers like Richard Gale and Owen Flanagan think *The Principles* is "spooky"[341], and that it cannot be given a consistent naturalistic reading[342].

That there are differing views regarding the naturalistic credentials of PP is perhaps not surprising given what we discovered in chapter one about the differing views regarding naturalism itself. Those with a more liberal concept of naturalism judge PP to be naturalistic, or to have a naturalistic strain. Those with a more austere concept of naturalism judge it to be spooky. From the point of view of the schema we developed in chapter one, we suggest that James, on the basis of PP alone, ought to be classified as a radical liberal naturalist. This is so because he rejects the thesis of CCP, and endorses doctrines of the strong emergence and macro-causal power of mental phenomena. As Timothy Sprigge has remarked, James's approach remains "naturalistic" because it presents consciousness as "a feature of animals which has emerged in the course of evolution" rather than as a pre-existent substance that interacts with organisms irrespective of physiological conditions[343]. For James human beings' capacity for freewill is not attributed to a substantial soul that pre-exists the body and interacts with it in some mysterious ad hoc fashion. Rather, our capacity for free will is attributed to an integral consciousness that is emergent from the physical properties of the human body. It has evolved through a process of natural selection, relative to physiological conditions, and utilizing the body's own physiological mechanisms.

As we have said, we shall see in chapter 3 how James's doctrine of the strong emergence and macro-causal power of mental phenomena can be developed into a more general doctrine of

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[337] Ralph Barton Perry, *The Thought and Character of William James* (USA: Vanderbilt University Press, 1996), p195
[338] See for instance: Rand Evans, 'Introduction', in *The Works of William James: The Principles of Psychology,* ed. by Frederick Burkhardt, 3 vols (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 1981) I, pp. xli-lxviii;
[339] Granville Stanley Hall, 'Review of William James's Principles of Psychology', *American Journal of Psychology*, 3 (1891), pp578-591
[340] *The Correspondence of William James*, ed. by Skrupskelis & Berkeley, VII, p136
[341] Gale, 'John Dewey's Naturalization of William James', in *The Cambridge Companion to William James*, ed. by R. A. Putnam, pp49-68
[342] Owen Flanagan, 'Consciousness as a Pragmatist Views It', in *The Cambridge Companion to William James*, ed. by R. A. Putnam, pp25-48
[343] Sprigge, *James & Bradley*, p75

emergentism and macro-causation. The development of this more general doctrine, we shall argue, is absolutely essential in order to make James's mature philosophy consistent. For here in PP James has argued that integral consciousness is necessarily emergent, and later, in PU, he will attribute integral consciousness to myriad infrahuman and superhuman entities. If integral consciousness is emergent in all these cases, then James evidently requires a much broader doctrine of emergentism.

2.3.   The Will to Believe

The publication of *The Will to Believe* is said to signal James's 'turn to philosophy'. In the introduction to chapter two we pointed out the potential danger of imputing 'phases' onto James's work, but in this case, the strategy really is useful. *The Principles*, despite its forays into metaphysics, was, in spirit, a primarily scientific text. James had evinced a naïve faith in the scientific enterprise, in the prospects of psychology as a natural science, and in the potential continuity of philosophy with science, etc[344]. Already in *Psychology: Briefer Course*, his attitude on these issues was beginning to change. There he revised his notion of the scientific status of psychology, and conceded that the inherent incompleteness of psychology mandated an independent philosophical project[345]. Post PP, we may say, James began to develop a more critical attitude towards science. By our lights, *The Will to Believe* is most significant as a herald and manifestation of that development. It represents, as it were, a shift in James's naturalism toward the pole of liberality[346].

Of the group of essays which comprise *The Will to Believe*, the most famous and widely discussed is undoubtedly the eponymous opening essay. It is here that James advances his notorious 'will-to-believe doctrine' (or 'WB doctrine'), which states that human beings may rightfully decide between options for belief in accordance with their passional natures when said options are i) living, ii) forced, and iii) momentous[347]. According to a widespread misinterpretation of the WB doctrine, it entails that human beings may believe whatever makes them feel good, regardless of the content of the belief, or of the existence of contradictory evidence. It is on the basis of this sort of misinterpretation that James Pratt insisted that the WB doctrine was incompatible with the empirical spirit of his critical naturalism[348]. James however states quite explicitly that an option for belief could not be living – not for any sensible modern-day person at any rate – unless

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[344] For a comprehensive study of James's early scientific influences (especially Darwinism and the so-called 'probabilistic revolution'), see: Paul Jerome Croce, *Science and Religion in the Era of William James* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1995)

[345] William James, *Psychology: Briefer Course* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1892), pp461-468. For a related discussion of James's changing attitude towards science in relation to PBC see: Lamberth, *William James and the Metaphysics of Experience*, p71.

[346] We recognize of course that many of the essays printed in *The Will to Believe* were written and in some cases published before the composition of *The Principles*. This shows us that James's more critical attitude towards science did not come about all at once, but had been brewing for many decades. Nevertheless, James's organization of the material into the text we now possess, and his decision to publish it when he did, may, we contend, legitimately be taken to indicate the direction and evolution of his thought during this period of his career.

[347] William James, *The Will to Believe* (New York: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1897), p3

[348] Pratt, p3

there were no definitive scientific evidence against it[349]. In other words, the WB doctrine only really applies in cases where the scientific evidence is inconclusive. It is precisely in *these* cases, after all, that W. K. Clifford – the antagonist of the essay – insists upon agnosticism. James's doctrine is essentially a *response* to Clifford; where Clifford insists upon agnosticism, James recommends belief. We therefore dismiss Pratt's claim that the WB doctrine is incompatible with naturalism. In what follows we will not discuss the WB doctrine in detail. It is, in any case, only one small part of a more general critique of 'scientificism' developed by James in WB, and it is this more general critique that will be our chief concern[350]. Besides the critique of scientificism we will also discuss James's ethical views in this section. 'The Moral Philosopher and the Moral Life' (MPML) is widely regarded as the key source for James's ethical philosophy. This essay amply demonstrates the tension between naturalism and religion in James's thinking, and has been alleged by Michael Slater to entail supernaturalist commitments on James's part. We will therefore investigate it in detail in section 2.3.2. But first, in section 2.3.1, we turn to James's critique of scientificism.

2.3.1. James's Critique of Scientificism

None of the essays in *The Will to Believe* are explicitly devoted to the topic of science, but many of them are littered with discussions about science and related issues. In the present section we have attempted to draw these various discussions together into what we are calling James's 'critique of scientificism'. 'Scientificism' is the name James gives to the scientific worldview[351]. He distinguishes it from science itself, which, in accordance with his views in PP, he identifies as essentially a method, free from metaphysical baggage of any kind[352]. Scientificism, unlike science, presupposes various metaphysical doctrines; in particular the doctrine that "the hidden order of nature is mechanical exclusively"[353] (which James seems to associate with materialism, determinism, and atomism[354]). Scientificism is not only a metaphysical doctrine however. Indeed, its more fundamental features are epistemological. Specifically, scientificism is committed to the theses of scientism and hyperscientific realism, and to the claim that there is a sharp boundary between science and non-science. It is from these epistemological theses that its

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[349] James, *The Will to Believe*, pp21-22
[350] For a nuanced reading of the WB doctrine that touches on its relation to James's broader critique of scientificism see: Sami Pihlström, *Pragmatism and Philosophical Anthropology* (New York: Peter Lang, 1998), pp115-142
[351] James, *The Will to Believe*, p132
[352] James, *The Will to Believe*, p319; p323
[353] James, *The Will to Believe*, p324
[354] James, *The Will to Believe*, p89; p145; p132

endorsement of the various metaphysical doctrines follows, and it is these, consequently, that form the main targets of James's critique.

James's strategy as regards scientism is to undermine science's claim to special epistemic status. He does so by arguing that science has a significant normative component, and therefore lacks the kind of objectivity that scientificists claim for it (2.3.1.1). His strategy as regards hyperscientific realism is to advance a pessimistic meta-induction from the history of science, essentially similar to one we saw Putnam describing in chapter 1 (2.3.1.2). In criticizing the claim that there are sharp scientific boundaries he draws on both of the preceding critiques (2.3.1.3). James's critique of scientificism in WB is, we shall see, naturally supplemented by the pragmatic theory of truth. The pragmatic theory of truth undermines scientism by developing a non-scientistic criterion of truth, and it undermines hyperscientific realism because it entails an instrumentalist interpretation of science/the scientific enterprise. We will only touch on this intersection between WB and *Pragmatism* briefly in what follows, postponing a lengthier treatment until section 2.6.

2.3.1.1. Critique of Scientism

The following quote serves as a good description of proponents of scientificism:

> There is included in human nature an ingrained naturalism and materialism of mind which can only admit facts that are actually tangible. Of this sort of mind the entity called 'science' is the idol. Fondness for the word 'scientist' is one of the notes by which you may know its votaries; and its short way of killing any opinion that it disbelieves in is to call it 'unscientific'.[355]

Scientificists, James says, "only admit facts that are actually tangible". It is only "truth as technically verified" that interests them; and they have "ceased to care for truth by itself at all"[356]. They insist that "amid the wreck of every other god and idol one divinity still stands upright", and that "his name is Scientific Truth"[357]. Indeed, it seems that proponents of scientificism, even in James's day, took this reductive approach to its logical conclusion, and held that "the 'truths' of bare physics in particular" were the only "uncontaminated" truths[358]. These scientificists, it seems, endorsed the thesis of scientism, according to which only science can provide us with knowledge of reality. What justified them in this endorsement, or so they thought, was the belief that science alone is "pure" and "uncontaminated" by subjective passions; that it alone

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[355] James, *The Will to Believe*, pp52-53
[356] James, *The Will to Believe*, p21
[357] James, *The Will to Believe*, p131
[358] James, *The Will to Believe*, p129

constituted a tabula rasa on which reality could be passively registered. It is this belief that is the main target of James's critique of scientism. Contra the scientificists, James insists that science involves significant normative components; firstly, insofar as the scientific enterprise presupposes faith in the uniformity of nature, and secondly, insofar as the selection of scientific theories presupposes certain norms of rationality.

i)   The Scientific Enterprise Presupposes Faith in the Uniformity of Nature

> The necessity of faith as an ingredient in our mental attitude is strongly insisted on by the scientific philosophers of the present day; but by a singularly arbitrary caprice they say that it is only legitimate when used in the interests of one particular proposition, – the proposition, namely, that the course of nature is uniform.[359]

Clearly, if we did not believe that the course of nature was uniform – that the cover of physical law was constant and absolute – then there would be relatively little motivation to conduct scientific experiments, and to construct scientific theories. But this belief in the uniformity of nature is famously not susceptible of proof. As Hume is supposed to have demonstrated in *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*, this belief really amounts to nothing more than a custom or habit[360]. We find that certain events occur in constant conjunction and we habitually expect them to occur in constant conjunction in the future. Then we infer a mysterious "necessary connection" between conjoined events and name it 'the law of causality', as though this clears the matter up. But we have no evidence or proof for the existence of this law (besides the circular one which invokes inductive inferences from past experience). It remains, after all, only a mysterious 'necessary connection', the existence of which we posit habitually, or, if consciously, by faith. James agrees wholeheartedly with Hume's analysis:

> The principle of causality, for example, – what is it but a postulate, an empty name covering simply a demand that the sequence of events shall someday manifest a deeper kind of belonging of one thing with another than the mere arbitrary juxtaposition which now phenomenally appears? It is as much an altar to an unknown god as the one Saint Paul found at Athens.[361]

Scientists have *faith* in the uniformity of nature; they have *faith* in causality. And without this faith the scientific enterprise would never have gotten off the ground. James thinks that scientists – or rather, proponents of scientificism – exercise their capacity for faith in this case, and refuse to do so in others, because the proposition in question in this case – that the course of nature is uniform – is one that appeals to their particular temperaments. But the scientist's

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[359] James, *The Will to Believe*, p91
[360] David Hume, *An Enquiry Concerning the Human Understanding* (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1894), p43
[361] James, *The Will to Believe*, p147

temperamental need for uniformity, James insists, is, on the face of it, no more justified than the religious man's temperamental need for spirituality. Proponents of scientificism are simply wrong in supposing that the former is somehow objective or non-normative.

James's argument here may be translated into a version of the fundamental argument. Consider the following formulation:

- P1: Scientism states that only science can provide us with knowledge of reality.

- P2: In order for a belief-source to count as a provider of knowledge, belief-sources which it presupposes must count as providers of knowledge.

- P3: Science presupposes faith as the source of its belief in the uniformity of nature.

- P4: Science counts as a provider of knowledge.

- P5: Faith counts as a provider of knowledge

- C2: Scientism is absurd.

The notion that faith counts as a provider of knowledge may seem strange at first, but it accords quite well with another of James's claims in WB; namely that "faith creates facts". In particular James has in mind the class of facts that involve interpersonal relations and the states of mind that arise therein; facts about how people feel about one another for instance:

> *Do you like me or not?* – for example. Whether you do or not depends, in countless instances, on whether I meet you half-way, am willing to assume that you must like me, and show you trust and expectation. The previous faith on my part in your liking's existence is in such cases what makes your liking come. But if I stand aloof, and refuse to budge an inch until I have objective evidence, … ten to one your liking never comes.[362]

Insofar as faith helps to create such facts, and is a source of our beliefs about them, it must be instrumental in enabling knowledge of them. Of course, scientificists might try to deny that such facts are a part of reality at all, but then it is they who are stretching the limits of credulity.

ii)   Scientific Theory Selection Presupposes Norms of Rationality

In 'The Sentiment of Rationality' James articulates the hypothesis that rationality and irrationality are not, as they are often supposed to be, objective features of thoughts, or objective standards which thoughts do or do not meet, but rather that they are *feelings* that accompany certain of our thoughts. Specifically, he suggests that irrationality is the feeling of obstruction and frustration in thought, and that rationality is the feeling of fluency and ease. He further suggests that there are a number of different ways in which our thought can become obstructed, and a number of

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[362] James, *The Will to Believe*, pp23-24

different ways in which human beings seek relief from these obstructions. For instance, we feel frustration and puzzlement when a thought is overly complex and disunified; we get relief by reducing its manifoldness to simplicity. This is what James calls 'theoretic rationality'[363]. The desire of many philosophers and scientists to produce a 'unified theory of everything' well expresses the ideal goal of theoretic rationality according to James[364]. Alongside theoretic rationality with its "passion for simplification", there exists what we might call 'factual rationality', animated by a "passion for distinguishing"[365]. Some minds are offended whenever a thought is overly abstract and disconnected from concrete facts; and they gain relief by becoming acquainted with the relevant facts. Now, according to James different individuals possess the passion for simplification or the passion for distinguishing to different degrees, and will assign more or less value to theoretic/factual rationality accordingly. James suggests that the balance of these passions in an individual, and their relative valuation of theoretic/factual rationality, significantly determines their overall philosophic attitude[366]. Thus, rationalists favour theoretic rationality while empiricists favour factual rationality[367]. Notice that this account of rationality makes it an essentially normative phenomenon. Even if each form of rationality was in itself totally lacking a normative component, absent some non-normative standard for deciding between forms of rationality, normativity will still enter into the equation insofar as we favour or value one form over another.

With the above account in mind, consider the following statement of James's from 'Reflex Action and Theism':

> The appetite for immediate consistency at any cost, or what logicians call the 'law of parsimony,' – which is nothing but the passion for conceiving the universe in the most labor-saving way, – will, if made the exclusive law of the mind, end by blighting the development of the intellect itself quite as much as that of the feelings or the will. The scientific conception of the world as an army of molecules gratifies this appetite after its fashion most exquisitely.[368]

What James here calls the "appetite for immediate consistency" and the "passion for conceiving the universe in the most labor-saving way" would seem to be species of what he earlier called the "passion for simplification". The faculty of theoretic rationality, James said, caters most aptly to

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[363] James, *The Will to Believe*, p70
[364] James, *The Will to Believe*, p71
[365] James, *The Will to Believe*, p66
[366] James, *The Will to Believe*, p66
[367] James names Spinoza and Hume as philosophers who, because of their one-sided devotion to one or the other from of rationality, failed to have lasting appeal or to inspire "systematic disciples". See: James, *The Will to Believe*, p67.
[368] James, *The Will to Believe*, p132

these kinds of passions or needs. Now he seems to be telling us that particular "scientific conception[s]" gratify these needs especially well; indeed, that they might gratify them too well, and in doing so fall into error. There would seem to be an implication here that other scientific conceptions might not gratify these needs so well (and that in James's view, this might not be a bad thing). We might say therefore, that for James, different scientific conceptions embody different forms of rationality to different degrees. For example, broadly reductive theories/conceptions will almost always be simpler, and therefore more theoretically rational than non-reductive theories. Higher-level theories meanwhile may account for a greater number of facts, and may thereby be more factually rational.   Now, as we have just said, absent some non-normative standard for choosing between forms of rationality, favouring or valuing one form or another is going to involve normativity. If then, as James seems to be suggesting, we select or adopt scientific theories partly on the basis of their embodying particular forms of rationality, then the selection of scientific theories is a partly normative process.

This analysis might be supposed to apply to James's example of the 'one-fluid' and 'two-fluid' theories of electricity:

> There is nothing improbable in the supposition that an analysis of the world may yield a number of formulae, all consistent with the facts. In physical science different formulae may explain the phenomena equally well, – the one-fluid and the two-fluid theories of electricity, for example. Why may it not be so with the world? Why may there not be different points of view for surveying it, within each of which all data harmonize, and which the observer may therefore choose between, or simply cumulate one upon another?[369]

The two-fluid theory, proposed by Charles Francois de Cisternay du Fay, held that there were two electrical fluids, one carrying a positive charge and one carrying a negative charge; when the two fluids met, they would produce a neutral charge. The one-fluid theory, popularised by Benjamin Franklin, held that there was only one electrical fluid, and that a positive charge was produced by an abundance of it, a neutral charge by a 'normal' amount of it, and a negative charge by a shortage of it. Ultimately, Franklin's one-fluid theory was victorious, though it was to be superseded of course by the theory of electromagnetism. James, we are suggesting, might adopt something like the following analysis of this state of affairs. The one-fluid theory, because it posits fewer entities, is simpler, and therefore more theoretically rational. The majority of physicists, with their temperamental preference for theoretic rationality, therefore adopted it.

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[369] James, *The Will to Believe*, p76

2.3.1.2. Critique of Hyperscientific Realism: James's Pessimistic Meta-Induction

In chapter one we articulated the thesis of scientific realism through Wilfrid Sellars's distinction between the manifest and scientific images. Sellars insisted that such entities and properties as persons, phenomenal qualities, and values (entities and properties that comprise what he called 'the manifest image') must be identical with entities and properties described by the science of physics (entities and properties that comprise 'the scientific image'). James appeals to a remarkably similar distinction in WB. He distinguishes between 'the personal view of life' and 'the impersonal or mechanical view of life'. On the personal view, "personal forces" such as free wills, phenomenal qualities, meanings, reasons, and values, "are the starting point of new effects"[370] (i.e. are causally efficacious). On the impersonal view "the hidden order of nature is mechanical exclusively", and "non-mechanical categories are irrational ways of conceiving and explaining even such things as human life"[371]. Proponents of scientificism hold to the impersonal view of life, and insist that entities and properties that comprise the personal view must be reducible to those that comprise the impersonal view[372].

Now, James has already said in PP that he suspects the "radically physical point of view" of being "an unreal abstraction"[373]. In WB he goes further, saying that this view constitutes a massive "alteration and falsification of the simply 'given' order of the world"[374]:

> Physics is but one chapter in the great jugglery which our conceiving faculty is forever playing with the order of being as it presents itself to our reception. It transforms the unutterable dead level and continuum of the 'given' world into an utterly unlike world of sharp differences and hierarchic subordinations…[375]

The mechanical view of life (the scientific image) transforms "the unutterable dead level and continuum of the 'given' world" into a "world of sharp differences and hierarchic subordinations". The world as it appears to us does not seem to be one that is organized into definite "hierarchic" levels, in which the lowest level phenomena have causal and existential primacy; it seems, on the face of it, to be a "continuum" of highly various causally powerful entities. James then, thinks that the mechanical view of life (the scientific image) undermines the personal view of life (the manifest image) to an implausible degree. He accordingly chooses the second of Wilfrid Sellars's options for resolving the conflict between the images; he thinks that the objects of physics are

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[370] James, *The Will to Believe*, p327
[371] James, *The Will to Believe*, p323
[372] Richard Gale has hinted at the similarity between James's and Sellars's formulations of this "bifurcationist upshot of science". See: Gale, *The Divided Self of William James*, p220.
[373] James, *The Principles*, I, p24
[374] James, *The Will to Believe*, p129
[375] James, *The Will to Believe*, pp129-130

just abstract or symbolic ways of representing manifest objects, and are reducible to manifest objects without remainder. James is not at his most explicit on this point in WB, but we shall see when we come to discuss *Pragmatism* and ERE that this is certainly his mature position.

As we have already mentioned, James's method of attack against hyperscientific realism in WB is through an argument by pessimistic meta induction from the history of science[376]. The following passage constitutes James's clearest statement of this argument:

> When from our present advanced standpoint we look back upon the past stages of human thought, whether it be scientific thought or theological thought, we are amazed that a universe which appears to us of so vast and mysterious a complication should ever have seemed to anyone so little and plain a thing. Whether it be Descartes's world or Newton's … it always looks the same to us, – incredibly perspectiveless and short. Even Lyell's, Faraday's, Mill's, and Darwin's consciousness of their respective subjects are already beginning to put on an infantile and innocent look. Is it then likely that the science of our own day will escape the common doom; that the minds of its votaries will never look old-fashioned to the grandchildren of the latter? It would be folly to suppose so.[377]

The scientific worldview has changed a great deal over time. It has undergone a number of revolutions, in which supposedly fundamental scientific theories and conceptions have had to be radically revised. If this pattern continues into the future, then there is good reason to think that our current scientific theories will likewise be subject to radical revisions. In which case those theories cannot possibly represent the world entirely accurately. This supposition is made even more convincing, according to James, when we consider how young the scientific enterprise is, and how rapid its progress has been. In three hundred years it has transformed our worldview completely beyond recognition. It seems reasonable to suppose that our current worldview will be likewise transformed during the next few hundred years of scientific progress:

> Think how many absolutely new scientific conceptions have arisen in our own generation, how many new problems have been formulated that were never thought of before, and then cast an eye on the brevity of science's career. It began with Galileo, not three hundred years ago. … Is it credible that such a mushroom knowledge, such a growth overnight as this, *can* represent more than the minutest glimpse of what the universe will really prove to be when adequately understood? No! our science is a drop, our ignorance a sea. Whatever else be certain, this at least is certain, – that the world of our present natural knowledge *is* enveloped in a larger

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[376] We note that James already had the resources to develop an 'argument from underdetermination' for scientific antirealism too. He believed, as we saw in the previous section, that scientific theories were underdetermined by data, and that contradictory theories – the one-fluid and two-fluid theories of electricity for instance – could explain that data equally well. He could easily have argued that terms describing entities in those theories were therefore unlikely to refer (and in this case, of course, he would have been quite right). We shall see that in *Pragmatism* James did indeed go on to develop something like an argument from underdetermination for scientific antirealism.

[377] James, *The Will to Believe*, p326

world of *some* sort of whose residual properties we at present can frame no positive idea.[378]

Thus, the claims of James's colleagues at Harvard, that "all the fundamental conceptions of truth have already been found by science, and that the future has only the details of the picture to fill in"[379] (which would be controversial in many circles even today) look absurd in the extreme. Proponents of scientificism think that only science can give us truth about reality. They think that science has, for the most part, already delivered on that promise. James disagrees. By way of a pessimistic meta-induction, he argues that the current scientific worldview is very unlikely to be the finally correct worldview. Scientificism has once again overstepped its bounds. We should have no reservations therefore, about rejecting the terms of its proposed reduction/elimination of the personal view of life.

2.3.1.3. The Boundaries of Science

In chapter one we examined the doctrine of the disunity of science. We saw that the contributors to De Caro and Macarthur's anthology believe "not just that there is no single method or set of methods that is properly called *the* scientific method, but, more than this, that there is no clear, uncontroversial, and useful definition of science to do the substantial work scientific naturalists require of it"[380]. This notion of 'the unity of science' is closely connected with another notion; that of 'the boundaries of science'. In proportion as we establish unity in science, we establish boundaries between science and non-science. This, in part, is what scientific naturalists hope to achieve through the notion of unity. They want to separate science from non-science, and thereby separate naturalistic philosophy (which is continuous with science) from non-naturalistic philosophy (which is not continuous with it). In so doing they hope to establish a superior status for their own brand of philosophy. Now James, although he does not address the issue of unity/disunity directly in *The Will to Believe*, is keenly aware of issues relating to the boundaries of science. He argues that those boundaries are not as sharp as scientificists would like to think, and that a number of enterprises/disciplines not traditionally included under the auspices of science might nevertheless attain to a quasi-scientific status.

The substance of James's discussion of the boundaries of science revolves around the in-his-view-mistaken idea promulgated by scientificists, that science is closed or complete:

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[378] James, *The Will to Believe*, pp53-54
[379] James, *The Will to Believe*, p53
[380] De Caro & MacArthur, 'Introduction: The Nature of Naturalism', in *Naturalism in Question*, ed. by De Caro & Macarthur, pp14-15

> The ideal of every science is that of a closed and completed system of truth. The charm of most sciences to their more passive disciples consists in their appearing, in fact, to wear just this ideal form. Each one of our various *ologies* seems to offer a definite head of classification for every possible phenomenon of the sort which it professes to cover; and so far from free is most men's fancy, that, when a consistent and organized scheme of this sort has once been comprehended and assimilated, a different scheme is unimaginable.[381]

As an *ideal* of course, this view is perfectly healthy, but as a belief about science as it presently exists, it is disastrous. It is disastrous because science as it presently exists is emphatically *not* closed or complete. As we have seen James arguing in the previous section, science has changed drastically and rapidly over the years, and there is good reason to think it will continue to change in the future. Just as outdated phenomena are constantly being dispensed with, new phenomena are constantly being discovered. But if we believe, as the scientificists do, that science is closed and complete, then we must dismiss any phenomena not *presently* classifiable in the system as "paradoxical absurdities"[382]. This, James thinks, is what underlies the scientificists' dismissal of the personal view of life. It is also, he suggests, what underlies their dismissal of religious, ethical, and psychical phenomena.

Now, this notion of the completeness of science arises, James thinks, because of the tendency to identify science with "a certain set of results"[383]. This tendency, he insists, is erroneous, because science, in fact, "only stands for a method and for no fixed belief"[384]. That method is the method of 'verification', and it can be extended, in principle, to various traditionally non-scientific domains[385]. Thus, in testing ethical theories, James says, "we might proceed exactly as does the physical philosopher in testing an hypothesis":

> He deduces from the hypothesis an experimental action, *x;* this he adds to the facts *M* already existing. It fits them if the hypothesis be true; if not, there is discord. The results of the action corroborate or refute the idea from which it flowed. So here: the verification of the theory … can only consist in this, – that if you proceed to act upon your theory it will be reversed by nothing that later turns up as your actions fruit; it will harmonize so well with the entire drift of experience that the latter will, as it were, adopt it…[386]

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[381] James, *The Will to Believe*, pp299-300
[382] James, *The Will to Believe*, pp299-300
[383] James, *The Will to Believe*, pp319-320
[384] James, *The Will to Believe*, p323
[385] James, *The Will to Believe*, p21
[386] James, *The Will to Believe*, p105

And the case is similar with theories pertaining to religious and psychical phenomena[387]. Thus, we could, in principle, develop a 'science of religions'[388], a 'science of ethics'[389], and a 'science of psychical phenomena'[390].

James then, in the final assessment, may after all be said to endorse a version of the unity of science thesis. He holds that science is united by its use of the method of verification. However, he construes that method in such broad terms that it ceases to establish any sharp boundaries between science and non-science; it ceases, as it were, to do the work that scientificists require of it. Indeed, it serves, on the contrary, to potentially *raise* the epistemic status of certain traditionally non-scientific enterprises. In so doing it goes against the spirit of contemporary versions of the unity thesis, and functions, instead, as a critique of that thesis[391].

2.3.2. James's Ethical Theory

We said in the introduction to section 2.3 that 'The Moral Philosopher and the Moral Life' is the main source for James's ethical philosophy. We also said that this essay displays the tension between James's naturalistic and religious tendencies. As with PP, this tension manifests in the divergent interpretations MPML has received from James's commentators. According to Graham Bird, MPML reveals James to be "a confirmed naturalist" in ethics[392]; and according to Richard Gale, it can be read as an attempted "naturalization of ethics"[393]. Michael A. Cantrell meanwhile

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[387] James does not speak about the religious case specifically in WB, but we shall see in section 2.4 (on VRE) that he holds the method of verification to be likewise applicable to religious theories.

[388] James, *The Will to Believe*, p. xii

[389] James, *The Will to Believe*, pp208-210

[390] James does not use the phrase 'science of psychical phenomena', but the whole thrust of 'What Psychical Research Has Accomplished' is towards such a possibility. Indeed, it was the explicit mandate of the Society for Psychical Research to investigate psychical phenomena using the methods of science: "The aim of the Society is to approach these various problems without prejudice or prepossession of any kind, and in the same spirit of exact and unimpassioned inquiry which has enabled science to solve so many problems, once not less obscure nor less hotly debated." See: 'Circulars of the American Society for Psychical Research', in *The Works of William James: Essays in Psychical Research*, ed. by Frederick Burkhardt (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 1986), p6

[391] For an excellent book-length study of James's attempts to navigate the boundaries of science and philosophy see: Francesca Bordogna, *William James at the Boundaries* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2008). Paul Croce has recently provided a discussion in the same vein regarding James's view of the relation between scientific and sectarian medicine. See: Paul Jerome Croce, *Young William James Thinking* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2018), pp77-133. For a more general discussion of the relationship between the pragmatic tradition and issues relating to the boundaries of science, see: Sami Pihlström, 'Toward Pragmatically Naturalized Transcendental Philosophy of Scientific Inquiry And Pragmatic Scientific Realism', *Studia Philosophica Estonica*, 5 (2012), pp79-94

[392] Bird, *William James*, p280. See also: pp174-175

[393] Gale, *The Divided Self of William James*, p10

holds that James endorsed a meta-ethical divine command theory in MPML[394]; and Mark Boone says that the upshot of the essay is that "we must conform our minds to the mind of God"[395]. In *William James on Ethics and Faith*, Michael Slater recognizes both sides of this tension. He suggests that James did indeed develop a naturalistic ethical theory in MPML, but that he also supplemented it with a religious ethic. Ultimately, Slater thinks, the religious supplement is essential for James, and renders his total ethical theory supernaturalistic[396]. For our part we agree with Slater that MPML contains both a naturalistic ethic and a religious ethic, and we agree that the religious ethic is essential, but we deny that the religious ethic entails a commitment to supernaturalism[397]. The details of our interpretation will be worked out in chapter three. For now, we confine ourselves to a straightforward exposition of James's ethical views.

James organizes his discussion in MPML around three important ethical questions. These are: 1) the psychological question, of what the origins of our moral judgements are, 2) the metaphysical question, of what the meaning of our ethical terms are, and 3) the casuistic question, of how to weight/order our moral judgements. In response to these questions, he may be said to articulate five ethical doctrines. These are: i) a doctrine of evolutionary intuitionism, ii) a social theory of moral obligation, iii) a desire-satisfaction theory of well-being, iv), a doctrine of preference-utilitarianism, and v) a doctrine of theological voluntarism. James's evolutionary intuitionism answers the first of the ethical questions; his social theory of moral obligation and his desire-satisfaction theory answer the second; and his preference-utilitarianism and theological voluntarism answer the third.

2.3.2.1. Evolutionary Intuitionism

At the time of his writing MPML, James tells us, the philosophical consensus seems to be that the psychological question (of the origin of our moral ideas) resolves into a choice between two alternatives: namely 'evolutionism' and 'intuitionism'. According to evolutionism our moral ideals "have gradually resulted from the teaching of the environment". On this view human beings are

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[394] Michael Cantrell, 'William James's Transcendental Theological Voluntarism: A Reading of "The Moral Philosopher and the Moral Life"', *William James Studies*, 10 (2013), pp1-11

[395] Mark Boone, 'Taking God Seriously, But Not Too Seriously: The Divine Command Theory and William James's 'The Moral Philosopher and the Moral Life'', *William James Studies*, 10 (2013), pp1-20 (p15)

[396] Slater, *William James on Ethics and Faith*, p87

[397] We note that James's ethics, in this respect, mirrored that of his father. As James said in his introduction to his father's literary remains, "the ordinary empirical ethics of evolutionary naturalism can find a perfect *permis de séjour* under the system's wings; and yet close alongside is an insistence on the need of the death of the natural man and of a supernatural redemption…" See: William James, 'Introduction', in Henry James, *The Literary Remains of the Late Henry James*, ed. by William James (New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1884), p14. Reprinted in: *The Works of William James: Essays in Religion and Morality*, ed. by Frederick Burkhardt (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 1982), pp3-63 (p7)

born without any innate ethical ideals/intuitions, and only gradually build these up by learning from experience; chiefly from experiences of pleasure and pain, and inferences of utility therefrom. According to intuitionism our ethical ideas result, at least in part, from the fact that we possess "an altogether unique faculty called 'conscience'" (i.e. apriori ethical intuitions) [398].

Now James, true to his avowed empiricism, is highly sceptical of a priori moral intuitions, but at the same time he cannot help but note that the evolutionism fails as an explanation of certain of our moral judgements. Consider the following often-discussed 'lost soul intuition':

> [I]f the hypothesis were offered us of a world in which Messrs. Fourier's and Bellamy's and Morris's utopias should all be outdone, and millions kept permanently unhappy on the one simple condition that a certain lost soul on the far-off edge of things should lead a life of lonely torture, what except a specific and independent sort of emotion can it be which would make us immediately feel, even though an impulse arose within us to clutch at the happiness so offered, how hideous a thing would be its enjoyment when deliberately accepted as the fruit of such a bargain?[399]

Such intuitions, James thinks, cannot be explained purely in terms of pleasure/utility. Rather, he thinks, they are the result of "incidental complications to our cerebral structure" which arose in the course of evolution with "no reference" to the specific content of the intuition or the circumstances which provoke it. He calls such intuitions "brain-born", by which he means that they result from the apriori structure of the human brain[400]. James thus takes a middle way between evolutionism and intuitionism. He thinks that human beings possess ethical intuitions, but that these intuitions are the "brain-born" results of the process of evolution[401]. Hence, we choose the name 'evolutionary intuitionism' to describe James's position[402].

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[398] James, *The Will to Believe*, p186

[399] James, *The Will to Believe*, p188

[400] James, *The Will to Believe*, p187. Bernard Brennan, in his relatively early study of James's ethical philosophy, already recognized the importance of this evolutionary dimension of his ethics. He suggested, more or less correctly in our view, that: "Although these views are definitely materialistic and naturalistic in their implications, in the wider context of James's philosophy they are made eventually to fit into a spiritual setting." This 'spiritual setting', he notes, is provided by James's mature panpsychist worldview. See: Bernard Brennan, *The Ethics of William James* (New York: Bookman Associates, 1961), p78; p168

[401] The philosopher Jacob G. Schurman is a likely source of this view. In his review of Schurman's book, *The Ethical Import of Darwinism*, James refers approvingly to the author's discussions of this topic: "Sudden variations in the way of intuitive perceptions of the superior excellence of social over selfish instincts would (if we understand Dr. Schurman rightly) be the only origin of conscience which he would himself allow to be plausible." See: *The Works of William James: Essays, Comments, and Reviews*, ed. by Frederick Burkhardt (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 1987), pp407-410 (p409). This review originally appeared in *Nation*: William James, 'The Ethical Import of Darwinism', *Nation*, 45 (1887), p376. We refer to *The Works* reprint for reasons of accessibility.

[402] In choosing this name we did not mean to imply any relation to the philosopher Brian Zamulinski's 'evolutionary intuitionism'. However, an interesting issue arises in this connection. Zamulinski makes much of the distinction between 'adaptationist' theories of morality and 'by-product' theories of morality. According to the former, morality has evolved because it is adaptive; i.e. because it confers an evolutionary

2.3.2.2. Social Theory of Moral Obligation

Next James moves on to consider the metaphysical question, of what the meanings of ethical terms are. In particular he is interested in the meanings of the terms 'obligation', 'good', and 'ill'. He begins with an intriguing thought experiment:

> Imagine an absolutely material world, containing only physical and chemical facts, and existing from eternity without a God, without even an interested spectator: would there be any sense in saying of that world that one of its states is better than another?[403]

James thinks that the answer is self-evidently 'no'. And from this he deduces the following principle: that the words 'obligation', 'good', and 'ill' "can have no application or relevancy in a world in which no sentient life exists."[404] Michael Slater calls this James's 'existential condition for ethics'[405]. Having established this principle, James continues with his thought experiment. He asks us now to imagine that sentient beings are introduced into our hypothetical universe. The moment this occurs, he thinks, moral relations begin to have a status; the sentient beings instantaneously have *obligations* to one another. The question is, what is the source of those obligations? James's suggestion is that the source of those obligations is simply the *demands* of the sentient beings themselves:

> Take any demand, however slight, which any creature, however weak, may make. Ought it not, for its own sole sake, be satisfied? If not, prove why not. The only possible kind of proof you could adduce would be the exhibition of another creature who should make a demand that ran the other way.[406]

From this James deduces a second principle: that demand and obligation are "coextensive terms". We may call this the principle of the 'coextensivity of demand and obligation'. These two principles together – the 'existential condition for ethics' and the 'coextensivity of demand and obligation' – constitute James's social theory of moral obligation. It may be formulated as follows:

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advantage upon organisms. According to the latter morality is a by-product of evolution; it is not shaped by and does not contribute towards adaptivity. See: Brian Zamulinski, *Evolutionary Intuitionism: A Theory of the Origin and Nature of Moral Facts* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2007). The question is: which sort of theory is James advocating? His talk of moral intuitions resulting from "incidental complications" of our cerebral structure, and his rejection of adaptivity as a valid casuistic principle, would seem to point to the latter view; but his explicit adoption of an adaptationist account of religion in VRE, together with his insistence upon the pragmatic testing of moral theories, point to the former.

[403] James, *The Will to Believe*, p189

[404] James, *The Will to Believe*, p189

[405] Michael Slater, 'Ethical Naturalism and Religious Belief in 'The Moral Philosopher and the Moral Life'', *William James Studies*, 2 (2007), paragraph 11

[406] James, *The Will to Believe*, p195

- P1: Obligations are the foundational moral facts.

- P2: There can be no obligations without demands.

- P3: There can be no demands without sentient beings.

- C: Moral obligation is grounded in sentient beings.

This theory may seem trivial in the present day, but in James's time it was controversial. A large number of James's philosophical contemporaries were still ardent Platonists in ethics, believing in "an abstract moral order in which the objective truth resides"[407], raining obligatoriness down upon our demands "much as upon the steel of the compass-needle the influence of the Pole rains down from out of the starry heavens."[408]

2.3.2.3. Desire-Satisfaction Theory

With the social theory of moral obligation James has answered the question of what the word 'obligation' means, but he has yet to answer the question of what the words 'good' and 'ill' mean. It is to this question that he turns next. He begins with a survey of extant attempts to answer it:

> Thus to be a mean between two extremes; to be recognized by a special intuitive faculty; to make the agent happy for the moment; to make others as well as him happy in the long run; to add to his perfection or dignity; to harm no one; to follow from reason or flow from universal law; to be in accordance with the will of God; to promote the survival of the human species on the planet, – are so many tests, each of which has been maintained by somebody to constitute the essence of all good things or actions so far as they are good.[409]

None of these theories, James says, have given general satisfaction. Some, like the character of 'harming no one', or that of 'following a universal rule', are evidently not present in all actions we would wish to describe as good; for good actions can be cruel and exceptional. Others, like 'following the will of God', or 'promoting survival' are vague and unascertainable[410].

> The best, on the whole, of these marks and measures of goodness seems to be the capacity to bring happiness. But in order not to break down fatally, this test must be taken to cover innumerable facts and impulses that never *aim* at happiness; so that, after all, in seeking for a universal principle we are inevitably carried onward to the *most* universal principle, – that *the essence of good is simply to satisfy demand*.[411]

The above statement would seem to constitute a fairly straightforward endorsement of the desire-satisfaction theory of well-being (DST). The notion that happiness as a measure of

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[407] James, *The Will to Believe*, p194
[408] James, *The Will to Believe*, p195
[409] James, *The Will to Believe*, p200
[410] James, *The Will to Believe*, pp200-201
[411] James, *The Will to Believe*, p201

goodness breaks down fatally was, and still is, widely touted as a reason for preferring desire-satisfaction theories to hedonistic theories[412]. It is important to note that James's statement of DST seems to imply that the ethical status of a demand is not related to its quality. After all, if it was so related then the essence of good would not be to satisfy demands, but to satisfy certain *kinds* of demands. James does however suggest that demands may differ quantitively. "Any desire", he says, "is imperative to the extent of its amount"[413]. This will be important in what follows.

2.3.2.4. Preference Utilitarianism

So, the essence of 'good' is to satisfy demand (and the essence of 'ill', we may infer, to thwart it). The metaphysical question has therefore been answered. But the casuistic question remains. How are we to subordinate demands to one another? We saw in the last section that the ethical status of demands, for James, does not depend on their quality; "all demands as such are *prima facie* respectable"[414]. This being the case, James says, "the best simply imaginary world would be one in which *every* demand was gratified as soon as made"[415]. However, such a state of affairs plainly cannot be realized in the *actual* world in which we live:

> There is hardly a good which we can imagine except as competing for the possession
> of the same bit of space and time with some other imagined good. Every end of
> desire that presents itself appears as exclusive of some other end of desire.[416]

The obvious solution, according to James, is to adopt a maximization principle; specifically, a principle of demand-satisfaction maximization/demand-dissatisfaction minimization[417]:

> Since everything which is demanded is by that fact a good, must not the guiding
> principle for ethical philosophy (since all demands conjointly cannot be satisfied in

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[412] Richard Gale suggests that James's customary use of the term 'demand' instead of 'desire' signals his adoption of an 'informed desire' version of DST. Demands, according to Gale, are those desires which we publicly request after a process of inquiry/amelioration; we all have many desires, after all, which we would not dare to publicly *demand*. See: Gale, *The Divided Self of William James*, pp44-45.

[413] James, *The Will to Believe*, p195

[414] James, *The Will to Believe*, p202

[415] James, *The Will to Believe*, p202

[416] James, *The Will to Believe*, p202

[417] We would do well at this point to mention an apparent inconsistency in James's account. There seems to be a conflict between James's utilitarian maximization principle and certain of his 'brain-born' ethical intuitions (outlined in section 2.3.2.1). On the one hand we are supposed to maximise demand-satisfaction *at all times*; on the other, we are supposed to reject the offer of utopia on the condition of the lonely suffering of one lost soul. Gale analyses this conflict in terms of the fact that the maximization principle is essentially consequentialist in character while the lost soul intuition is essentially deontological. He calls this James's 'maximizing-deontological aporia', and insists that it constitutes a major difficulty for his ethical philosophy. Ultimately, he thinks, James must either drop the desire-satisfaction theory, or admit of qualitatively different (better or worse) demands. See: Gale, *The Divided Self of William James*, pp48-49. We will revisit this issue in chapter three (section 3.3.2).

this poor world) be simply to satisfy at all times *as many demands as we can?* That act must be the best act, accordingly, which makes for the *best whole*, in the sense of awakening the least sum of dissatisfactions.[418]

It is because of his adoption of this maximization principle that many of James's commentators have described his position as basically utilitarian[419]. We add however that his rejection of hedonism impels us to categorize him as a 'preference utilitarian'; it is not pleasure that James wishes to maximize, but desire/demand-satisfaction[420].

The upshot of James's maximization principle is that we must strive to find the most inclusive set of demands; that is, 'the largest possible set of mutually consistent demands'[421]. "The course of history", James says, "is nothing but the story of men's struggles from generation to generation to find the more and more inclusive order":

> Following this path, society has shaken itself into one sort of relative equilibrium after another by a series of social discoveries quite analogous to those of science. Polyandry and polygamy and slavery, private warfare and liberty to kill, judicial torture and arbitrary royal power have slowly succumbed to actually aroused complaints; and though some one's ideals are unquestionably the worse off for each improvement, yet a vastly greater total number of them find shelter in our civilised society than in the older savage ways.[422]

In this way, James says, moral progress of a kind is possible, even in the absence of any truly objective standard. Whether or not God exists, he says, "we form at any rate an ethical republic here below"[423].

2.3.2.5. Theological Voluntarism

The preceding four subsections constitute the overtly naturalistic part of James's ethical theory. According to James, it "affords a basis for ethics as well as theism does". Whether, however, this "purely human system" can gratify the philosopher's demand for moral objectivity, is, James says, an entirely different question; one which he intends to answer before the close of the essay[424].

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[418] James, *The Will to Believe*, p205
[419] See for instance: Gale, *The Divided Self of William James*, pp33-34; Slater, *William James on Ethics and Faith,* p70
[420] Michael Slater further distinguishes between 'desire-satisfaction utilitarianism' and 'ideal-satisfaction utilitarianism', and places James in the latter camp. See: Slater, *William James on Ethics and Faith*, p85. For our part we struggle to see the substantive difference between ideal-satisfaction and desire-satisfaction, especially if one adds the proviso that desires must be informed (as per Gale's suggestion). By our lights both of these doctrines are species of preference-utilitarianism.
[421] We owe this formulation to Mark Boone. See: Boone, p4; p19.
[422] James, *The Will to Believe*, pp205-206
[423] James, *The Will to Believe*, p198
[424] James, *The Will to Believe*, p198

The problem for the philosopher, he suggests, is that there is "nothing final" in any given equilibrium of human ideals. It merely represents the will of the majority, or of the most powerful among them, at a given point in history. Demands that are insignificant and disposable today may thus be victorious tomorrow; and we are none the wiser about which demands are destined to be triumphant. It is as this point that God enters into James's account. If we postulate a God who *knows* which demands are destined to be triumphant, and whose own demands coincide with these, then moral objectivity is secured:

> If such a thinker existed, his way of subordinating the demands to one another would be the finally valid casuistic scale; his claims would be the most appealing; his ideal universe would be the most inclusive realizable whole. If he now exist, then actualized in his thought already must be that ethical philosophy which we seek as the pattern which our own must evermore approach. In the interests of our own ideal of systematically unified moral truth, therefore, we, as would-be philosophers, must postulate a divine thinker, and pray for the victory of the religious cause.[425]

Thus, God's "all-enveloping demands" exert an overwhelming obligation on human beings, and abolish the moral relativity of the ethical republic. They do so, James notes, not because they are of a different *kind* to human demands, but "simply because they are the greatest in amount."[426] It is for this reason that thinkers like Michael Cantrell ascribe a divine command theory to James; because in the final assessment, he holds that our most important moral obligations have their source in God. We take Cantrell's suggestion seriously, but ultimately we agree with Mark Boone that James's doctrine is too dissimilar from traditional divine command theories to be worthy of the name. God, after all, is not the *exclusive* source of moral obligation for James. Indeed, he is a source of moral obligation in just the same way that human beings are; by virtue of his being a person and having demands (as per James's social theory of moral obligation[427]). For this reason, we prefer to classify this part of James's ethical philosophy as a doctrine of metaethical theological voluntarism. It constitutes a doctrine of theological voluntarism because it appeals to God's will as a source of moral obligation. It is metaethical because it does so only *formally*; it says nothing about the *content* of God's demands[428].

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[425] James, *The Will to Believe*, p214
[426] James, *The Will to Believe*, p196
[427] This combination of a doctrine of theological voluntarism with a social theory of moral obligation makes James's view strikingly similar to the 'divine command theory of obligation' defended by Robert Adams in *Finite and Infinite Goods*. See: Robert Merrihew Adams, *Finite and Infinite Goods: A Framework for Ethics* (New York: OUP, 1999)
[428] James explicitly states that "what the thought of the infinite thinker may be is hidden from us". See: James, *The Will to Believe*, p214.

God then, may be said to serve a metaethical purpose in James's philosophy. But this is not the only purpose he serves. He also has a more practical role. James makes a vital distinction in MPML between what he calls 'the easy-going mood' and 'the strenuous mood'. The easy-going mood characterises most of us most of the time; in it, we give ourselves some wiggle-room in ethical matters, and allow ourselves the occasional 'moral holiday'. The strenuous mood on the other hand is what we feel in times of dire need and profound religious excitement; it is the condition of all our most heroic and saintly deeds[429]. Now, what James suggests in the final section of MPML, is that the 'purely human system of ethics' – what he elsewhere calls "the religion of humanity"[430] – is not sufficient to awaken the strenuous mood. Life, he says, for the religion of humanity, is "a genuine ethical symphony; but it is played in the compass of a couple of poor octaves, and the infinite scale of values fails to open up":

> When, however, we believe that a God is there, and that he is one of the claimants, the infinite perspective opens out. The scale of the symphony is incalculably prolonged. The more imperative ideals now begin to speak with an altogether new objectivity and significance, and to utter the penetrating, shattering, tragically challenging note of appeal.[431]

Thus God, in MPML, serves a dual metaethical and practical purpose. He is the condition for the possibility of moral unity and objectivity; and he is the inspiration for a morally strenuous life. Michael Slater, as we mentioned in the introduction, has claimed that this religious part of James's ethical philosophy is essentially supernaturalistic. The basis of this claim appears to be James's use of the term 'infinite', as in the quotes above. We will not discuss this claim in detail now, but we signal the manner of our eventual response by noting our agreement with Richard Gale in his review of Slater's book: James's God is a *finite* God, existing *within* nature. As such it is doubtful that his appeal to God in MPML commits him to supernaturalism[432].

2.3.3. Conclusions

In this section we have investigated *The Will to Believe* under two heads: 'James's Critique of Scientificism', and 'James's Ethical Theory'. In the former we saw James describing a position he called 'scientificism', which was characterised by commitments to scientism and hyperscientific realism, and to the claim that there are sharp boundaries between science and non-science. We saw that he mounted critiques of these doctrines; in the first case centred around the argument

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[429] Compare: William James, 'The Energies of Men', *Philosophical Review*, 16 (1907), pp1-20. Reprinted in: *The Works of William James: Essays in Religion and Morality*, ed. by Burkhardt, pp129-146
[430] James, *The Will to Believe*, p198
[431] James, *The Will to Believe*, pp212-213
[432] Richard Gale, 'William James on Ethics and Faith', *William James Studies*, 7 (2011), pp36-46 (p41)

that science presupposes faith and norms of rationality; in the second around a pessimistic meta induction; and in the third around a liberal definition of the scientific method. It might be thought that these critiques imply some sort of conflict with naturalism, but this, we insist, is a superficial view. Each of James's critiques overlaps significantly with the critiques advanced by liberal naturalists which we covered in chapter one. His arguments against scientism are essentially versions of 'the fundamental argument' and 'the argument from non-scientific values/principles in science'. They are echoed by a number of the contributors to *Naturalism in Question* and *Naturalism and Normativity*; for instance, by Hilary Putnam in 'Science and Philosophy'[433] and by Donald Davidson in 'Could There Be a Science of Rationality?'[434]. His pessimistic meta-induction is essentially similar to modern versions of the argument, like those advanced by Putnam and Laudan. Finally, his discussion of the boundaries of science overlaps with the critiques presented by John Dupre in 'The Miracle of Monism' and 'How to be Naturalistic Without Being Simplistic in the Study of Human Nature'[435], and with David Macarthur's arguments in 'Taking the Human Sciences Seriously'[436]. James's views on these topics, we contend, far from implying conflict with naturalism, place him squarely in the camp of 'liberal naturalism'.

As to 'James's Ethical Theory', we have seen that it consisted in both a naturalistic and a religious part. The naturalistic part is, it must be admitted, quite *thoroughly* naturalistic. James argues that moral intuitions are the 'brain-born' results of the process of evolution; that all moral facts are grounded in natural beings; that the essence of good is in satisfying the desires of those beings; that the only valid casuistic principle is to maximise desire-satisfaction; and that in so doing we may achieve moral progress in this "ethical republic here below". This, as Richard Gale says, could well be construed as an attempted naturalization of ethics. However, there is no sense in denying that the religious part of James's ethics constitutes a deviation from this classic naturalistic pattern. In it he invokes a powerful, personal God, whose divine demands serve to secure moral objectivity and to ground the strenuous mood. Yet the question remains open as to whether this deviation is a deviation into supernaturalism. In our view, it would be better interpreted as a deviation into *radical religious naturalism*. Our argument for this conclusion

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[433] H. Putnam, 'Science and Philosophy', in *Naturalism and Normativity*, ed. by De Caro & Macarthur, pp89-99

[434] Davidson, 'Could There Be a Science of Rationality?', in *Naturalism in Question*, ed. by De Caro & Macarthur, pp152-169

[435] Dupre, 'The Miracle of Monism', in *Naturalism in Question*, ed. by De Caro & Macarthur, pp36-58; Dupre, 'How to be Naturalistic Without Being Simplistic in the Study of Human Nature', in *Naturalism and Normativity*, ed. by De Caro & Macarthur, pp289-303

[436] Macarthur, 'Taking the Human Sciences Seriously', in *Naturalism and Normativity*, ed. by De Caro & Macarthur, pp123-141

however must await a fuller picture of James's concept of God. Part of this picture will be

revealed to us in the next section, on *The Varieties of Religious Experience.*

2.4.   The Varieties of Religious Experience

The Varieties of Religious Experience is undoubtedly James's most important text as regards his views on religion. In it, James famously aligns himself with supernaturalism and against naturalism. However, the precise ontological commitments of his so-called 'piecemeal supernaturalism' are far from clear. On one hand James considers that God's being extends into a "supernatural" or "mystical" dimension of existence, but on the other he calls God a "higher part of the universe"[437]. James is known to have flirted with the doctrine of a finite God throughout his career, and to have explicitly defended that doctrine in PU[438]. For this reason, Eugene Taylor and others describe James's mature view as a form of 'naturalistic theism[439]. As we shall see, James himself used a similar term – "theistic naturalism" – to describe his position in a notebook containing an original plan for his second course of Gifford Lectures[440]. The suggestion of Nancy Frankenberry, that we may be able to "make naturalistic sense" of James's notion of an 'unseen order' in VRE, does not, therefore, seem implausible[441]. Frankenberry hints that a doctrine of emergentism may be of help in this endeavour, but Graham Bird insists that while James's *ethical* views can be fit into the schema of emergentism, his *religious* views cannot[442]. Along with Richard Gale and Wayne Proudfoot he considers that James is committed in VRE to a typical, modern concept of supernaturalism, according to which God's being (or in Gale's case, the Mother Sea of consciousness, considered as something distinct from God) extends beyond nature, and may even be ontically discontinuous with it[443].

Our overriding concern in this section will be to show that readings like Bird's and Proudfoot's are mistaken, and that James's avowal of piecemeal supernaturalism is superficial. This will be the focus of our final subsection (2.4.4), but first we must investigate James's overall account of religious experience. As we mentioned in the introduction to chapter 2, this account can justifiably by called naturalistic in several respects. First and foremost, it definitely evinces

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[437] James, *The Varieties*, pp515-516
[438] William James, *A Pluralistic Universe* (New York: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1909) pp310-311; p318
[439] Taylor, *William James on Consciousness Beyond the Margin*, p88
[440] *The Works of William James: The Varieties of Religious Experience*, ed. by Burkhardt, p492
[441] Frankenberry, 'The Fate of Radical Empiricism and the Future of Pragmatic Naturalism', in *Pragmatism and Naturalism*, ed. by Bagger, pp221-251 (p242). We have already mentioned Phil Oliver's claim to the same effect in *William James's "Springs of Delight"*. See: Oliver, *William James's "Springs of Delight"*, p30. A third commentator to express this thought is Bennett Ramsay, who sees James as "attempting to broaden the definition of religion beyond theistic and supernaturalistic frameworks towards an immanentist, almost naturalistic meaning". Ramsay, however, does not expand upon this claim in detail. See: Bennett Ramsay, *Submitting to Freedom* (Oxford: OUP, 1993), p3; pp137-138
[442] Bird, *William James*, p174
[443] See: Gale, *The Divided Self of William James*, p271; Wayne Proudfoot, 'Pragmatism and an "Unseen Order" in *Varieties*', in *William James and a Science of Religions*, ed. by Proudfoot, pp31-47 (pp41-45)

James's continued commitment to the methodological thesis of naturalism, for he explicitly endeavours to maintain "contact with science" throughout[444]. We will organize our investigation into four parts. In section 2.4.1 we will address James's general approach and methodology in VRE, his model of mystical experience, and his conclusions regarding the intellectual content of religious and mystical experience. In section 2.4.2 we will examine James's notion of the testing/verification of religious experience by its fruits, his conclusions regarding the epistemic status of religious/mystical experience, and his proposal of a 'Science of Religions'. In section 2.4.3 we will investigate James's notion of subliminal consciousness, his theory of the divided self and the process of its unification, and his conclusions regarding the biological function of religion/religious experience. Finally, in section 2.4.4, we will investigate the notion of 'over-belief', the content of James's own over-belief, and his classification of that over-belief in terms of 'piecemeal supernaturalism'.

2.4.1. The Phenomena of Religious Experience

2.4.1.1. Religious Experience

In late January 1898 the University of Edinburgh's senate voted to make James the Gifford Lecturer for 1899-1900 and 1900-1901. Later the same year, whilst camping in the Adirondacks with friends, James found himself slipping one night into "a state of spiritual alertness of the most vital description":

> The influences of Nature, the wholesomeness of the people round me, … the thought of you and the children, … the problem of the Edinburgh lectures, all fermented within me till it became a regular Walpurgis nacht. I spent a good deal of it in the woods, where the streaming moonlight lit up things in a magical checkered play, and it seemed as if the gods of all the nature-mythologies were holding an indescribable meeting in my breast with the moral gods of the inner life. … The intense *significance* of some sort, of the whole scene, if one could only *tell* the significance; the intense inhuman remoteness of its inner life, and yet the intense appeal of it; its everlasting freshness and its immemorial antiquity and decay; … It was one of the happiest lonesome nights of my existence, and I understand now what a poet is. He is a person who can feel the immense complexity of influences that I felt, and make some partial tracks in them for verbal statement. In point of fact, I can't find a single word for all that significance, and don't know what it was significant of, so there it remains, a mere boulder of impression.[445]

"Doubtless in more ways than one, though," James adds, "things in the Edinburgh lecture will be traceable to it". One of the most important aspects of the Gifford Lectures that is partly traceable

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[444] James, *The Varieties*, p512
[445] *The Correspondence of William James*, ed. by Ignas K. Skrupskelis & Elizabeth M. Berkeley, 12 vols (London: University Press of Virginia, 2000) VIII, pp390-391

to James's Walpurgisnacht is his focus on religious experience. But while this experience may have provided the *inspiration* for the approach of VRE, it cannot be said to have provided the *intellectual motives* for it. Those motives, we may say, were twofold. Firstly, James intends to take a pragmatic approach to the study of religion, and in order to get at the pragmatic meaning of religion, it is necessary to go back to experiences and their effects. Secondly, he intends his approach to be psychological, and psychology, for James, is primarily concerned with private experiences.

The first of these motives is elucidated in James's famous talk on 'Philosophical Conceptions and Practical Results' delivered to the Philosophical Union at Berkeley in 1898[446]. This talk was, James acknowledged, "a rehearsal for Edinburgh"[447]. In it, he introduced some of the key themes of *The Varieties*. It is also noteworthy for being the first lecture in which James invoked the concept of pragmatism, and therefore for signalling "the beginning of the pragmatist movement"[448]. James begins 'Philosophical Conceptions and Practical Results' by outlining the "principle of practicalism – or pragmatism" which had been introduced to him by Charles Sanders Peirce at a meeting of the Metaphysical Club at Harvard in the 1870s[449]:

> To attain perfect clearness in our thoughts of an object, then, we need only consider what effects of a conceivably practical kind the object may involve – what sensations we are to expect from it, and what reactions we must prepare. Our conception of these effects, then, is for us the whole of our conception of the object, so far as that conception has positive significance at all.[450]

This principle, James says, when applied to certain philosophical problems, shows them to be illusory or insignificant; or else serves to sharpen and clarify the meanings of their terms. For instance, when we apply the principle to certain concepts of scholastic theology – God's 'aseity', his 'necessity', and his 'simplicity', among others – we find that these terms are utterly empty of practical significance; they "awaken no responsive active feelings and call for no particular conduct of our own"[451]. The sensations we may expect and the reactions we must prepare in a universe in which God possesses aseity are exactly the same as they would be in a universe in which he does not. These concepts make no practical difference to our lives, and so, according to

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[446] William James, 'Philosophical Conceptions and Practical Results', in *University Chronicle*, 1 (1898), pp287-310. Reprinted in: *The Works of William James: Pragmatism*, ed. by Frederick Burkhardt (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 1975), pp255-274

[447] Robert Richardson, *William James: In the Maelstrom of American Modernism* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 2006), p379

[448] John McDermott, *The Writings of William James* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1977), p346

[449] James, 'Philosophical Conceptions and Practical Results', p290. For more on the illustrious 'Metaphysical Club' see: Louis Menand, *The Metaphysical Club* (London: Flamingo, 2002)

[450] James, 'Philosophical Conceptions and Practical Results', p291

[451] James, 'Philosophical Conceptions and Practical Results', p301

the principle of pragmatism, they have no meaning. The *real* meaning of the word "God", James

says – what really "keeps religion going" – is "concrete religious experiences"; "conversations with

the unseen, voices and visions, responses to prayer, changes of heart, deliverances from fear,

inflowings of help, assurances of support"[452]. It would be concrete experiences like these, rather

than the "secondary accretions" of theology, that would form the primary subject matter of

VRE[453].

As to James's second motive, he remarks at the beginning of the first lecture of VRE that he is

neither a theologian, nor an anthropologist, nor a historian of religion, but a psychologist. "If the

inquiry be psychological," he insists, "not religious institutions, but rather religious feelings and

religious impulses must be its subject"[454]. This constitutes an important disclaimer to James's

controversial definition of religion in the following lecture (according to which it consists of "the

feelings, acts and experiences of individual men in their solitude" [455]). James is not – not naively

at least – trying to give an essentialist definition of religion, or to construct the category in a way

that justifies his protestant bias; he is merely trying to establish a mandate for his psychological

approach to the topic[456]. Besides his focus on private experiences, this approach also warrants

various other methodological and thematic choices. For instance, James appeals frequently to

psychopathology (i.e. in his comparison of religious genius and madness), to the psychology of

personality and temperament (in his account of the sick-soul and healthy-mindedness), to clinical

psychology (in his emphasis on the therapeutic effects of religion), and to psychological concepts

like that of the subconscious self and its associated automatisms. James considers that the

psychological character of his investigation means that it maintains "contact with science"[457]. In

modern terms, we may say that it upheld the methodological thesis of naturalism. Indeed, we

shall see in what follows that VRE is, in some ways, one of James's more profoundly naturalistic

texts.

2.4.1.2. Mystical Experience

James includes in VRE accounts and discussions of a truly staggering variety of religious

experiences. Indeed, he seems to consider just about *any* unusual or anomalous experiences

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[452] James, 'Philosophical Conceptions and Practical Results', pp302-303
[453] James, 'Philosophical Conceptions and Practical Results', p302
[454] James, *The Varieties*, p3
[455] James, *The Varieties*, p31
[456] For relatively nuanced readings of James on the category of religion see: Sonu Shamdasani, 'Psychologies as Ontology-Making Practices', in *William James and the Varieties of Religious Experience*, ed. by Carrette, pp27-44; Jerome Bruner, 'James's Varieties and the "New" Constructivism', in *William James and A Science of Religions*, ed. by Proudfoot, pp73-85
[457] James, *The Varieties*, p512

provided they have religious content of some kind. He considers accounts of sudden changes of

heart, of the overcoming of addiction, of obsessive ideas, unaccountable motor impulses,

delusions, hallucinations, experiences of ecstasy, drug-induced experiences, and more. It is

perhaps for this reason that he does not attempt to formulate a general schema for assessing the

phenomenal content of any and all religious experience. What he gives us instead is a schema for

assessing the phenomenal content of one relatively well-defined class of religious experiences,

namely mystical experiences, together with the claim that these experiences may serve as a

model for religious experience more generally. Let us first address this claim about the

relationship between religious and mystical experience. It occurs at the beginning of his lecture

on 'Mysticism':

> One may say truly, I think, that personal religious experience has its root and centre
> in mystical states of consciousness; so for us, who in these lectures are treating
> personal experience as the exclusive subject of our study, such states of
> consciousness ought to form the vital chapter from which the other chapters get
> their light.[458]

James offers little in the way of justification for this claim. Ironically, he appeals for support to the

ecclesiastical institutions of the various religious traditions, noting that they generally accept

some version of it[459]. Thus, many religious traditions contain something loosely describable as a

'mystical tradition' which aims at the systematic cultivation of mystical states, and which

enshrines them as authoritative and revelatory. But the mere consensus of religious believers or

of ecclesiastical authorities ought not to be definitive on this question. More robust empirical

evidence would certainly be required to establish James's claim to the satisfaction of his critics[460].

Let us now outline the four typical characteristics which, on James's view, constitute the common

core of mystical experience. The first two characteristics, of 'ineffability' and 'noetic quality', are,

he says, the most typical, and will, by themselves, "entitle any state to be called mystical"[461]:

1. *Ineffability*.– … The subject of it immediately says that it defies expression, that no
   adequate report of its contents can be given in words. It follows from this that its

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[458] James, *The Varieties*, p379

[459] We say 'ironic' because James repeatedly evinces suspicion and disapproval of organized religion in VRE.
See: James, *The Varieties*, pp28-31

[460] The legitimacy of the category of 'mystical experience' and the nature of its relationship to religious
experience is something that is hotly debated among scholars. For relevant critiques see: Steven Katz,
'Language, Epistemology, and Mysticism' in *Mysticism and Philosophical Analysis*, ed. by Steven Katz (New
York: OUP, 1978); Grace Jantzen, *Power, Gender and Christian Mysticism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University
Press, 1995); Richard King, *Orientalism and Religion* (Oxon: Routledge, 1999), pp 20-24; Richard King, 'Asian
Religions and Mysticism', in *William James and the Varieties of Religious Experience*, ed. by Carrette, pp106-
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[461] James, *The Varieties*, p381

quality must be directly experienced; it cannot be imparted or transferred to others. In this peculiarity mystical states are more like states of feeling than like states of intellect.

2. *Noetic quality.***–** Although so similar to states of feeling, mystical states seem to those who experience them to be also states of knowledge. They are states of insight into depths of truth unplumbed by the discursive intellect. They are illuminations, revelations, full of significance and importance, all inarticulate though they remain; and as a rule they carry with them a curious sense of authority for after-time.

The second two characteristics, of 'transiency' and 'passivity', are "less sharply marked, but are usually found":

3. *Transiency.*– Mystical states cannot be sustained for long. Except in rare instances, half an hour, or at most an hour or two, seems to be the limit beyond which they fade into the light of common day. Often, when faded, their quality can but imperfectly be reproduced in memory; but when they recur it is recognized; and from one recurrence to another it is susceptible of continuous development in what is felt as inner richness and importance.

4. *Passivity*.– Although the oncoming of mystical states may be facilitated by preliminary voluntary operations, as by fixing the attention, or going through certain bodily performances, or in other ways which manuals of mysticism prescribe; yet when the characteristic sort of consciousness once has set in, the mystic feels as if his will were in abeyance, and indeed sometimes as if he were grasped and held by a superior power.[462]

Following his enumeration of these characteristics, James proceeds to give various examples of states that will be classified as mystical according to his schema. He begins by telling us that mystical states can vary considerably in intensity and in purported religious significance[463]. On one end of the spectrum we have relatively insignificant states like déjà vu. Experiences of déjà vu are ineffable to some degree; they involve a profound sense of familiarity, but we cannot say what this sense of familiarity consists in. They possess noetic quality; we seem to *recognize*, and hence to *cognize* the objects of the experience. They are transient; lasting only for a few seconds. And there is some sense of passivity or dreaminess in experiences of déjà vu as well. At the other end of the spectrum we have the deliberately cultivated experiences of the various religious mystics. James cites Swami Vivekananda's account of 'samadhi', Al-Ghazali on the 'transports' of

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[462] James, *The Varieties*, pp380-381
[463] James, *The Varieties*, p382

Sufism, and Saint Teresa on the 'orison of union', among others[464]. In each case he attempts to show how the accounts in question conform to his schema[465].

2.4.1.3. The Intellectual Content of Religious and Mystical Experience

The reader will notice that there is nothing in James's INTP schema about any *intellectual content* of mystical experience. And yet many of the reports of mystical experience that James considers – with the pointed exception of the apophatic utterances of Pseudo-Dionysus and the Buddhist accounts of śūnyatā – seem, on the face of it, to contain a good deal of intellectual content. That nothing exists except for "a pure, absolute, abstract Self"[466]; that human beings are "identical with the Atman or Universal Soul"[467]; that we are immersed in "the infinite ocean of God"[468]; destined for "total absorption in God"[469]; for "unity with all that is"[470]. These are so many ways that mystics have expressed part of that intellectual content. The upshot of all these varied expressions, according to James, is the claim of "the unity of man with God":

> This is the everlasting and triumphant mystical tradition, hardly altered by differences of clime or creed. In Hinduism, in Neoplatonism, in Sufism, in Christian mysticism, in Whitmanism, we find the same recurring note, so that there is about mystical utterances an eternal unanimity which ought to make a critic stop and think, and which brings it about that the mystical classics have, as has been said, neither birthday nor native land. Perpetually telling of the unity of man with God, their speech antedates languages, and they do not grow old.[471]

It is important to note that when James uses the term 'God' in this case he does not intend it to have any specific theological connotations. In particular he wants to dissociate it from the attributions of unity and infinity that are typically made for it by mystics:

> [I]n the interests of intellectual clearness, I feel bound to say that religious experience, as we have studied it, cannot be cited as unequivocally supporting the infinitist belief. The only thing that it unequivocally testifies to is that we can experience union with *something* larger than ourselves and in that union find our greatest peace.[472]

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[464] James, *The Varieties*, pp400-412
[465] James himself does not suggest this, but we might suppose that his Walpurgisnacht would fall somewhere in the middle of the spectrum, containing, as it did, a sense of "intense significance" (noetic quality) which he could not "find a single word for" (ineffability).
[466] James, *The Varieties*, p385
[467] James, *The Varieties*, p400
[468] James, *The Varieties*, p398
[469] James, *The Varieties*, p404
[470] James, *The Varieties*, p395
[471] James, *The Varieties*, p419
[472] James, *The Varieties*, p523

Religious and mystical experiences testify to our union with something larger than ourselves. But that is all they testify to. Whether that something is finite or infinite, pluralistic or monistic, unitary or trinitary, jealous or magnanimous, etc., is not disclosed in the experiences themselves. This may seem like a meagre intellectual content, but it is from this content, according to James, that the various religious traditions and religious individuals build out their myriad 'over-beliefs'. This is, as it were, the foundation upon which the whole intellectual edifice of religion is built. Let us therefore turn in the next section to the question of whether or not the foundation is sturdy; of what is the epistemic status of mystical experience, and of knowledge claims derived therefrom.

2.4.2. The Epistemology of Religious Experience

2.4.2.1. By Their Fruits You Shall Know Them

In section 2.3, on *The Will to Believe*, we saw James advocating a verificationist approach to the testing of moral theories. His doctrine in VRE, that religious experiences are to be known by their fruits, amounts, in our view, to an extension of that approach into the realm of religion. As in WB, one advantage to this approach is its empirical/quasi-scientific character. Religious theories vindicated by such a method may be supposed to have an epistemic status similar to that of ethical theories, and not wholly dissimilar to that of physical theories. Another advantage, according to James, is that this approach avoids a fallacy that is all too common in the evaluation of religious experiences; namely the genetic fallacy. Religious experiences are all too often venerated or condemned on the basis of their purported origins. Thus, critics of religion declare many religious experiences epistemically dubious on account of their pathological origins; Saint Paul's on account of his epilepsy; Saint Teresa's on account of her hysteria; Saint Francis's on account of his hereditary degeneracy, and so on[473]. Supporters of religion meanwhile declare the same experiences infallible on account of their supposedly divine origins[474]. James thinks that this way of dealing with religious experience will get us nowhere. We should instead take a leaf out of the book of "the natural sciences", and test religious experiences and hypotheses "by logic and by experiment"[475].

In WB, recall, James proposed that the testing of moral theories would involve: i) devising a hypothesis, ii) deducing experimental actions from it, iii) performing those actions, and iv) seeing whether the results harmonize with experience. Now, in the case of religious *theories*, we may presumably adopt precisely the same procedure; but in the case of religious *experiences*, the

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[473] James, *The Varieties*, p13
[474] James, *The Varieties*, p18
[475] James, *The Varieties*, p17

situation would seem to be different. We do not generally *deduce* experimental actions from religious experiences; rather actions follow more or less automatically from them. All we need do therefore, is see whether the fruits of those actions harmonize with subsequent experience. Using the ample data he has gathered concerning those fruits from the lives of converts and saints, James proposes to do just that[476]. The fruits of religious experience, as manifested in saintliness, are, he says, as follows:

a. *Asceticism*.– The self-surrender may become so passionate as to turn into self-immolation. It may then so overrule the ordinary inhibitions of the flesh that the saint finds positive pleasure in sacrifice and asceticism…

b. *Strength of Soul*.– The sense of enlargement of life may be so uplifting that personal motives and inhibitions, commonly omnipotent, become too insignificant for notice … Fears and anxieties go, and blissful equanimity takes their place.

c. *Purity*.– The sensitiveness to spiritual discords is enhanced, and the cleansing of existence from brutal and sensual elements becomes imperative.

d. *Charity*.– The ordinary motives to antipathy, which usually set such close bounds to tenderness among human beings, are inhibited.[477]

The question is, do these fruits harmonize with experience or not? As manifested in converts, the beneficial character of these fruits is evident. Depression is alleviated, sinfulness is vanquished, addiction is overcome[478]. As manifested in saints, the situation is more complex. Saints sometimes possess these fruits to such a degree that they prove poorly adapted to the circumstances of their time. But the saints, James suggests, with their excesses of virtue, may be prophetic. They may be "impregnators of the world, vivifiers and animaters of potentialities of goodness which but for them would lie forever dormant."[479] They may be "torch-bearers" for a "millennial society" that is yet to be realized. In this way the saints may be regarded as "leavens" of moral progress and social justice. In the final assessment, James thinks, they serve an indispensable function in social evolution[480].

> In a general way, then, and 'on the whole,' our abandonment of theological criteria, and our testing of religion by practical common sense and the empirical method, leave it in possession of its towering place in history.[481]

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[476] James, *The Varieties*, p331
[477] James, *The Varieties*, pp273-274
[478] James, *The Varieties*, pp189-216
[479] James, *The Varieties*, p358
[480] James, *The Varieties*, p358
[481] James, *The Varieties*, p377

Thus, religious experience, and the interpretations and theories it engenders, stand vindicated. They have, we may suppose – according to the standards James set out in WB – been "verified". And yet James is reluctant to say that we have thereby demonstrated the truth of religion. He supposes that his readers will insist that he has so far only demonstrated its *utility*. To get at its *truth*, he says, we must assess the phenomenon of mysticism[482].

2.4.2.2. Mystical Experiences as Perceptual Experiences

In lecture three of VRE (on 'The Reality of the Unseen') James introduces the notion of a 'sense of objective presence':

> It is as if there were in the human consciousness a sense of reality, a feeling of objective presence, a perception of what we may call 'something there', more deep and more general than any of the special and particular 'senses' by which the current psychology supposes existent realities to be originally revealed.[483]

This 'sense of objective presence', he speculates, has likely played a major role in the formation of beliefs about ghosts, gods, and other unseen entities throughout human history[484]. Many religious persons, past and present, have experienced this sense of objective presence, and have associated it with the existence of a deity. These persons, James says, "possess the objects of their belief, not in the form of mere conceptions which their intellects accept as true, but rather in the form of quasi-sensible realities directly apprehended"[485]. And as this sense of objective presence fluctuates "so the believer alternates between warmth and coldness in his faith"[486].

Now, James thinks that in mystical experiences this sense of objective presence rises to a fever pitch. Subjects of mystical experience feel that they have been "grasped and held by a superior power", and they feel that they *know* this to be the case[487]. James thinks that such experiences are analogous in some respects to sensory experiences. Like sensory experiences they come without our consent, and they take the form not of conceptions or mental images, but of "face to face presentations of what seems immediately to exist"[488]. Indeed, the impression is so strong that it is "realized with an intensity almost like that of a hallucination"[489], which, James said in PP, is "*a strictly sensational form of consciousness, as good and true a sensation as if there were a real*

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[482] James, *The Varieties*, pp377-378
[483] James, *The Varieties*, p58
[484] James, *The Varieties*, p58
[485] James, *The Varieties*, p64
[486] James, *The Varieties*, p64
[487] James, *The Varieties*, pp380-381
[488] James, *The Varieties*, p424
[489] James, *The Varieties*, p72

object there"[490]. This leads him to conclude in his lecture on 'Mysticism' that these experiences are, as a matter of psychological fact, "absolutely sensational in their epistemological quality"[491]. What he means by this is that when we observe how mystics treat their experiences – how they speak about them, and how they respond to them – we find they treat them as epistemically equivalent to sensory experiences. The accounts of mystical experience quoted by James speak of being "face to face" with God[492], of having "perceived" God[493], of being surrounded by God "like the physical atmosphere"[494], and of having heard God's voice "so clearly … that it seems my outer ear must have carried the tone"[495]. Onlookers may justly debate their epistemic status, but the subjects of mystical experience themselves can no more doubt what they have perceived than subjects of hallucination or ordinary sensation can[496].

And so, James offers the following conclusion (of which we give the first two of three parts; the third to be discussed at a later stage):

(1) Mystical states, when well developed, usually are, and have the right to be, absolutely authoritative over the individuals to whom they come.

(2) No authority emanates from them which should make it a duty for those who stand outside of them to accept their revelations uncritically.[497]

Non-mystics are under no obligation to accept mystical knowledge claims. They are perfectly entitled to assess their value by the usual "empirical methods"[498]; i.e. on the basis of the sort of verification procedures outlined above. "By their fruits ye shall know them," James says, "not by their roots."[499]

2.4.2.3. The Science of Religions

The category of religious experience is an incredibly broad one. Although these experiences can evidently contain an abundance of intellectual content, James does not embark, in VRE, upon what would surely be the mammoth task of systematizing that content. Even when he comes to

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[490] James, *The Principles*, II, p115
[491] James, *The Varieties*, p424
[492] James, *The Varieties*, p67
[493] James, *The Varieties*, p68
[494] James, *The Varieties*, p71
[495] James, *The Varieties*, p70
[496] For an illuminating discussion of James's perceptual model of religious experience see: Gale, The Divided Self of William James, pp253-272. For a contemporary defence of such a model, see: William Alston, *Perceiving God* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1991)
[497] James, *The Varieties*, p422
[498] James, *The Varieties*, p427
[499] James, *The Varieties*, p20

assess the relatively well-defined sub-category of mystical experience, he does not deign to derive explicit knowledge claims from them. However, James is far from denying the possibility of a more systematic treatment of the intellectual content of religious and mystical experience. Indeed, he thinks such a treatment is positively mandated. This task cannot be carried out by a solitary individual however, or completed in a single book. It will require a collaborative effort on the part of many academics over many generations to achieve; and James thinks it ought to follow something like the model of a natural science in its approach and methodology.

A "critical Science of Religions", James says, would compare the doctrines of the various religious traditions, and the deliverances of their respective mystics, and would attempt to "eliminate the local and the accidental" from them. This would involve removing all "historic incrustations" from them; such incrustations, we might imagine, as the notion that we must accept a particular historical figure as our saviour in order to attain salvation. It would also involve "confronting the spontaneous religious constructions with the results of natural science", and eliminating any doctrines that contradict them. Thus, we might presume, the notion of a 'young earth', and the doctrine of creationism would have to be abandoned. Proceeding in this way, a science of religions would sift out all "unworthy formulations" until it was left with "a residuum of conceptions that at least are possible". These, James says, it would then *test*, "in all the manners, whether negative or positive, by which hypotheses are ever tested"[500]. This, presumably, means subjecting them to sort of tests we discussed in section 2.4.2.1.

The Science of Religions will thus have four main goals:

i)   Cataloguing religious phenomena.

ii)   Locating a common core of religious phenomena.

iii)   Making that common core continuous with the best contemporary science.

iv)   Testing resulting religious hypotheses.

VRE, James says, is intended to be a "crumb-like" contribution to the science of religions. It catalogues various religious experiences; it locates a common core in the form of the INTP schema of mystical experience; it makes that common core continuous with science by grounding religious experience in the scientific hypothesis of subliminal consciousness (to be discussed in the following section); and it tests the resultant religious actions/theories using pragmatic/verificationist methods (i.e. the lectures on 'Conversion' and 'Saintliness'). The work of numerous scholars in the present day may be viewed as contributing to the science of religions

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[500] James, *The Varieties*, pp455-457

along the lines advocated by James. For instance, scholars at 'The Religious Experience Research Centre' work diligently to catalogue accounts of religious experience[501]; scientific models of mysticism from Walter Pahnke through Ralph Hood Jr. to Roland Griffiths (as well as more philosophical/theological projects from the likes of Stace, Smith, and Forman) build on James's INTP schema in their effort to locate a common core of religious experience[502]; work in the neuroscience of religion from the likes of Andrew Newberg, Mario Beauregard, and Patrick McNamara[503], together with the sort of naturalistic theology that frequently graces the pages of Zygon, and which is also exemplified in Buckareff's and Nagasawa's recent anthology[504], attempts to make religious hypotheses continuous with the best contemporary science; and a plethora of scientific studies subject religious experiences/practices to the kind of testing that James envisioned[505].

Jeremy Carrette and David Lamberth suggest that the notion of a science of religions is a post-hoc and largely speculative one for James. It is in some sense "superseded", they think, by his final pluralistic metaphysics[506]. In support of this contention they note that the term 'science of religions' vanishes from James's works after VRE. Our own analysis suggests a slightly different reading. We think that James remained committed to a project of this kind, and that his dropping of the term 'science of religions' reflects a shift in emphasis. We have already seen that James defines the scientific method very loosely, in terms of verification, broadly construed. In section 2.6 we shall see that this method coincides to a large extent with the pragmatic method. Indeed, James considered that the pragmatic method contained and superseded the scientific method[507]. Our suggestion is that post 1906 James came to see the appropriate method for studying religion

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[501] See the 'Publications' section of the 'Alister Hardy Research Centre' page on University of Wales website: <https://www.uwtsd.ac.uk/library/alister-hardy-religious-experience-research-centre/>

[502] See: Walter Pahnke, 'Drugs and Mysticism', *International Journal of Parapsychology*, 8 (1966), pp295-314; Ralph Hood Jr., 'The Construction and Preliminary Validation of a Measure of Reported Mystical Experience', *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, 14 (1975), pp25-41; Roland Griffiths, 'Psilocybin Can Occasion Mystical-Type Experiences Having Substantial and Sustained Personal Meaning and Spiritual Significance', *Psychopharmacology*, 187 (2006), pp268-283; Walter Terence Stace, *Mysticism and Philosophy* (London: Macmillan Press, 1960); Huston Smith, *The World's Religions* (New York: Harper Collins, 2009); *The Problem of Pure Consciousness*, ed. by Robert Forman (Oxford: OUP, 1990); *The Innate Capacity*, ed. by Robert Forman (Oxford: OUP, 1998)

[503] See: Eugene d'Aquili & Andrew Newberg, *The Mystical Mind* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1999); Mario Beauregard & Denyse O'Leary, *The Spiritual Brain* (New York: Harper Collins, 2008); Patrick McNamara, *The Neuroscience of Religious Experience* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009)

[504] *Alternative Concepts of God*, ed. by Buckareff & Nagasawa

[505] Harold G. Koenig, 'Research on Religion, Spirituality, and Mental Health: A Review', *The Canadian Journal of Psychiatry*, 54 (2009), pp283-291

[506] Jeremy Carrette & David Lamberth, 'William James and the Study of Religion'; in *Religion, Theory, Critique*, ed. by Richard King (New York: Columbia University Press, 2017) pp203-212 (208-210)

[507] *The Correspondence of William James*, ed. by Ignas K. Skrupskelis & Elizabeth M. Berkeley, 12 vols (London: University Press of Virginia, 2001), XI, p343

as pragmatic rather than exclusively scientific, and that this is why he dropped the term 'science of religions'[508]. In the next section we will investigate the third aspect of James's contribution to the science of religions; his grounding of religious experience in the scientific hypothesis of subliminal consciousness.

2.4.3. The Psychology of Religious Experience

2.4.3.1. Subliminal Consciousness

In the course of our investigation of PP, in section 2.2.1.3 (on 'The Method of Introspection'), we saw James invoke the notion of 'split-off consciousness' as part of an argument against the existence of unconscious mental states. He argued, recall, that we cannot infer that a putative mental state is unconscious from the fact that we have no consciousness of it, because it may exist in a split-off condition. Though we only mentioned it in passing, this notion of split-off consciousness is in fact vital to James's understanding of a variety of psychological phenomena; for instance, hysteria, hypnosis, alternating selves, mediumship, possession, madness, and genius. It is also, as we shall see, a vital part of his psychological account of religion.

James's initial exploration of split-off consciousness occurs in the context of a discussion of the phenomena of 'hysterical anaesthesia'. The comparatively well-known phenomenon of 'hysterical blindness' is just one species of hysterical anaesthesia, which can also affect hearing, taste, smell, and touch[509]. In James's estimation the work of Pierre Janet and Alfred Binet had shown that "during the times of anaesthesia, and coexisting with it, *sensibility to the anaesthetic parts is also there, in the form of a secondary consciousness* entirely cut off from the primary or normal one, but susceptible of being *tapped* and made to testify to its existence in various odd ways"[510]. For example, one of Janet's patients, Lucie, whenever she was engaged in conversation,

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[508] For a similar view see: David Hollinger, '"Damned for God's Glory"', in *William James and a Science of Religions*, ed. by Proudfoot, pp9-30

[509] Nowadays these symptoms would be grouped under the category of 'conversion disorder'. See: Colm Owens & Simon Dein, 'Conversion Disorder: The Modern Hysteria', *Advances in Psychiatric Treatment*, 12 (2006), pp152-157

[510] James, *The Principles*, I, p203. The relevant work of Janet is: Pierre Janet, *L'Automatisme Psychologique* (Paris: Félix Alcan, 1889). For James's contemporaneous review see: William James, 'The Hidden Self', *Scribner's Magazine*, 7 (1890), pp361-373. Reprinted in: *The Works of William James: Essays in Psychology*, ed. by Frederick Burkhardt (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 1983), pp247-268. In Binet's case, James only refers to "his articles in the Chicago Open Court, for July, August and November, 1889. Also in Revue Philosophique for1889 and '90." The relevant articles in *The Open Court* for those months would appear to be 'Proof of Double Consciousness in Hysterical Individuals', 'The Relations Between the Two Consciousness of Hysterical Individuals', 'The Hysterical Eye', and 'The Graphic Method and the Doubling of Consciousness'. All of these articles, together with three others printed in *The Open Court* in 1899, can be found in: Alfred Binet, *On Double Consciousness* (Chicago: The Open Court Publishing Company, 1896). The relevant articles in *Revue Philosophique* would appear to be 'Recherches sur les Altérations de la Conscience chez les Hystériques', 'La Vision Mentale', 'Contribution à l'Étude de la Douleur chez les Hystériques', and

was utterly unable to notice anybody except the person she was speaking to. Janet discovered

that he was able to tap into the split-off consciousness of Lucie's anaesthetic arm while she was in

this distracted state[511]. He would place a pencil in her anaesthetic hand and a piece of paper

within her reach, and would stand behind her and whisper questions. Lucie herself would show

no sign of having heard the questions, but her anaesthetic arm would respond by writing on the

piece of paper. Crucially, her arm was able to register sensory stimuli in this state, and to respond

to questions accordingly; i.e. it would correctly identify in its written response how many times it

had been touched, etc. In some cases, the written responses were unmistakably intelligent. All in

all, the phenomenon appears to have been strikingly similar to what we observe in patients with

split-brain conditions[512].

Perhaps even more striking as a demonstration of split-off consciousness was the phenomenon of

what James called 'alternating selves'[513]. In these cases the subject's normal waking personality

would be replaced by an entirely different one for extended periods of time. When the primary

personality regained control, it would have no knowledge of the activity of the secondary

personality. James cites the case of one Ansel Bourne of Greene, Rhode Island, a carpenter by

profession, who one day inexplicably boarded a horse-car to Pennsylvania, declared that his name

was A. J. Brown, and set up a small grocery store in Norristown. Two months later his primary

personality regained control and he awoke with a fright, totally unable to recall his activities in the

intervening period[514]. Other cases of alternating selves, such as M. Janet's patient Leonie, were

more complex. Leonie had three personalities, each variously anaesthetic, each variously aware

of the other personalities' existence. Thus, James says, "Leonie 1 knows only of herself; Leonie 2,

of herself and of Leonie 1; Leonie 3 knows of herself and both the others. Leonie 1 has a visual

consciousness; Leonie 2 has one both visual and auditory; in Leonie 3 it is at once visual, auditory,

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'Recherches sur les Mouvements Volontaires dans l'Anesthésie Hystérique' from 1889, and 'La Concurrence des États Psychologiques' from 1890. Full references in the bibliography.

[511] James, *The Principles*, I, pp203-204

[512] This phenomenon generally occurs when patients have to have their corpus collosum severed in order to reduce seizure activity. In such cases the two hemispheres of the patient's brain continue to function as relatively independent entities, each with its own preferences/desires, etc. The right hemisphere is unable to communicate through speech, but can communicate through gestures/writing, etc. See: Michael Gazzaniga, 'The Split Brain in Man', *Scientific American*, 217 (1967), pp24-29. See also: Graham Chedd & John Angier, 'Severed Corpus Callosum', online video recording, YouTube, 25th June 2008, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lfGwsAdS9Dc> [accessed: 4/11/2019]

[513] In EMS he would describe this as the phenomenon of 'multiple personality'. The cases he describes would undoubtedly fall under the modern category of 'dissociative identity disorder'.

[514] James, *The Principles*, I, pp391-393. For an account of James's hypnotism of Ansel Bourne see: Richard Hodgson, 'III. A Case of Double Consciousness', *Proceedings of the Society for Psychical Research*, 7 (1891), pp221-255 (pp241-249). Excerpts reprinted in: *The Works of William James: Essays in Psychology*, ed. by Burkhardt, p269.

and tactile."[515] James speculates that the alternate personalities in such cases must correspond with different "system[s] of cerebral paths" in the brain, that are somehow able to throw one another out of gear and gain predominance alternately[516].

James thought that cases of mediumship constituted yet another example of split-off consciousness. In his view such cases were fundamentally similar to those of 'alternating selves', because the medium's primary personality would be temporarily replaced by that of a 'control' – usually supposed to be the spirit of a diseased human being – who would provide readings for the sitters. James had an ingenious – though in his view partial – explanation for this phenomenon. He had already argued earlier in PP that human experience is significantly shaped by selective attention; that we only attend to a very small range of the thoughts and sensations available to us[517]. He went on to suggest that those thoughts and sensations which pass *un*attended do not immediately become non-existent or unconscious, but rather continue to exist consciously in the subliminal region of the individual's mind. Once there, he speculated, the subliminal consciousness could actually organize them into an intelligible scheme; even infer new information from them. Mediums, James hypothesised, were individuals who had unusually porous boundaries between their primary and subliminal consciousnesses. They were able to enter a trance state, more or less at will, in which their subconscious selves, taking the form of 'controls', would present details about their sitters which their primary selves alone could not have divined[518].

Finally, in the penultimate chapter of PP, James discussed the phenomenon of hypnosis. There he argued in favour of a particular rendition of the 'suggestion-theory' of hypnosis, according to which hypnotism consists in bringing the hypnotic subject into a special 'hypnotic state' or 'trance' characterised by heightened suggestibility, and by a susceptibility to the splitting-off of consciousness[519]. Some of the more remarkable phenomena of hypnosis, such as those of post-hypnotic suggestion, were to be explained in terms of these key features of the trance state.

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[515] James, *The Principles*, I, p388
[516] James, *The Principles*, I, p399
[517] James, *The Principles*, I, pp284-290
[518] James, *The Principles*, I, pp393-400. This, we have just said, only constituted a *partial* explanation of the phenomenon for James. The other part involved an appeal to the medium's ability to access the 'memories' of deceased human beings left behind in the mother-sea of consciousness. These memories, however, were said to be realized or instantiated by "system[s] of physical traces" in the natural world; chiefly by the brains of the deceased human beings' friends and family members (See: William James, 'Report on Mrs. Piper's Hodgson Control' in *The Works of William James: Essays in Psychical Research*, ed. by Frederick Burkhardt, pp357-359). All such phenomena together with the mechanisms behind them were regarded by James as natural, and in principle investigable using the methods of science.
[519] James, *The Principles*, II, pp598-601

Suggestions made to subjects in the trance state would tend to take hold, and would come to rest in portions of split-off consciousness, where they would remain dormant – though still conscious – until such time as the operator called for them to be enacted[520]. In James's Lowell Lectures on *Exceptional Mental States*, he utilized the suggestion-theory of hypnosis as part of his explanation of hysteria. He affirmed the hypothesis of Frederic Myers and others that hysteria was "a disease of the hypnotic stratum"[521]. The idea here was that hysteric patients, as a result of nervous exhaustion, would enter a kind of fugue state (essentially similar to a hypnotic trance), and would thereby become susceptible to the auto-suggestion of various hysteric symptoms. James surmised that an essentially similar mechanism was likely behind phenomena such as witchcraft, demoniacal possession, mediumship, and multiple personality. He grouped all of these phenomena together under the category of 'alternating personality'[522]. All of them, he thought, involved the subject's possession of a porous boundary between the primary and subliminal consciousness.

Now, there was a widespread belief in James's day that the subconscious was home only to vague and nonsensical impressions[523]. This belief is well expressed in a letter from Ward to James upon the former's reading of VRE:

> I do not, of course, object to your taking the subconscious for granted, but I feel that you go too far in accepting Myers's views as so much "gospel truth." So far as I can see the entire presentative content of subconsciousness is derivative: it consists, as you seem to admit, of memories or suggestions. It would, I think, be substantially true to say: "There is nothing in subconsciousness – in the way of idea at least – that was not first in consciousness."[524]

James could not agree with Ward. He believed that the subconscious was not just a repository of impressions, but an intelligent, interested, agent. Cases of alternating personality proved as much. They proved that *all* consciousness, split-off or otherwise, partook of the five characteristics James had outlined in PP; all consciousness thus tended to take a personal form, and to function as a selecting agency. This is why the split-off consciousness of mediums took the form of 'controls'; i.e. a *personal* form. It is why the automatisms produced by split-off

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[520] James, *The Principles*, II, pp613-615

[521] Eugene Taylor, *William James on Exceptional Mental States* (Amherst: The University of Massachusetts Press, 1984) p59

[522] Taylor, *William James on Exceptional Mental States*, p73

[523] Indeed, this belief persists into the present day, with Ruth Anna Putnam for instance saying that the subconscious self is "too limited as well as too fragmented" to do the work James requires of it. See: Ruth Anna Putnam, 'Varieties of Experience and Pluralities of Perspective', in *William James and the Varieties of Religious Experience*, ed. by Carrette, pp149-160 (p158)

[524] *The Correspondence of William James*, ed. by Ignas K. Skrupskelis & Elizabeth M. Berkeley, 12 vols (London: University Press of Virginia, 2002) X, p87

consciousnesses so often demonstrated intelligence. "It is … to no 'automatism' in the mechanical sense that such acts are due", James insisted: "a self presides over them, a split-off, limited and buried, but yet a fully conscious self"[525]. His core hypothesis in EMS was that this subconscious intelligence, together with its automatisms, could be utilized in constructive and evolutive ways. In the next section we will see that this hypothesis formed a key part of his psychological explanation of religious experience in VRE.

2.4.3.2. The Divided Self, and the Process of Its Unification

In lectures four to seven of VRE James describes two distinct temperamental dispositions of human beings; that of the 'healthy mind' and that of the 'sick soul'[526]. In the religious sphere, these temperamental dispositions correspond with two forms of religious life; that of the 'once-born' and that of the 'twice-born'. The healthy minded naturally find the universe to be fundamentally satisfactory, and given the right circumstances, develop their religious propensities steadily and gradually without arrest or frustration. The sick souls naturally find the universe to be fundamentally unsatisfactory, and, even given the right circumstances, must undergo a dramatic experience – must be 'born again' – in order to develop their religious propensities fully. The majority of religious geniuses, James thinks, belong in the twice-born camp; their lives are beset with bouts of melancholy, with temptations and conflicts, and with bizarre and transformative experiences[527].

Now, in lecture eight of VRE, on 'The Divided Self and the Process of Its Unification', James suggests that "[t]he psychological basis of the twice-born character seems to be a discordancy or heterogeneity in the native temperament of the subject, an incompletely unified moral and intellectual constitution."[528] Having an incompletely unified moral and intellectual constitution – i.e. a divided self – means having multiple sets of contradictory impulses, desires, and ideas. Thus, one's religious impulses may contradict one's carnal impulses, one's intellectual impulses may contradict one's reproductive/child-rearing impulses, one's moral impulses may contradict one's survival impulses, etc. The unification of a divided self, James tells us, is typically achieved by an individual identifying the whole of their self with one set of these contradictory impulses, and by becoming unresponsive to the opposing set of impulses. Thus, one might achieve unification by identifying with one's carnal impulses and becoming unresponsive to one's religious impulses, or by identifying with one's intellectual impulses and becoming unresponsive to one's

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[525] James, *The Principles*, I, p209
[526] James, *The Varieties*, pp78-126; pp127-165
[527] James, *The Varieties*, p169
[528] James, *The Varieties*, p167

reproductive/child-rearing impulses, etc. In VRE, James is of course concerned exclusively with cases of religious self-unification; i.e. cases where one identifies with one's religious impulses.

The process of unification, James tells us, often involves dramatic changes in an individual's personality; one's emotional centre of gravity completely shifts, one experiences a radical reduction in fear and anxiety, is released from addictions that have plagued one for years, etc. In some cases it almost seems as though a whole new personality has replaced or subsumed the old one. This leads him to speculate, in the first of his lectures on 'Conversion', that the process of unification may involve an individual harnessing latent "possibilities of character" that lie hidden in the subliminal region of consciousness[529]. The process generally proceeds in something like the following manner. The possibility of conversion is suggested (or auto-suggested) to an individual; the idea undergoes a process of subconscious "incubation" in the individual's mind, combining with material furnished from perception and memory to produce a content that is uniquely meaningful and motivating to that individual; that content bursts forth into the individual's conscious mind in the form of an automatism such as a religious experience[530]. This of course recalls some of the ideas James discussed in PP, in EMS, and in his essays in psychical research. What he appears to be suggesting is that, i) the process of unifying a divided self consists in co-opting the resources of one's subliminal selves in order to bolster or reconstruct one's primary consciousness, and ii) the religious experiences which catalyse this process are themselves automatisms which have their source in the subliminal region of consciousness.

This pattern of experience – of division and subsequent unification through the utilization of subliminal resources – although typified by the twice-born, is not unique to them. James derives a schema from it which he thinks applies to the religious life of human beings *generally*. Religion, he says in his concluding lecture, consists of two parts:

(1) An uneasiness … a sense that there is something wrong about us as we naturally stand.

(2) Its solution … a sense that we are saved from the wrongness by making proper connection with the higher powers.[531]

Elaborating on this schema, James tells us that "making proper connection with the higher powers" consists in identifying one's whole being with a "germinal higher part" of one's self (the locus of one's religious impulses) that is "*continuous with a MORE of the same quality*"[532]. This

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[529] James, *The Varieties*, p189
[530] James, *The Varieties,* pp205-211
[531] James, *The Varieties*, p508
[532] James, *The Varieties*, p508

'MORE', he says, "whatever it may be on its *farther* side … is on its *hither* side the subconscious continuation of our conscious life."[533] It is, in other words, nothing other than the "*subconscious self*"[534]; i.e. the subliminal self of PP and EMS. James considers that the subconscious self, at the time of his delivering VRE, is "a well accredited psychological entity"[535], and that "[s]tarting thus with a recognized psychological fact as our basis, we seem to preserve a contact with science which the ordinary theologian lacks"[536]. He adds the following:

> At the same time the theologian's contention that the religious man is moved by an external power is vindicated, for it is one of the peculiarities of invasions from the subconscious region to take on objective appearances, and to suggest to the Subject an external control. In the religious life the control is felt as 'higher'; but since on our hypothesis it is primarily the higher faculties of our own hidden minds which are controlling, the sense of union with the power beyond us is a sense of something, not merely apparently, but literally true.[537]

The wider subconscious self which we encounter in religious experience is felt as external. On James's hypothesis this is perfectly understandable, because it *is* external in a sense; in the sense, namely, of being ejective to the primary consciousness. Moreover, James, says, it is felt as an external '*control*'. His use of the word 'control' here is of course no accident. Just as the automatisms of mediums are mediated by a 'control', so religious automatisms are mediated by a 'control'; i.e. by an entity that seems to possess personality and intelligence. In the latter case however, the control is felt as 'higher'; it is not the mere spirit of a deceased human being, but the spirit of *God* we are encountering. Finally, our sense of union with the subconscious self is also perfectly understandable on James's account, because we *really are* unified with it. It is realized – at least on its hither side – by the same *brain* as our primary self; it is contingent upon "system[s] of cerebral paths" that are literally connected with those upon which our primary self is contingent[538].

2.4.3.3. Religion as a Biological Function

Lastly, we want to explore James's notion that "from the biological point of view" religion is "an essential organ of our life, performing a function which no other portion of our nature can so

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[533] James, *The Varieties*, p512
[534] James, *The Varieties*, p511
[535] James, *The Varieties*, p511
[536] James, *The Varieties*, p512
[537] James, *The Varieties*, pp512-513
[538] For a contemporary discussion of the relation between James's theory of subliminal consciousness and the broader study of religion see: Ann Taves, 'The Fragmentation of Consciousness and the Varieties of Religious Experience', in *William James and A Science of Religions*, ed. by Proudfoot, pp48-72

successfully fulfil"[539]. It is natural to frame this discussion around James's repudiation of 'The Survival Theory' of religion in the concluding lecture of VRE. The survival theory holds that religion is a by-product of a primeval type of thought which has somehow managed to survive even after that primeval type of thought has become obsolete. The primeval type of thought in question was one that postulated "personal forces" with "individual needs and claims" as the causes of natural events[540]. Thus, our ancestors would postulate personal forces behind the rain, the volcano, the forest, etc., and would attempt to "coerce the spiritual powers" behind these phenomena "and get them on our side"[541]. Religion, according to the survival theory, is an outgrowth of this type of thought. Just as our primitive ancestors postulated personal forces behind individual natural phenomena, so religion postulates a personal force behind nature as a whole. But whereas the general belief in personal forces has vanished, the belief in God remains. Religion, therefore, is not an adaptation, but a by-product; and a by-product, moreover, of something that might not have been particularly useful in the first place.

We can already guess at the outlines of James's response to the survival theory. Religion, he said in the 'Saintliness' lectures, had been vindicated from the point of view of utility. Not only does it yield beneficial fruits for individuals – helping them to overcome depression, sinfulness, and addiction – but it serves a vital social function as a leaven of moral progress. Given the foregoing, we may add to these another function; namely that of uniting divided selves[542]. That it possesses these functions is enough to refute the survival theory, and to demonstrate that religion has "enormous biological worth"[543]. But this does not go far enough for James. So far from being a by-product, he thinks, religion's worth may be *primarily* biological. In support he cites Leuba:

> The truth of the matter can be put in this way: *God is not known, he is not understood; he is used* – sometimes as meat-purveyor, sometimes as moral support, sometimes as friend, sometimes as an object of love. If he proves himself useful, the religious consciousness asks for no more than that. Does God really exist? How does

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[539] James, *The Varieties*, p52

[540] James, *The Varieties*, p119

[541] James, *The Varieties*, p495

[542] Patrick McNamara, in *The Neuroscience of Religious Experience*, finds this to be the primary function of religion. He cashes this out in the following terms. Biological evolution produces human beings with incompletely integrated executive selves, susceptible to selfishness, free-riding, and violence. Religion is one of the means by which human beings integrate their executive selves: "Religions accomplish this feat by promoting a cognitive process I call decentering. In this cognitive process, the "Self" (i.e., the Self-construct or the Self-concept) is temporarily taken "off-line" or decoupled from its control over attentional and behavioural goals of the individual while a search is conducted in semantic memory or a suppositional space (or in a "possible worlds" space) for a more ideal or complex Self-concept that can better match the needs and behavioural goals of the individual." See: McNamara, p. xii

[543] James, *The Varieties*, p509

he exist? What is he? are so many irrelevant questions. Not God, but life, more life,
a larger, richer, more satisfying life, is, in the last analysis, the end of religion.[544]

James, although he may not agree with Leuba that religion is a *purely* adaptive, agrees that it
must be counted "amongst the most important biological functions of mankind"[545]. He agrees,
furthermore, that religion itself is to some extent a *product* of adaptation. Those religions best
adapted to serving our "vital [i.e. biological] needs" survive; those which are poorly adapted
disappear[546]. Religion, he concludes, "cannot be a mere anachronism and survival, but must exert
a permanent function, whether she be with or without intellectual content, and whether, if she
have any, it be true or false."[547]

2.4.4. The Metaphysics of Religious Experience

2.4.4.1. Over-belief

According to James's psychological account of religious experience the 'more' which we
encounter in religious experience is, on its *hither* side, our own subconscious self (or one such self
at any rate). However, what it is on its *farther* side – i.e. where the *limits* or *boundaries* of that
subconscious self are – is an open question, to be settled, he says, by our own particular 'over-
belief'. This notion of over-belief is an important one for James. The first use of this term occurs
in the preface of WB, but the concept clearly has its roots in 'The Sentiment of Rationality', first
delivered in 1880. It is, we suggest, James's chosen translation for what he there calls
'Aberglaube'. Speaking about the decision between options for belief that cannot be settled by
evidence, he says the following:

> In short, it is almost certain that personal temperament will here make itself felt, and
> that although all men will insist on being spoken to by the universe in some way, few
> will insist on being spoken to in just the same way. We have here, in short, the
> sphere of what Matthew Arnold likes to call *Aberglaube*, legitimate, inexpungable,
> yet doomed to eternal variations and disputes.[548]

The word 'aberglaube', which was popularised by Goethe, is generally translated into English as
'superstition'. However, as Matthew Arnold remarks, Goethe used the term without the negative

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[544] James, *The Varieties*, pp506-507. This quote is from: James Leuba, 'The Contents of the Religious
Consciousness', *The Monist*, 11 (1901), pp536-573 (pp571-572)
[545] James, *The Varieties*, p506
[546] James, *The Varieties*, p331
[547] James, *The Varieties*, p507. We note that James's claims regarding religion's biological function/value in
no way undermine his critique of 'medical materialism' in the first lecture of VRE. Medical materialism
judges the cognitive value of religion based on its biological conditions. Here James is bracketing the
question of cognitive value, and assessing the biological value of religion in its own right.
[548] James, *The Will to Believe*, p89

connotations that attach to the English 'superstition', in the simple sense of "*extra-belief*, belief beyond what is certain and verifiable"[549]. Thus, James's use of the term here in WB, following shortly after his exposition of the will-to-believe doctrine, reads naturally as denoting beliefs which result from exercises of the will to believe; that is, beliefs which cannot be settled by evidence, and whose adoption is forced and momentous. In VRE, we contend, James is using the term 'over-belief' in just the same way. Where his evidence-based psychological account of religious experience ends, he says, over-beliefs begin:

> Here the over-beliefs begin: here mysticism and the conversion-rapture and Vedantism and transcendental idealism bring in their monistic interpretations and tell us that the finite self rejoins the absolute self, for it was always one with God and identical with the soul of the world. Here the prophets of all the different religions come with their visions, voices, raptures, and other openings, supposed by each to vindicate his own peculiar faith.[550]

Psychology can tell us that religious experiences have their source in a subconscious self, but it cannot tell us what the limits or boundaries of that self are. Those limits may be confined to a system of 'cerebral paths' in the brain like the alternate selves of dissociative identity disorder (fig. 17); they may encompass a larger part of the brain and nervous system (fig. 18); or they may extend beyond the brain and nervous system altogether. If the latter, they may encompass only a larger portion of the physical universe (fig. 19); they may extend to the universe as a whole (fig. 20); or they may extend beyond the universe, into a supernatural reality (fig. 21). If they do so extend into a supernatural reality, that reality may be identified with the God of Christianity, the God of Judaism, the God of Islam, and so on. Each of these options for belief differs pragmatically from the others. Depending on which we believe to be true, we are likely act very differently[551]. In the next sub-section, we will examine James's preferred option, together with its distinctive pragmatic consequences.

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[549] Matthew Arnold, *The Complete Prose Works of Matthew Arnold*, ed. Robert Super, 11 vols (Ann Arbour, 1968) VI, p212

[550] James, *The Varieties*, pp513-514

[551] If, for instance, the 'more' is confined to a system of cerebral paths, insights and experiences drawn from it may be no more profound or valuable than those of our waking consciousness. If it encompasses some larger part of the brain and nervous system then we might attribute deeper wisdom and inclusiveness to it. If it extends into the universe beyond us then we may even expect it to exercise some providential influence on our lives. And if it is identified with the God of a particular religion, then we may suppose the doctrines/practices of that religion to have special significance and power.
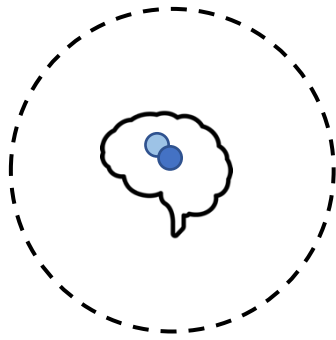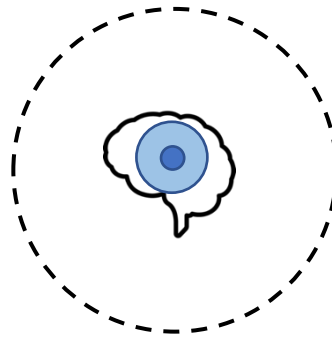
Fig. 17   **Fig. 18**   **Fig. 19**
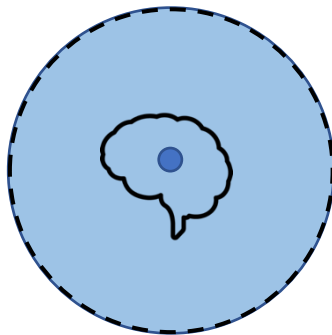
Fig. 20   **Fig. 21**
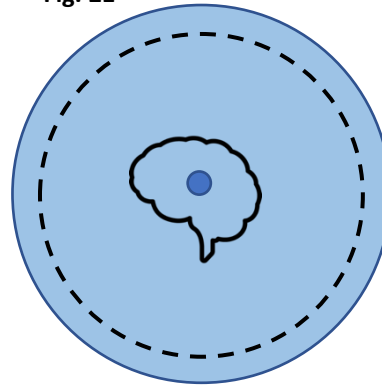
2.4.4.2. James's Own Over-belief

James states his own over-belief as follows:

> The further limits of our being plunge, it seems to me, into an altogether other dimension of existence from the sensible and merely 'understandable' world. Name it the mystical region, or the supernatural region, whichever you choose. … God is the natural appellation, for us Christians at least, for the supreme reality, so I will call this higher part of the universe by the name of God.[552]

This is an ambiguous statement. James seems clearly to suggest that the boundaries of the subconscious self extend beyond the brain and nervous system, but it is less clear whether he thinks that they extend beyond the universe. On the one hand he says that they plunge into a "supernatural" dimension; but on the other he seems to count that dimension as a "higher part of the universe". The following consideration may help to clear this matter up. James, in the above statement, uses the terms 'mystical' and 'supernatural' interchangeably. Now, each of these terms may be said to have both a technical and a colloquial sense. In their technical senses they are not, in fact, interchangeable. 'Supernatural' is opposed to 'natural', and denotes a portion of reality that is ontically discontinuous with nature, whereas 'mystical' refers to a certain aspect or

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[552] James, *The Varieties*, pp515-516

category of human spiritual traditions, practices, and experiences[553]. In their colloquial senses meanwhile, both of these terms have roughly the same meaning; namely something like 'mysterious' or 'otherworldly'. We reason therefore that in using these terms interchangeably James meant them in their colloquial rather than their technical sense. In this case they do not necessarily imply a traditional form of supernaturalism.

Next James addresses the pragmatic meaning of his over-belief; that is, "what sensations we are to expect from it, and what reactions we must prepare":

> [T]he unseen region in question is not merely ideal, for it produces effects in the real world. When we commune with it, work is actually done upon our finite personality, for we are turned into new men, and consequences in the way of conduct follow in the natural world upon our regenerative change.[554]

He elaborates on this theme:

> We and God have business with each other; and in opening ourselves to his influence our deepest destiny is fulfilled. The universe, at those parts of it which our personal being constitutes, takes a turn genuinely for the worse or for the better in proportion as each one of us fulfils or evades God's demands.[555]

In other words, the sensations James expects are saving experiences and the regenerative changes they bring; the reactions he must prepare are an openness to God's influence and a willingness to meet his demands. He notes that this account, as it stands, makes human beings' "personal centres of energy" the sole loci of God's influence. Ultimately, he thinks, such an account does not go far enough:

> A good hypothesis in science must have other properties than those of the phenomenon it is immediately invoked to explain, otherwise it is not prolific enough. God, meaning only what enters into the religious man's experience of union, falls short of being a hypothesis of this more useful order. He needs to enter into wider cosmic relations in order to justify the subject's absolute confidence and peace.[556]

God, James thinks, in order to have some pragmatic meaning over and above that of being a putative source of religious experience, must have influence beyond the human psyche; he must enter into "wider cosmic relations" of some sort. Just what these cosmic relations are, James does not venture to hypothesize at this stage. We will explore this question in greater detail in chapter 3 (section 3.3).

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[553] VRE was, of course, instrumental in establishing this technical sense of the term 'mystical'.
[554] James, *The Varieties*, p516
[555] James, *The Varieties*, pp516-517
[556] James, *The Varieties*, pp517-518

2.4.4.3. From Theistic Naturalism to Piecemeal Supernaturalism

James's Gifford Lectures consisted in two courses; each course containing ten lectures. Thus, the first course, up to and including the second lecture on 'Conversion', was delivered in 1901, and the second course, from 'Saintliness' to the 'Conclusions', was delivered in 1902. James remarks in the preface to VRE that he had originally intended only the first course to be concerned with the psychology of religion, while the second course was to be primarily "metaphysical". In the end however the "growth of the psychological matter … resulted in the second subject being postponed entirely"[557]. Only in the concluding lecture and the postscript, he says, does he touch on those topics which he had originally planned to address in the metaphysical course of lectures. The concluding lecture and the postscript are devoted almost entirely to an account of James's over-belief concerning religious experience. We think it reasonable, therefore, to suppose that the metaphysical course of lectures, had they been completed as planned, would have consisted in a much fuller and lengthier exposition of that over-belief[558]. In a notebook containing James's original plan for the second course of Gifford Lectures we find the following intriguing memorandum concerning part of their prospective content:

> The God of theistic naturalism will, then, fill the requirements of our total nature.
> The point is to establish him upon the three lines of 1) experience of his presence; 2) faith; 3) definition of his nature.[559]

This passage occurs on folios 6-7 of the relevant notebook. A blank sheet of paper is pasted over the upper three-quarters of folio 6, and the folios immediately preceding and following it contain notes on unrelated topics. As such, we must take it more or less on its own terms. There is however one other brief discussion in the same notebook that appears to be related. On folios 18 to 20 James outlines three different ways of conceiving of the relationship between nature and 'the Ideal'. The first way is that of "naturalistic pluralism", which says that the world is becoming increasingly ideal, but that this increase is not necessary or guaranteed. The second way is that of dualism, which says that the ideal principle is opposed to an obstructive principle, but that the former is guaranteed to be victorious. And the third is that of monism, which says that nature is

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[557] James, *The Varieties*, p. v

[558] A ten-point plan for the second course of lectures in James's notebooks would seem to confirm us in this supposition. See: *The Works of William James: The Varieties of Religious Experience*, ed. by Burkhardt, p493. Many of the points relate explicitly to James's metaphysics of radical empiricism/pluralistic pantheism. For an enlightening discussion on this topic, see: Lamberth, *William James and the Metaphysics of Experience*, pp106-110

[559] *The Works of William James: The Varieties of Religious Experience*, ed. by Burkhardt, p492.

already wholly ideal, and that the apparently unideal parts are illusory[560]. After providing this outline, James says the following:

> Evolutionistic optimism (barring the final dissolution of the world which it must now predict) is an example of the first type. When combined with some sort of idealism or panpsychism, à la Paulsen, … it may merge into the second type; and here apparently my own theistic way of taking the world would find vaguely a place.[561]

James here identifies his position as a form of "naturalistic pluralism" that incorporates "panpsychism" and "theism". Significantly, he locates this position alongside that of Paulsen, who, as we saw in chapter 1, he identified as an archetypal exponent of naturalism. He names Platonism as an example of the dualistic conception of the relation between nature and the ideal, and absolutism as an example of the monistic conception. We take it that traditional theism would also be an example of the dualistic conception. In this case, James, in saying that the naturalistic pluralistic conception combined with panpsychism "may merge into" the dualistic conception, would seem to be suggesting that naturalistic pluralism, by incorporating a doctrine of panpsychism, is able to accommodate a non-traditional form of theism. This, we contend, makes perfect sense, for a doctrine of panpsychism allows the naturalistic pluralist to identify the divine consciousness with the 'mind' or 'soul' of some portion of the natural world.

Thus, it seems that James had originally planned to defend a doctrine of 'theistic *naturalism*' in his second course of Gifford lectures. And yet, when he came to write the postscript for the final version of VRE, he classified his over-belief as 'piecemeal *supernaturalism*'. In this section, we aim to suggest an explanation for this change of heart. This explanation begins, we contend, just where our own thesis began, with James Ward's Aberdeen Gifford Lectures on *Naturalism and Agnosticism*. James, we know, was greatly influenced by Ward's view[562]. He wrote the following in a letter to Ward dated August 1899:

> [I]t is a great book, and if I mistake not, it will be recognized as marking the termination of one stage, and the beginning of another, in English philosophical literature. "Naturalism" or scientificism will linger in the by-ways, but on the highways I don't see how it can survive … The whole thing has been a great help to me about my second Gifford course, which in many respects is planned to cover similar ground…[563]

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[560] We shall revisit James's notion of 'the Ideal' and its relation to nature in chapter 3 (section 3.3.1.2).

[561] *The Works of William James: The Varieties of Religious Experience*, ed. by Burkhardt, p498

[562] James's use of Ward's lectures as a textbook for his 1902-1903 course on 'Philosophy of Nature' give some indication of the high esteem in which he held them. See: note 267.26 in *The Works of William James: Manuscript Lectures and Notes*, ed. by Frederick Burkhardt (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 1988), p502

[563] *The Correspondence of William James*, ed. by Skrupskelis & Berkeley, IX, p15

In the memorandum from his notebook James planned to establish a doctrine of "theistic naturalism". But in his letter to Ward he supposed that naturalism had been defeated, and identified it with scientificism, a position more or less defined in terms of its aberration and excess. This leads us to an intriguing hypothesis. Namely, that James had originally planned to call his position 'theistic naturalism', recognizing perhaps, as later commentators have recognized, that given his belief in a finite God, existing within the natural world, this would seem to be an apt description. However, upon reading Ward's *Naturalism and Agnosticism*, a book which he expected to be widely read and epoch-making, he decided against it[564]. He considered that Ward had once and for all established an austere and restrictive definition for naturalism. Using that term now could only result in confusion. It was no longer fit for his purpose[565].

The question is, what aspect of naturalism – as defined by Ward – did James object to? What made him define himself, in contradistinction to that doctrine, as a 'piecemeal supernaturalist'? The answer, we submit, is suggested by James's discussion of piecemeal supernaturalism in the postscript of VRE, and it has to do with the issue of causal closure. There, James tells us that 'piecemeal supernaturalism' is to be distinguished from 'refined supernaturalism'. For the latter, "the world of the ideal has no efficient causality, and never bursts into the world of phenomena"; while for the former, there is "no intellectual difficulty in mixing the ideal and the real worlds together by interpolating influences from the ideal region among the forces that causally determine the real world's details"[566]. Piecemeal supernaturalism therefore involves a violation of CCP, which, according to Ward's definition, entails a breach with naturalism. It is this, we contend, that caused James to define himself, somewhat reluctantly, as a supernaturalist:

> Notwithstanding my own inability to accept either popular Christianity or scholastic theism, I *suppose* that my belief that in communion with the ideal new force comes into the world, and new departures are made here below, *subjects me* to being classed among the supernaturalists of the piecemeal or crasser type.[567] [our emphasis]

Now, as we have already seen, the 'ideal', 'supernatural', or 'mystical' region, is, for James, a "higher part of the universe". It is to be interpreted, we suggest, not in dualistic terms, as a

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[564] This hypothesis would seem to imply that the letter to Ward was written after the memorandum on the Gifford Lectures. The former is dated August 1899, and the latter *circa* 1900. We have been unable to ascertain a more precise date for the memorandum.

[565] This of course gives perspective to Roy Wood Sellars's comment that 'mechanicalism' had "forced a procrustean bed upon naturalism", and had given it "a false task and ideal"[565]. It might have had a powerful ally in William James; instead it was abandoned, temporarily at least, to the by-ways of philosophy. There is perhaps a lesson here for contemporary naturalists. If they want their outlook to survive they may wish to consider a movement in the direction of liberality.

[566] James, *The Varieties*, p521

[567] James, *The Varieties*, p521

substance ontically discontinuous with nature, but in broadly emergentist terms, as per James's doctrine of the soul in PP. This, we note, accords perfectly well with James's final statement concerning his overbelief on the penultimate page of the postscript:

> It [God/the Ideal] might conceivably even be only a larger and more godlike self, of which the present self would then be but the mutilated expression, and the universe might conceivably be a collection of such selves, of different degrees of inclusiveness, with no absolute unity realized in it at all.[568]

The ideal, supernatural, or mystical region is, for James, a larger and more godlike self, standing to the physical universe – or rather to a portion of it – as the human self stands to the human body. Its possessing causal power does not therefore involve a violation of the causal closure of *nature*, but only of the causal closure of the *physical*; a principle which, as we argued in chapter 1, is inessential to naturalism. This, at any rate, is our contention. We concede that it cannot be definitively established from VRE alone, but it will, we think, emerge as an increasingly plausible interpretation in what follows[569].

2.4.5. Conclusions

The Varieties is a pivotal text in our interpretation of James. It is here, for the first time, that James shows himself to be a bona fide religious realist. In MPML *belief* in God had played a significant role, but God's actual *existence* was scarcely an issue. In VRE on the other hand, James explicitly takes the view that God is a *real being* with *real causal power*, capable not only of communing with human beings through religious experiences, but also of entering into "wider cosmic relations". Here, if anywhere in James's work, there is a prima facie conflict with naturalism. But whether we take this conflict to be real or superficial very much depends on how we understand James's concept of God. Recall Owen Flanagan's suggestion in chapter 1 that religion only entails conflict with naturalism insofar as it holds the following theses:

> (i) there exists a 'supernatural being or beings' or 'power(s)' outside the natural world; (ii) this 'being' or 'power' has causal commerce with the world; (iii) the

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[568] James, *The Varieties*, pp525-526

[569] We note that James's discussion of refined and piecemeal supernaturalism, with its juxtaposition of 'the ideal world' and 'the world of phenomena', is framed in Kantian terms. As James says, refined supernaturalists "obey the Kantian direction enough to bar out ideal entities from interfering causally in the course of phenomenal events" (See: James, *The Varieties*, p520). It might therefore be thought that an adequate analysis of James's piecemeal supernaturalism requires more extensive reference to Kant. However, Kant's conception of the noumenal, which by definition precludes classification in terms drawn from experience, is utterly antithetical to James's philosophy, with its foundational commitment to MTRE and MTPE. As such James's conception of 'the ideal region' can have nothing in common with Kant's conception of the noumenal. We suggest that entering into dialogue with Kant's famously abstruse system at this stage would be of very limited value for the purposes of this thesis.

grounds for belief in both the 'supernatural being' and its causal commerce cannot be seen, discovered, or inferred by way of any known and reliable epistemic method.[570]

James, to be sure, holds that God exists and that he has causal commerce with the natural world. He may also be said to hold that God's existence cannot be discovered using reliable epistemic methods, if by 'reliable epistemic methods' we mean exclusively the methods of contemporary natural science. What is less clear however is whether he holds God to exist '*outside the natural world*'. If our arguments in this section have been convincing, this conclusion will be in doubt. If, as we contend, James's God exists *within* the natural world, then his position is not necessarily in conflict with naturalism. It entails the rejection of CCP rather than CCN. In which case James should be classified, according to our schema, as a radical religious naturalist.

Leaving aside this key ontological issue, we have seen that VRE embodies James's continued commitment to methodological naturalism. He endeavours throughout to maintain "a contact with science", employing the methods of psychology; developing a thoroughly naturalistic psychological account of religious experience; and proposing a 'Science of Religions' that would utilize the methods of science to catalogue, refine, and test religious experiences and hypotheses[571]. In all of these respects, *The Varieties of Religious Experience* is a profoundly naturalistic text. The fact that the subject matter is religion, and that the author ultimately adopts a stance of religious realism, only accentuates this point.

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[570] Flanagan, 'Varieties of Naturalism', in *The Oxford Handbook of Religion and Science*, ed. by Clayton, p433
[571] Bennett Ramsay is one of the few interpreters to assign a central place to the notion of a science of religions in James's philosophy of religion. He reckons that James's proposal amounts to "a kind of naturalistic theory of religion", but does not expand upon this in any detail. See: Ramsay, p86.

2.5.   Essays in Radical Empiricism

Following his return to America after the Gifford Lectures, James quickly began to entertain ideas for a new book project. In it, he intended to address many of the themes he had originally planned to cover in his second course of Gifford Lectures. The book was to be called *The Many and the One*, and would expound a "system of tychistic and pluralistic philosophy of pure experience"[572]. Although the book never came to fruition, his 1902 lecture notes for a new course on 'The Philosophy of Nature' give some inkling of the ideas he was germinating at this time. In them, he devoted lengthy discussions to the doctrines of panpsychism and 'tychism' ("Peirce's suggestion [that] order results from chance-coming, and survival of the more coherent"), and attempted to formulate a "description of the world as a multitude of moments of experience"[573]. Although *The Many and the One* was never completed (or even really started[574]), James's thinking and reading in this period did bear considerable fruit. Between 1903 and 1905 several of the pieces that comprise *Essays in Radical Empiricism* were composed.

Radical empiricism, James says in the preface to *The Meaning of Truth*, "consists first of a postulate, next of a statement of fact, and finally of a generalized conclusion"[575]. According to the postulate, only "things definable in terms drawn from experience" are debatable in philosophy. According to the statement of fact, the relations between experiences are "as much matters of direct particular experience" as the experiences themselves. And according to the generalized conclusion the universe may consist entirely of bits of experience held together by experienced relations with "no extraneous trans-empirical connective support"[576]. In *William James and the Metaphysics of Experience* David Lamberth calls these 'The methodological thesis of radical empiricism' (MTRE), 'The factual thesis of radical empiricism' (FTRE), and 'The metaphysical thesis of pure experience' (MTPE). He notes that in addition to these three theses James also develops two other important doctrines in ERE, which he calls 'the functional account of direct acquaintance' and 'the functional account of knowledge about'[577]. We will follow Lamberth in

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[572] *The Correspondence of William James*, ed. by Skrupskelis & Berkeley, X, p240

[573] *The Works of William James: Manuscript Lectures and Notes*, ed. by Burkhardt, pp267-268

[574] See: Richardson, *William James: In the Maelstrom of American Modernism*, pp444-446

[575] William James, *The Meaning of Truth* (New York: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1909), p. xii

[576] James, *The Meaning of Truth*, pp. xii-xiii

[577] Each of these five theses/doctrines, in Lamberth's view, can be dated to much earlier than any of the essays that comprise ERE. All of them, he suggests, are present in James's 1895 article on 'The Knowing of Things Together'. Their traces can be found in many of the articles and texts published after that date, including in VRE. On this basis Lamberth argues convincingly that James had embraced all the fundamentals of radical empiricism by 1895. See: Lamberth, *William James and the Metaphysics of Experience*, pp73-82. See also: William James, 'The Knowing of Things Together', *Psychological Review*, 2

adopting this terminology in the present section. Thus, we will investigate the methodological and factual theses in section 2.5.2, and the metaphysical thesis and functional accounts of knowledge in section 2.5.3. First however, we must address a special interpretative problem arising in connection with ERE; namely the nature of James's so-called 'break with dualism'.

2.5.1. James's Break with Dualism

Essays in Radical Empiricism is very probably James's most controversial text from the point of view of his contemporary commentators. It is this text, more than any other, that gives rise to significant divergences in interpretations of his worldview. All of these divergences, we may say, revolve around one central issue. Commentators generally agree that ERE marks James's 'break with dualism'; but they utterly *fail* to agree on the question of what he replaces his dualism *with*.

Both Russell and Ayer are said to have attributed a doctrine of 'neutral monism' to James, but their definitions of this doctrine differ considerably[578]. For Ayer neutral monism holds that the subjective (inner) and objective (outer) aspects of experience are differentiated out of an original neutral content called pure experience, and further, that nothing exists outside of this experiential content. Neutral monism, on this view, is a form of phenomenalism[579]. For Russell on the other hand, neutral monism holds that mental and physical *events/entities* are constituted out of an original neutral *substance* which itself possesses neither mental nor physical properties[580]. Thus, Russell's interpretation yields an entirely different and contrasting picture of James's position. Russell however concedes that James never fully developed the doctrine along

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(1895), pp105-124. Reprinted in: *The Works of William James: Essays in Philosophy*, ed. by Burkhardt, pp71-89

[578] Strictly speaking 'neutral monism' was Russell's term rather than Ayer's; Ayer himself never actually used it. However, for one reason or another, the doctrine has come, in the context of James studies, to be associated primarily with Ayer's interpretation. See for instance: Cooper, *The Unity of William James's Thought*, pp63-64

[579] See: Alfred Jules Ayer, *The Origins of Pragmatism* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 1968). James's contemporaries A. O. Lovejoy and B. H. Bode were among the first to interpret his philosophy along phenomenalistic/idealistic lines. Lovejoy insisted that James was either a Berkeleyan Idealist or a panpsychist; Bode thought that his position inevitably led to solipsism. See: Arthur Lovejoy, *The Thirteen Pragmatisms and Other Essays* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1963) p142; Boyd Henry Bode, ''Pure Experience' and the External World', *Journal of Philosophy, Psychology, and Scientific Methods*, 2 (1905), pp128-133 (p130).

[580] David Chalmers interprets James along the same lines as Russell. He thinks that James takes an eliminative view of phenomenal consciousness in ERE and endorses a form of panprotopsychism called 'panqualityism'. See: David Chalmers, 'The Combination Problem for Panpsychism', in *Panpsychism: Contemporary Perspectives*, ed. by Godehard Brüntrup & Ludwig Jaskolla (Oxford: OUP, 2017), pp179-214 (p183). Cooper endorses an essentially similar interpretation. See: Cooper, *The Unity of William James's Thought*, p8. We think that such interpretations suffer from the same defects as Russell's (of which more shortly).

the lines he advocated. For the sake of clarity, we will refer to Russell's interpretation of James's position as 'Russellian monism' and Ayer's as 'neutral monism'.

Perry and Cooper may be said to share Ayer's reading *in part*, but they add the important proviso that James's phenomenalism is combined with a doctrine of 'naïve realism', according to which the pure experiences which constitute objective (outer) phenomena are *public*, and not dependent on the minds of sentient beings[581]. Thus, the table in front of me will continue to exist, as a bundle of phenomenal properties, even when no sentient being perceives it. It will exist as a kind of free-floating, self-subsistent, pure experience. Such a free-floating pure experience might be thought of as a kind of superposition of all the possible phenomenal properties that any sentient being might perceive the table to have, all existing simultaneously, waiting for the sensory apparatuses of particular sentient beings to pick out some set of them[582].

Myers, Ford, Sprigge, and Gale accept that James seems to endorse naïve realism in ERE, but hold that he does so only confusedly. For one thing, they say, the doctrine itself is incoherent. For another, it conflicts with a doctrine that James came to adopt later in his career; namely panpsychism[583]. Panpsychism is held to be incompatible with naïve realism because it claims that outer objects continue to exist when no sentient being perceives them, *not* as a free-floating pure experiences possessing the same phenomenal properties with which they appear to observers, but as an experiences for themselves; conglomerations of mind-dust, so to speak, whose phenomenal properties bear no definite relation to those with which they appear to observers[584].

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[581] See: Perry, *The Thought and Character of William James*, II, pp591-592; Cooper, *The Unity of William James's Thought*, pp71-73. Other proponents of the naïve/natural realist interpretation include Robert G. Meyers and Andrew Reck. See: Robert Meyers, 'Natural Realism and Illusion in James's Radical Empiricism', *Transactions of the Charles S. Peirce Society*, 5 (1969), pp211-223 (p212); Andrew Reck, *Introduction to William James* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1967) pp64-65. We have just said in footnote 580 that Cooper endorses a panprotopsychist interpretation of James along the same lines as Chalmers. Yet he also seems to endorse this naïve realist/neutral monist interpretation. These two interpretations might seem to be contradictory insofar as the former implies that qualities of perceived objects are really qualities of the perceiver's brain whereas the latter implies that they belong to the objects themselves. We will discuss this issue in further detail in section 3.1.1.

[582] There is some reason to think that James's preferred version of naïve realism would make only perceptions of *space* public, while all other perceptions remained private. See: James, *Essays in Radical Empiricism*, pp84-86

[583] Timothy Sprigge provides by far the most lucid and detailed treatment of the relationship between naïve realism and panpsychism in James's work. See: Sprigge, *James and Bradley*, pp120-137

[584] For instance, your stream of consciousness is presently constituted of the phenomenal properties of whiteness, spread into a rectangular shape, and blackness, formed into small markings and arranged into lines. Yet your stream of consciousness appears to *observers* as a part of your brain and nervous system, possessing phenomenal properties like 'pinkness', 'softness', 'wetness', etc. The former properties – of whiteness and blackness – do not seem to bear any definite relation to the latter.

Our chief aim in this section, besides providing an exposition of the core doctrines of ERE, will be to establish the superiority of this latter, panpsychist reading of James's doctrine of pure experience. This reading is the key to reconciling ERE with *A Pluralistic Universe*; James's other key metaphysical text. It is also, therefore, the key to establishing the underlying theoretical unity of James's worldview. Most importantly for our purposes, it will serve as the foundation, in chapter three, for our detailed discussion of James's mature doctrine of panpsychism.

2.5.2. The Methodological Thesis of Radical Empiricism

James introduces his doctrine of radical empiricism by explaining its relationship to traditional empiricism. Like traditional empiricism, he says, it takes concrete experiences to be fundamental. However, where traditional empiricism still entertains transempirical principles and hypotheses, albeit cautiously, radical empiricism totally excludes them. Moreover, where traditional empiricism excluded certain experiences, whether by accident or because of conscious bias, radical empiricism insists on admitting any and all of them:

The Methodological Thesis of Radical Empiricism (MTRE): "To be radical, an empiricism must neither admit into its constructions any element that is not directly experienced, nor exclude from them any element that is directly experienced."[585]

Note that there is both a negative and a positive part to this thesis; the former insisting on the *exclusion* of anything that is *not* directly experienced, and the latter insisting on the *inclusion* of anything that *is* directly experienced. Each of these parts is distinct, and is novel and controversial in its own way. We will therefore treat of them separately in what follows.

The negative part of MTRE states that we must *exclude* anything which is *not* directly experienced from our philosophical constructions. Notice that this goes far beyond merely treating experience as fundamental. James's use of the phrase 'directly experienced' would seem to imply that entities which are, so to speak, *indirectly* experienced – i.e. which are *inferred* from direct experience – are likewise to be excluded. Thus, not only such transempirical entities as result from runaway apriori speculation – i.e. transcendental egos and absolutes – but *all* transempirical entities *in principle* are disqualified. This, it seems, would include things like material substances and entities postulated by scientific theories (insofar as they are conceived as non-experiential). Right at the outset then, doubt is cast upon interpretations of James's doctrine of pure experience which appeal to such entities. Interpretations, for instance, like Russell's, which take James to

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[585] James, *Essays in Radical Empiricism*, p42

endorse the existence of a neutral substance which possesses non-experiential properties, would seem to be precluded.

Nowadays this negative part of MTRE strikes us as extreme, but in James's day such sceptical conclusions regarding trans-empirical entities were not uncommon. Everyone from phenomenologists like Brentano and Husserl, to personal idealists like Lotze and Schiller, to absolute idealists like Royce and Bradley, to phenomenalists like Mill and Mach entertained such sceptical conclusions. Two factors may be said to have typically informed such conclusions: i) a trend, prompted by the rapidly increasing purview of science, towards the acceptance of substance-monism; and ii) traditional Berkleyan arguments against the coherence of transempirical entities/principles. These two factors together led very naturally in the direction of idealism, phenomenalism, and panpsychism. In the modern day the purely scientific/physical description of the world seems more solid and independent than it once did, and Berkeleyan considerations tend to be less hard-hitting. The result is that the majority of contemporary philosophers prefer materialism or physicalism to idealism, phenomenalism, or panpsychism.

The positive part of MTRE states that we must *include* anything which *is* directly experienced in our philosophical constructions. Once again, we should note the radical nature of this injunction. James is not merely saying that we are *entitled* to utilize anything that is directly experienced in our philosophical constructions; he is saying that we *must* utilize them. In ERE he has a particular set of experiences in mind; namely experiences of relations. Philosophers, he thinks, have traditionally viewed relations as essentially trans-empirical entities. In PP James explained how this led the more empirically inclined philosophers of the associationist school to abolish the relations between experiences altogether, and the more rationalistically inclined philosophers of the spiritualist school to introduce substantial souls and transcendental egos to relate bits of finite experience together from without[586]. Both of these approaches, he argued, ultimately failed. The solution is to see that the bits of finite experience that constitute a stream of consciousness are joined together by *experienced* relations like the 'co-conscious transition', through which they are made sensibly continuous with one another without the need of "extraneous transempirical connective support"[587]. The so-called 'factual thesis of radical empiricism' extends this analysis of the relations between the bits of experience that constitute a single stream of consciousness to *all* relations. It says that *all* relations, including those between distinct streams of consciousness,

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[586] James, *The Principles*, I, pp1-2
[587] James, *The Meaning of Truth*, p. xiii

and those between streams of consciousness and the objects which they know, must be *experienced* relations, essentially similar in kind to the co-conscious transition:

The Factual Thesis of Radical Empiricism (FTRE): "For such a philosophy, *the relations that connect experiences must themselves be experienced relations, and any kind of relation experienced must be accounted as 'real' as anything else in the system*."[588]

Although James's primary concern in ERE is with the experience of relations, the positive part of MTRE is clearly also relevant to other sorts of experience he considers in his work; namely ethical, religious, and paranormal experiences. In this sense MTRE can be seen to enshrine in an explicit methodology, James's repeated entreaties in WB that we should not prematurely exclude ethical, religious, and psychical phenomena from the scientific synthesis, and his insistence in VRE that *all* experiences are prima facie respectable regardless of their origins. James's intention, in insisting upon the inclusion of such experiences, is not to affirm any particular interpretation of them, or to take a realist stance with respect to their objects, but rather to guard against their arbitrary dismissal, and to signal radical empiricism's capacity to accommodate them.

2.5.3. The Metaphysical Thesis of Pure Experience

As we noted in the introduction to this section, the metaphysical thesis of pure experience states that the universe may consist entirely of bits of experience held together by experienced relations. It is easy enough to see how this thesis fits together with the methodological and factual theses. If the methodological thesis is sound, then a *complete* philosophical description of the world is only possible if the world consists *entirely* of experience. If, after all, the world contained non-experiential elements, philosophy could not deal with those elements, and its description of the world would have to remain incomplete. We have already seen that in James's time there were a number of popular candidates for broadly experiential descriptions of the world, the most prevalent being phenomenalism and idealism. Both of these however suffered a core defect in James's view; they failed to account for the reality of experienced relations. The former thereby left the world fundamentally disjointed, while the latter made appeal to trans-empirical entities. Only radical empiricism, with its recognition of the reality of experienced relations, could offer a description of the world that was at once truly coherent and wholly experiential. If therefore the methodological thesis is sound, then the metaphysical thesis of pure experience represents the only possible route to a complete philosophical description of the universe. The key obstacle to developing such a description, in James's view, was the relation of

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[588] James, *Essays in Radical Empiricism*, p42

knowledge. The question was: how can we describe the relation between the human mind and an object which it knows in purely experiential terms? And how, furthermore, can we explain the relation between two *different* minds and the *same* object? It is in the process of answering these questions that James articulates the detailed metaphysical position of radical empiricism.

2.5.3.1. Does Consciousness Exist?

'Does Consciousness Exist?' is undoubtedly the most widely read and discussed of all the essays that comprise ERE. Bertrand Russell described it as having "startled the world"[589], and indeed, in it, James makes what *seems* to be a startling claim:

> For twenty years past I have mistrusted 'consciousness' as an entity; for seven or eight years past I have suggested its non-existence to my students, and tried to give them its pragmatic equivalent in realities of experience. It seems to me that the hour is ripe for it to be openly and universally discarded.[590]

He adds, by way of clarification, that he means only "to deny that the word stands for an entity", and that he intends to argue instead that it stands "for a function"[591]. The function in question is that of knowing, or cognition. Thus, consciousness is to be understood as a functional term, and not as a concrete noun referring to an entity or substance. "There is, …" James says, "no aboriginal stuff or quality of being, contrasted with that of which material objects are made, out of which our thoughts of them are made"[592]. This looks, at first, like a complete reversal for James. It looks as though he is embracing reductive materialism, and attempting to eliminate phenomenal consciousness from his worldview. If we read on however, we find that this impression is radically mistaken. The aboriginal stuff out of which both thoughts and things are made is not, as these statements might seem to suggest, matter, but something else, which he calls 'pure experience':

> My thesis is that if we start with the supposition that there is only one primal stuff or material in the world, a stuff of which everything is composed, and if we call that stuff 'pure experience,' then knowing can easily be explained as a particular sort of relation towards one another into which portions of pure experience may enter.[593]

James, we contend, is not denying the existence of consciousness in the sense of *phenomenal* consciousness; rather, he is denying the existence of consciousness construed as a special entity or substance that is involved in higher mental processes like cognition. His final conclusions, far

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[589] Bertrand Russell, *An Outline of Philosophy* (London: George Allen & Unwin, Ltd., 1927), p218
[590] James, *Essays in Radical Empiricism*, p3
[591] James, *Essays in Radical Empiricism*, p3
[592] James, *Essays in Radical Empiricism*, p3
[593] James, *Essays in Radical Empiricism*, p4

from denying phenomenal consciousness, point strongly towards the *identity* of pure experience with phenomenal consciousness. To see why this is so, consider the following.

To begin with we note that interpreting James's thesis as a denial of the existence of phenomenal consciousness involves assuming a radical and unannounced shift in his worldview; namely the total abandonment of the 'esse est sentiri' doctrine of PP. This assumption, we insist, is certainly untenable. For one thing, James explicitly affirms his continued commitment to the doctrine in another of the essays in the volume (namely 'How Two Minds Can Know One Thing'; published within months of 'Does Consciousness Exist?'[594]). For another, James tells us at the beginning of the article that he has doubted the existence of consciousness for *twenty years*; since well before the publication of PP. The explanation for this, in our view, is simple enough. James had not doubted the existence of *phenomenal consciousness* for twenty years; he had doubted substance dualism, and the notion that consciousness was a special substance associated with cognition. Now twenty years, as it happens, is precisely the amount of time that had elapsed since the publication of 'The Function of Cognition', in which James first articulated his functional account of knowledge. That account holds that cognition "takes place" wholly *within* "states of consciousness", but specifies that states of consciousness are to be "considered subjectively, or without respect to their possible function"[595]. In other words, it specifies that states of consciousness are to be considered *phenomenally*. Thus, cognition, in 'The Function of Cognition' – an essay which James considered representative of his mature views, and thus reprinted as the opening essay of MT – was to be regarded as a function taking place wholly *within* phenomenal consciousness. We contend that James's view did not substantially change between 'The Function of Cognition' and 'Does Consciousness Exist?'. All that really changed was his terminology. Specifically, he dropped the term consciousness in order to distance himself from the popular notion of consciousness as a special entity or substance, and he adopted the term 'experience' to denote consciousness considered subjectively or phenomenally[596]. The modifier 'pure' signifies that phenomenal consciousness, considered as a primal stuff, should be abstracted from any special characteristics of human consciousness, such as its concept laden nature[597]. This reading is all but confirmed by the following passage:

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[594] James, *Essays in Radical Empiricism*, p127
[595] James, *The Meaning of Truth*, pp1-2
[596] It has the added advantage, according to James, of being a 'double-barrelled' term, essentially ambiguous as to whether its referent is 'subjective' or 'objective' in the ordinary, dualistic sense of those words. See: *Essays in Radical Empiricism*, p10. For more on this point see David Lamberth's discussion in: Lamberth, *William James and the Metaphysics of Experience*, pp25-29
[597] Thus, James's repeated suggestions that 'pure experience' may be taken to stand indifferently either for 'thoughts' or for 'things' (see: James, *Essays in Radical Empiricism*, p10) should not be interpreted as

> If you ask what any one bit of pure experience is made of, the answer is always the same: "It is made of that, of just what appears, of space, of intensity, of flatness, brownness, heaviness, or what not." ... Experience is only a collective name for all these *sensible natures*, and save for time and space (and, if you like, for 'being') there appears no universal element of which all things are made. [our emphasis]

Pure experience, James says, is made of '*sensible natures*'; of properties like 'flatness', 'brownness' and 'heaviness'. Sensible natures, we contend, are nothing other than what contemporary philosophers call 'phenomenal properties'. In the final analysis therefore, James does not deny the existence of phenomenal consciousness; he says that the world is *wholly constituted* of it[598].

2.5.3.2. The Functional Account of Knowledge

So, the question which James now faces is this: how, given MTPE – the thesis that the world is wholly constituted of pure experience or phenomenal consciousness – are we to explain the function of knowing or cognition? On the classic dualist account, my thoughts come to 'know' something – a tiger in India for instance – by somehow transcending themselves and instantaneously hooking-up with the tiger[599]. But for James, these notions of 'the self-transcendency of thought' and 'the instantaneous hooking-up of thought with thing' are blatantly transempirical; neither refers to a process or relation that is directly experienced. He proposes, instead, to explain knowing as a relation between "two pieces of actual experience belonging to the same subject, with definite tracts of conjunctive transitional experience between them"[600]. A thought is said to 'know' a tiger in India in the sense that it may literally lead us, through a

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meaning that it can stand indifferently either for entities *within* the stream of phenomenal consciousness or for material entities totally *devoid* of phenomenal consciousness; rather it should be interpreted as meaning that it can stand indifferently either for *subjective/inner elements* within the stream of phenomenal consciousness or for *objective/outer elements* within the stream of phenomenal consciousness. What we here call 'subjective/inner elements' and 'objective/outer elements' may be taken as equivalent to the 'Self' and 'not-Self' of PP. See: James, *The Principles*, I, p304.

[598] James, *Essays in Radical Empiricism*, pp26-27. James's comments to the effect that there is "no general stuff" or "universal element of which all things are made" are often interpreted as a kind of retraction of his earlier statement that pure experience is the "one primal stuff or material in the world ... of which everything is composed". See for instance: William Joseph Gavin, *William James in Focus* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2013), p47. We read these comments differently. We think James is saying that it is useless to posit some underlying stuff like 'being' or 'nervous energy' out of which the various phenomenal properties that we experience are differentiated. In PP he had quoted (and rejected) Spencer's theory that all phenomenal properties – all tactile sensations, smells, sounds, etc. – are differentiated out of a common "primordial element" called a 'nervous shock'. See: James, *The Principles*, I, p152. Now he is dismissing questions about the ultimate constitution of phenomenal properties in similar terms. Phenomenal properties are not *made* of anything; they just *are*.

[599] Compare: James, *The Meaning of Truth*, pp43-50

[600] James, *Essays in Radical Empiricism*, p53

continuous series of experiences, to an experience of an actual tiger, or to an equivalent substitute[601].

This account clearly looks forward to the pragmatic conception of truth. However, the precise relation between the two doctrines is not transparent. In the preface to *Pragmatism* James insists that they are entirely independent, and that each can be accepted without accepting the other[602]. Yet in the preface to MT he says that the acceptance of the pragmatic account of truth is "a step of first-rate importance" towards the acceptance of radical empiricism[603]. This, he suggests, is because the pragmatic account of truth is a completion of the functional/experiential account of cognition from ERE. If one accepts it, then a key barrier to the acceptance of radical empiricism – namely its difficulty explaining the knowledge relation – is overcome. On the other hand, our acceptance of MTRE and MTPE establish a warrant for developing the pragmatic account of truth, for if the world is wholly comprised of pure experience, then an experiential account of knowing *must* be possible. We think that James's later statement of the relation between these doctrines is the truer one. They are, if not interdependent, then at least mutually reinforcing. This, we suggest, explains some of James's intellectual acrobatics in *Pragmatism* which so infuriated his critics. The real mandate for the pragmatic account of truth had always lain in the metaphysics of radical empiricism. James presented the doctrines as independent in *Pragmatism* because he was concerned to construe the eponymous philosophy as a stand-alone project, as many of its admirers had taken it to be[604]. As such he attempted to divorce the pragmatic account of truth from the metaphysics of radical empiricism. The result was an account of truth that appeared, in the eyes of many readers, to be needlessly contorted into a purely experiential mould.

2.5.3.3. Naive Realism

But now another problem arises: how, given this functional/experiential account of knowledge, can two minds be said to know one thing? Consider, once again, the classic dualist account. On that account two minds know one thing – a pen on the desk for instance – because their individual perceptions of the pen are representations of one underlying material reality. On

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[601] It is an essential part of James's functional account of knowledge that direct sense experiences of the objects of a given piece of knowledge can be replaced with alternative experiential or purely conceptual substitutes. See: James, *Essays in Radical Empiricism*, pp62-66. Thus, the experience of an actual tiger may be substituted with a dictionary article or a museum exhibit on tigers.

[602] James, *Pragmatism* (New York: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1907), pp. viii-ix

[603] James, *The Meaning of Truth*, p. xii

[604] James was surprised and gratified by the great success of pragmatism. It had captured the imaginations of a new generation of philosophers, many of whom took it to be a stand-alone doctrine, worthy of adherence in its own right. James had no intention of upsetting the prospects of his fledgling school by tying its fate to a comparatively obscure and unpopular metaphysical system (even though he personally regarded that system as more important).

James's account the underlying material reality is excluded. The pen only exists as experienced, and the two minds experience it very differently. Each mind, it seems, knows only its own perception of the pen; not the same identical pen.

Given his rejection of materialism, there are three possibilities available to James for resolving this problem:

i) **Idealism:** the 'true pen' coincides with God's perception of it, and our several finite perceptions are derived from God's perception.

ii) **Panpsychism:** our several perceptions of the pen are only outward appearances of a single underlying experiential reality.

iii) **Naive Realism:** the pen exists as a kind of self-subsistent perception (or a superposition of multiple perceptions) of which our several minds variously partake.

James rejects idealism because it leads to absolutism. If, after all, God's perceptions are to guarantee the reality of *all* external objects, then *all* external objects will have to be contained in God's perception. Absolutism is unacceptable to James on ethical grounds; it entails determinism and thus undermines any motivation for moral striving. James rejects panpsychism, somewhat provisionally, because he is still yet to find a solution to the combination problem, or to the problem of stating the connection between the mind and the brain. The only option left, therefore, is naïve (or natural) realism. And thus, James says, "natural realism, so long decently buried, raises its head above the turf, and finds glad hands outstretched from the most unlikely quarters to help it to its feet again."[605] James, however, is clearly undecided on this issue. He only says that natural realism may "pass for possible"[606], and elsewhere he makes statements which would seem to indicate a preference for panpsychism[607]. We will investigate this alternative panpsychist reading in the final part of this section.

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[605] James, *Essays in Radical Empiricism*, p40
[606] James, *Essays in Radical Empiricism*, p82
[607] Interestingly, in his notes for the 1903-1904 course 'Philosophy 20c' James omits the naïve realist solution from a similar discussion of the problem of how two minds can know one thing. Indeed, he seems to suggest that naïve realism, because it conceives of no subject/experiential reality underlying our perceptions, makes those perceptions in some sense untrue. Consider the following statement: "I lay stress on the point that the actual presence of the other S[ubject] there is what constitutes the veracity of our consciousness that the matter of our own tho't is objective. The form of our consciousness must always be objective. But only when the other S[ubject] is there is it veraciously so. … The thought of a physical object existing in *se*, though cognitive in form is not veracious. … The physical object to be truly known must be conceived as a psychical one." We read these statements in the following way. The thought of a physical object – which appears to us as a bundle of phenomenal properties – existing in itself (as per naïve realism), although cognitive, "is not veracious". In order for the thought to be veracious, it must posit a subject – a

2.5.3.4. Panpsychism

Despite the possibility of naive realism, James says, we may nevertheless continue to believe in "an existing beyond"; i.e. a thing-in-itself underlying our perceptions of external objects:

> The beyond must, of course, always in our philosophy be itself of an experiential nature. If not a future experience of our own or a present one of our neighbour, it must be a thing in itself in Dr. Prince's and Professor Strong's sense of the term – that is, it must be an experience *for* itself whose relation to other things we translate into the action of molecules, ether-waves, or whatever else the physical symbols may be.[608]

This, he tells us, "opens up the chapter of the relations of radical empiricism to panpsychism, into which I can not enter now"[609]. Later, of course, in *A Pluralistic Universe*, James *would* enter into this discussion[610]. He would articulate the "pluralistic panpsychic view of the universe" that characterizes his mature philosophy[611]. In hindsight, therefore, these comments from ERE appear very definitely as early flirtations with panpsychism.

The following excerpt taken from James's syllabus for his 'Philosophy 1a' course for the year 1905-1906 adds further weight to the panpsychist reading:

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psychical/experiential reality – behind the physical object (as per panpsychism). James says that theism gets around this difficulty by saying that God's perception is the psychical reality that underlies the physical object, and by saying that our own perceptions approximate to God's. In this way, theism manages to "preserve the physical appearance" of outer objects; i.e. it makes our perceptions of those objects veracious, without having to postulate individual subjects behind them as per panpsychism. This may indicate that James had ultimately intended to combine his naïve realism with a doctrine of theism. See: *The Works of William James: Manuscript Lectures and Notes*, ed. by Burkhardt, p278

[608] James, *Essays in Radical Empiricism*, pp88-89. In a footnote James adds: "Our minds and these ejective realities would still have space … in common. These [experiences for themselves] would exist *where*, and begin to act *where*, we locate the molecules, etc., and where we perceive the sensible phenomena explained thereby." See: James, *Essays in Radical Empiricism*, p89. In connection with this note James references the aforementioned Dr. Prince and Professor Strong. According to Prince, states of consciousness are identical with "neural vibrations", and we may suppose, on the basis of an argument by analogy/continuity, that *all* motions/vibrations in physics are likewise identical with states of consciousness. See: Morton Prince, *The Nature of Mind and Human Automatism* (Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott Company, 1885), pp44-82. Strong makes an almost identical argument, stating that "the movements of particles by which a crystal is formed, or those by which minute portions of water in falling gather themselves into globules, are, despite their vastly greater simplicity, strictly analogous to animal movements, and hence to be regarded as manifestations of feeling." The same is true, he says, even of "the very simplest motions, those of molecules and atoms, thus breaking down the barrier between the organic and the inorganic and making mind omnipresent in nature." See: Charles Augustus Strong, *Why the Mind Has a Body* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1903), p291. We note that all of these statements strongly suggest panpsychism's affinity with metaphysical and scientific realism (of which more shortly).

[609] James, *Essays in Radical Empiricism*, p89

[610] We note that Perry attaches a footnote to the above quote referencing lectures IV and VII of *A Pluralistic Universe* (in which James articulated his doctrine of panpsychism). It seems therefore that despite his final classification of James as a naïve realist, Perry regarded PU as the consummation of these early flirtations with the doctrine.

[611] William James, *A Pluralistic Universe*, p313

> Our only intelligible notion of an object in itself is that it should be an object *for* itself, and this lands us in panpsychism and a belief that our physical perceptions are effects on us of "psychical" realities. … *That* something exists when we as individuals are not thinking it, is an inexpungable conviction of common sense. The various stages of idealist reflection are only as many successive attempts to define *what* the something is that thus exists. The upshot tends pretty strongly towards something like panpsychism.[612]

And yet, as Perry notes, it seems from James's correspondence with C. A. Strong that he is still reluctant to accept panpsychism as late as 1907[613]. His repeated rebuffing of Strong's panpsychist advances, together with his increasingly concrete flirtations with the doctrine in ERE and in Philosophy 1a, give the strong impression that James *wants* to accept panpsychism, but for some reason is prevented from doing so wholeheartedly. Building on this thought, we think that the following reading becomes highly compelling. James considered that radical empiricism was potentially compatible with both naive realism and panpsychism. At the time of his writing the essays that comprise ERE, he still had not figured out the solution to the combination problem, and so left both of these options open. By the time of his writing PU, he had solved the combination problem, and so settled the matter in favour of panpsychism. All of this, we shall see, accords well with James's own account of his evolution on this topic. After blackening countless pages of his notebooks trying to solve the combination problem, he says, finally, upon reading Bergson (around 1907), he saw his way out of it[614].

Lastly, we get a clue as to the *form* of panpsychism to which James was inclined from his reference to chapters III and IV of Morton Prince's *The Nature of Mind and Human Automatism*. In said chapters, Prince endorses a form of panpsychism for which physical entities/events are not just *correlated* with consciousness, but are *identical* with it:

> It must be distinctly understood that it is not a question of translation or transformation at all, but of identification. Physical changes are not transformed into

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[612] Perry, *The Thought and Character of William James*, II, p446. James's notes for philosophy 1a (delivered at Stanford) do not appear in the Harvard edition of *The Works* "because of the considerable duplication with similar notes for his courses at Harvard". See: *The Works of William James: Manuscript Lectures and Notes*, ed. by Burkhardt, p651. We note that one such duplication relevant to the present case occurs in James's notes for the 'Philosophy D' course of 1906-1907, where he says: "Idealistic panpsychism … in some shape or other will probably be the theory of the future." See: *The Works of William James: Manuscript Lectures and Notes*, ed. by Burkhardt, p396

[613] Perry, *The Thought and Character of William James*, II, p, p534-552. Perry refers to a series of letters between James and Strong written in 1907 and 1908. For these and other relevant letters see volume XI of *The Correspondence of William James*; especially Strong's letter of October 5th 1907. See: *The Correspondence of William James*, ed. by Skrupskelis & Berkeley, XI, pp457-459

[614] James, *A Pluralistic Universe*, p214.

states of consciousness, nor are there "two processes" which occur "side by side" in the same person. There is only one process.[615]

In his introduction to Fechner's *Little Book of Life After Death* (published in the very same *month* as 'Does Consciousness Exist?' and 'A World of Pure Experience'), James seems to be flirting with an essentially similar form of panpsychism:

> Once we grasp the idealistic notion that inner experience is the reality, and that matter is but a form in which inner experiences may appear to one another when they affect each other from the outside, it is easy to believe that consciousness or inner experience never originated, or developed, out of the unconscious, but that it and the physical universe are co-eternal aspects of one self-same reality, much as concave and convex are aspects of one curve.[616]

This statement, we contend, strongly suggests that James is amenable to a doctrine of 'panpsychist identism' or 'Russellian panpsychism', according to which all properties are ultimately identical with phenomenal properties[617].

2.5.4. Conclusions

The essays that comprise ERE represent a major shift in James's worldview, at least as it appeared in his published works. He had flirted with doctrines of neutral monism and panpsychism in previous works, and even with functional accounts of knowledge, but in ERE, for the first time, he attempted to articulate these ideas in a systematic way. He now definitively rejects dualism. He holds that everything in the world is comprised of pure experience – of sensible natures, or phenomenal properties – to be conceived after the analogy of human experience. All of James's philosophical commitments and beliefs, if they are to find a place in his mature worldview, must be made consistent with the metaphysics of radical empiricism. The emergent soul of PP is

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[615] Prince, pp65-66

[616] William James, 'Introduction', in Gustav Theodor Fechner, *The Little Book of Life After Death*, trans. by Mary C. Wadsworth (Boston: Little, Brown, & Company, 1904), p. xiii. Reprinted in: *The Works of William James: Essays in Religion and Morality*, ed. by Burkhardt, p118.

[617] This panpsychist reading of ERE, especially insofar as it attributes a doctrine of panpsychist identism to James, would seem to imply a commitment on his part to metaphysical realism; i.e. to the belief that the external world has a definite structure independently of how it is perceived by observers. As Sami Pihlström has pointed out, this creates a problem for those, like himself, who read James as a metaphysical idealist. On this basis, he attempts to articulate a non-realist version of panpsychism. See: Sami Pihlström, *"The Trail of the Human Serpent is Over Everything"* (Lanham: University Press of America, 2008), pp213-228. This problem does not arise on our interpretation, because we read James as a metaphysical realist (section 2.6.2.2).

nothing but pure experience; God is nothing but pure experience[618]; atoms and molecules, insofar as they exist in themselves, are nothing but pure experience:

> Radical empiricism thus leads to the assumption of a collectivism of personal lives (which may be of any grade of complication, and superhuman or infrahuman as well as human), variously cognitive of each other, variously conative and impulsive, genuinely evolving and changing by effort and trial, and by their interaction and cumulative achievements making up the world.[619]

Moreover, all of these entities and processes – all of these 'personal lives' – when perceived from the outside, appear in the form of matter, as parts of the physical universe; of the single space-time-causal system that we call nature[620]. Any lingering doubt as to the validity of this reading will be dispelled when we come to consider PU in section 2.7.

ERE is also significant in attempting to construct a metaphysics that gives primacy to what James called 'the personal view of life'[621]. This can be seen in 'A World of Pure Experience', and the thesis of MTPE, but it is shown even more clearly in certain later essays, which we have not considered here, but which we will discuss in chapter 3. Thus, in 'The Experience of Activity' James conceives of all causal activity by analogy with the human experience of effort and volition; and in 'The Place of Affectional Facts in a World of Pure Experience' he attempts to establish the quasi-objective/cognitive status of affectional and evaluative facts. All of this, evidently, speaks to his desire to defend the personal view of life (the manifest image) from the encroaching mechanical view (the scientific image). This, once again, demonstrates the harmony of James's project with that of liberal naturalism.

ERE contains just one brief discussion that refers explicitly to 'naturalism'. In it, James summarises the opposing views of rationalism and naturalism regarding the function of the intellectual capacities of human beings. For rationalism, he says, the chief function of our intellectual capacities is to apprehend the objective truth about reality, and the truth of a thought

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[618] Richard Gale explicitly denies this claim. He ascribes to James's mystic self the belief that God – or the wider mother-sea with which God is continuous – is a supernatural being to whom the doctrine of pure experience does not apply. See: Gale, *The Divided Self of William James*, pp271-272. In this case we think Gale is sacrificing fidelity to James in the name of the neatness of his interpretation.

[619]William James, 'Personal Idealism', Mind, 12 (1903), pp93-97 (p97). Reprinted in: *The Works of William James: Essays, Comments, and Reviews*, ed. by Frederick Burkhardt (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 1987), pp540-545 (p545)

[620] We note a significant overlap between the metaphysics of radical empiricism and Peter Forrest's 'Properly Anthropomorphic Metaphysics' (PAM) and 'Defiantly Anthropomorphic Theism' (DAT). Forrest, like James, uses certain features of human consciousness as the basis for a broader metaphysical view, and models his concept of God on those features. See Peter Forrest, 'The Personal Pantheist Conception of God', in: *Alternative Concepts of God*, ed. by Buckareff & Nagasawa, pp21-40

[621] Henry Samuel Levinson sees this connection. See: Henry Samuel Levinson, *The Religious Investigations of William James* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1981), p175

is to be measured in terms of its theoretic simplicity and unity. For naturalism, our intellectual capacities always subserve relatively short-term practical ends, and the truth of a thought is to be measured in terms of its ability to usefully connect us with experiences to which it points[622]. As regards their conceptions of truth, James says, "rationalism and naturalism, or (as I will now call it) pragmatism, walk thenceforward upon opposite paths."[623] James then, sides explicitly with naturalism on this point, and even identifies the naturalistic conception of truth with the pragmatic conception. This serves as a natural segue into the penultimate section of this chapter, in which we will launch a detailed investigation into James's 1906 Lowell Lectures on *Pragmatism*.

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[622] James, *Essays in Radical Empiricism*, pp96-100
[623] James, *Essays in Radical Empiricism*, p100

2.6. Pragmatism

In section 2.5.3.2 we touched on the relationship between the pragmatic conception of truth and the metaphysics of radical empiricism. Despite James's claims to the contrary in the preface of *Pragmatism*, we said, the two doctrines are mutually reinforcing; even mutually dependent to some degree. We will explore James's pragmatic conception of truth in more detail in section 2.6.2. This conception, however, is only a part of James's pragmatist program. The foundation of pragmatism is the pragmatic *method*, and James applies that method not only to truth but to the concepts of substance, science, and religion, among others. In what follows, our investigation of *Pragmatism* will be split into three parts. In section 2.6.1 we shall establish James's notion of the pragmatic method, and we shall briefly consider his application of that method to the concept of substance. We shall see that the pragmatic method includes the prescription that philosophy should maintain continuity with science, and is thereby perfectly aligned with the methodological thesis of naturalism. In section 2.6.2 we shall examine James's application of the pragmatic method to the concept of truth. We will first attempt to state the theory; then we will weigh in on certain key debates concerning it; and finally, we will build out our own novel interpretation, according to which the pragmatic theory of truth may be viewed as an evolutionary theory of cognition. Finally, in section 2.6.3, we will consider the relationship between pragmatism, science, and religion. We will examine James's notion that pragmatism serves as a mediator between religion and naturalism; we will revisit our suggestion from section 2.3, that *Pragmatism* constitutes a continuation of James's critique of scientificism; and we will investigate James's claims regarding the pragmatic truth of religion.

2.6.1. The Pragmatic Method

We have already seen, in 'Philosophical Conceptions and Practical Results', James's official statement of the pragmatic principle[624]. There, he applied it to scholastic conceptions of God's attributes. Such attributes as God's aseity and simplicity, he said, were utterly devoid of pragmatic meaning. The sensations we may expect and the actions we must prepare in a world in which God possesses aseity and simplicity are no different from those we should expect in a world in which he does not. The attributes of justice and omniscience, by contrast, have a relatively definite pragmatic meaning. They mean that God will see all of our actions, good and bad, and

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[624] "To attain perfect clearness in our thoughts of an object, then, we need only consider what conceivable effects of a practical kind the object may involve – what sensations we are to expect from it, and what reactions we must prepare. Our conception of these effects, whether immediate or remote, is then for us the whole of our conception of the object, so far as that conception has positive significance at all." See: James, *Pragmatism*, pp46-47

reward or punish us accordingly. Here, in the second of the *Pragmatism* lectures, James offers us a homelier example of the pragmatic method in practice.

Whilst out camping with friends in the mountains, he says, he returned to the campsite after a brief stroll to find his friends engaged in a ferocious metaphysical dispute. They were discussing a scenario in which a man is trying to get sight of a squirrel moving around a tree. As the man moves around the tree, the squirrel circles its trunk, always keeping out of the man's sight. "The resultant metaphysical problem now is this: *Does the man go round the squirrel or not?*[625]"

> "Which party is right," I said, "depends on what you *practically mean* by 'going round' the squirrel. If you mean passing from the north of him to the east, then to the south, then to the west, and then to the north of him again, obviously the man does go round him, for he occupies these successive positions. But if on the contrary you mean being first in front of him, then on the right of him, then behind him, then on his left, and finally in front again, it is quite as obvious that the man fails to go round him, for by the compensating movements the squirrel makes, he keeps his belly turned towards the man all the time, and his back turned away."[626]

James's friends were conflating two distinct pragmatic meanings of the phrase 'going around'. If they had applied the pragmatic method, they would have realised this, and the dispute could have been avoided.

In the above example, the pragmatic method appears almost absurdly simple. Surely human beings apply this method, if only implicitly, on a relatively regular basis. James concedes that they certainly do. Indeed, he insists that the method is by no means unfamiliar to philosophy. Such philosophical giants as Socrates, Aristotle, Locke, Berkeley, and Hume, he says, were adept at it, and made "momentous contributions to truth by its means"[627]. Berkeley, for example, saw that the pragmatic meaning of 'material substance' is the experience of sensations; "of colour, figure, hardness and the like"[628]. Locke, in turn, saw that the pragmatic meaning of 'spiritual substance' is personal identity, which he thought resolved into our consciousness of previous states of our self which we appropriate to our personal history[629]. Finally, Hume saw that the pragmatic meaning of the 'self' is only a bundle of qualities within the stream of experience[630]. James, as we know by now, agrees with each of these pragmatic resolutions to the traditional problems of the concept of substance. In the subsequent lectures, he proposes to apply the pragmatic method to a number of other metaphysical problems, such as those resulting from disputes between

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[625] James, *Pragmatism*, p43
[626] James, *Pragmatism*, p44
[627] James, *Pragmatism*, p50
[628] James, *Pragmatism*, pp89-90
[629] James, *Pragmatism*, pp90-92
[630] James, *Pragmatism*, p92

materialism and spiritualism, indeterminism and determinism, and pluralism and monism. Finally, and most notoriously, he applies the pragmatic method to the concept of truth, wherein he arrives at the famous pragmatic conception of truth. In each case James's utilization of the pragmatic method aims at tempering metaphysical speculation with considerations of concrete facts and practical effects. The general triumph of the pragmatic method, he says, "would mean an enormous change in … the 'temperament' of philosophy"; it would mean that "Science and metaphysics would come much nearer together, would in fact work absolutely hand in hand"[631]. This of course, is a relatively straightforward statement of the methodological thesis of naturalism (probably among the first of such statements). In respect to methodology therefore, we may say that pragmatism and naturalism are perfectly aligned.

2.6.2. The Pragmatic Theory of Truth

2.6.2.1. The Theory Outlined

In lecture six of *Pragmatism*, James proposes to apply the pragmatic method to the concept of truth. Doing so, he thinks, leads to a revolutionary theory of truth that has distinct advantages over its competitors. He begins by offering a broad definition of truth which he thinks both pragmatists and their opponents are bound to accept:

> Truth, as any dictionary will tell you, is a property of certain of our ideas. It means their agreement, as falsity means their disagreement, with 'reality'. Pragmatists and intellectualists both accept this definition as a matter of course. They begin to quarrel only when the question is raised as to what may precisely be meant by the term 'agreement,' and what by the term 'reality,' when reality is taken as something for our ideas to agree with.[632]

Let us therefore attempt to establish precisely what James's means by the terms 'agreement' and 'reality', and how his understanding of these concepts differs from more traditional views. We begin with the concept of reality.

We may say that in James's time two different concepts of reality were most prevalent. On the one hand we have the absolute idealist's conception, for which reality consists in the absolute point of view; in the eternal and unchanging content of the absolute mind. On the other hand, we have the materialist's conception, for which reality consists in the imperceptible entities described by physics, together with the imperceptible laws which govern them. James, as we know from our investigation of radical empiricism, rejects both of these conceptions of reality. Absolute minds and material substances are among those transempirical entities/principles which

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[631] James, *Pragmatism*, p52
[632] James, *Pragmatism*, p198

philosophy, in his view, must dispense with. As the metaphysical thesis of pure experience states, reality is fundamentally experiential, and is wholly constituted out of bits of finite experience held together by experienced relations. However, for the purposes of the present discussion this basic statement of the constitution of reality is not quite sufficient. Certain higher-order facts – namely ideas or concepts – are also relevant here[633]. James provides the following summary of his view of the constitution of reality. It consists, he says, of three parts: i) concrete facts (i.e. sense perceptions), ii) necessary truths and relations of ideas, and iii) "the whole body of other truths already in our possession"[634].

Next then, we must assess James's understanding of the concept of an idea's 'agreement' with reality. "The popular notion", he remarks, "is that a true idea must copy its reality."[635] For absolute idealists, this means that our idea of an object must copy the absolute's idea of it; for materialists, it means that our idea must copy something of the material constitution of the object. In both cases it is assumed that some sort of straightforward one-to-one copying must be occurring. While James concedes that this notion seems to work well in some cases, in considerably many others, he thinks, it quickly breaks down.

> Our ideas of sensible things do indeed copy them. Shut your eyes and think of yonder clock on the wall, and you get just such a true picture or copy of its dial. But your idea of its 'works' (unless you are a clock-maker) is much less of a copy … when you speak of the 'time-keeping function' of the clock, or of its spring's 'elasticity,' it is hard to see exactly what your ideas can copy.[636]

My idea of the clock, unless I am a clock-maker, is not an *exact copy* the clock. For all I know, it may be a mock-clock, whose internal mechanisms are arranged incorrectly so that it serves no time-keeping function. Moreover, there are complex physical properties/processes involved in the working of the clock that our ideas – even a clock-maker's – cannot possibly copy in any straightforward sense. James concludes that agreement with reality is going to have to consist in something more than simply copying.

It is at this point that he suggests that we apply the pragmatic method to this problem, and ask what concrete difference is made by a belief's being true; "What, in short, is the truth's cash value in experiential terms?"[637]. Pragmatism, he says, gives the following answer: "*True ideas are those*

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[633] Ideas and concepts are of course, on James's view, wholly constituted of pure experience. Lamberth's discussion of concepts in the first and second intentions is helpful in this regard. See: Lamberth, *William James and the Metaphysics of Experience*, pp38-41
[634] James, *Pragmatism*, p212
[635] James, *Pragmatism*, p199
[636] James, *Pragmatism*, p199
[637] James, *Pragmatism*, p200

that we can assimilate, validate, corroborate, and verify. False ideas are those that we can not."[638] Elaborating on this thesis, he says that the truth of an idea "is not a stagnant property inherent in it", but rather that ideas are "*made* true by events". Indeed, truth is itself a kind of event or process; "the process namely of its [an idea's] verifying itself…"[639]. But now, James says, we must pin down the pragmatic meaning of verification. To begin with, we must distinguish between 'full verification' and 'partial' or 'potential verification'.

The full verification of an idea occurs when our having the idea leads to a sense perception which the idea copies. James offers the example of a man lost in the woods who sees a cow-path and forms the idea of a house at the end of it. He follows the cow-path, finds a house, and his idea is thereby fully verified. "Such simply and fully verified leadings", James says, "are certainly the originals and prototypes of the truth-process."[640] Other kinds of truth process – i.e. partial or potential verifications – are always "conceivable as being primary verifications arrested, multiplied, or substituted for one another"[641]. The case of a non-clock-maker's idea of a clock is a good example of partial verification. We non-clock-makers assume our ideas of clocks to be true, and act as if they are true, and if we are not led to frustration, we take our assumption to have been correct. Nowhere in this process does anything amounting to full verification of the idea occur. James contends that most of the ideas we call true are, like non-clock makers' ideas of clocks, only partially or potentially verified:

> For one truth process completed there are a million in our lives that function in this
> state of nascency. They turn us *towards* direct verification; lead us into the
> *surroundings* of the objects they envisage; and then, if everything runs on
> harmoniously, we are so sure that verification is possible that we omit it, and are
> usually justified by all that happens.[642]

In such cases our ideas do not terminate in perceptions which they copy, but rather lead us into the "surroundings" of such perceptions; into situations where having the relevant perceptions is a concrete possibility. Our idea that the object on the wall is a clock, for example, might lead us to call a clock-maker to examine it, whereupon our idea could be verified; or our idea of tigers in India might lead us to catch a flight to India where we could see the tigers for ourselves. As a matter of fact, we rarely do seek full verification in these cases, but this does not stop us from

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[638] James, *Pragmatism*, p201

[639] James, *Pragmatism*, p201

[640] James, *Pragmatism*, p206

[641] James, *Pragmatism*, p206

[642] James, *Pragmatism*, p207

calling our ideas true. "*Indirectly or only potentially verifying processes*", James concludes, "*may thus be true as well as full verification-processes*."[643]

True ideas, whether fully or only partially verified, lead us, in a "progressive" and "harmonious" fashion, "into or up to, or towards" their objects". "This function of agreeable leading", James says, "is what we mean by an idea's verification"[644]. For an idea to agree with reality then, means for it to agreeably lead us into the vicinity of objects. We call, and are entitled to call, any ideas which fulfil this function, true. Recall however that the relevant realities with which a true idea must agree are not exhausted by sense perceptions. Reality, for James, consists of three parts: i) concrete facts (i.e. sense perceptions), ii) necessary truths and relations of ideas, and iii) "the whole body of other truths already in our possession"[645]. An idea's leading into the vicinity of its objects, or even directly to a sense perception of them, will not necessarily make it true if it contradicts ii) or iii). For example, we may hear a creak in an empty room and form the idea of a ghost behind the door, and we may open the door and really *see* a ghost before us, but if we are already convinced that ghosts do not exist, we might conclude that we are hallucinating, and that our idea is therefore false. In this case we might say that although the idea has led to its object, it has done so *disagreeably*. The leading was not progressive and harmonious; it was sudden, unexpected, and perplexing. For someone else of course, this experience might not be perplexing at all, or it might be so convincing as to merit an amendment to their stock of past truths. The crucial point is simply that squaring new ideas with our stock of past truths is an essential part of the process of agreeable leading. James suggests that many of the misunderstandings of pragmatism result from a failure to appreciate this point[646].

The final part of James's pragmatic concept of truth consists in his claim that true ideas are ideas which agreeably lead into the vicinity of their objects "*in the long run and on the whole*" (our emphasis); for, he says, "what meets expediently all the experience in sight won't necessarily meet all farther experiences equally satisfactorily"[647]. Thus, the truth of an idea, on the pragmatic account, is never absolute. Ideas which are true today may turn out to be false tomorrow. While this way of speaking may jar with popular intuitions about truth, it accords perfectly well with our actual use of the term. That being said, James suggests that we may continue to employ the notion of absolute truth as a kind of regulative principle. For pragmatism, absolute truth is "that ideal vanishing point towards which we imagine that all our temporary truths will some day

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[643] James, *Pragmatism*, pp208-209
[644] James, *Pragmatism*, p202
[645] James, *Pragmatism*, p212
[646] James, *The Meaning of Truth*, pp211-212
[647] James, *Pragmatism*, p222

converge"[648]. Thus we may say, for example, that many of our present scientific theories, although pragmatically true today, are absolutely false, because they are bound to be replaced in the long-run. And we may say that our longer-lasting ideas are *truer* than our shorter-lived ones. Pragmatic truth and absolute truth, James acknowledges, may one day perfectly align, but if they do it will be because the absolute truth is *made* – i.e. verified – through concrete truth processes like those that he has outlined[649].

In summary, we may say that according to pragmatism there are two key criteria that must be met in order for an idea to be considered true: i) it must lead to, or into the vicinity of, its objects (sense perceptions), and ii) it must conform, all the while, to our stock of past truths. These criteria alone suffice, when met, to make an idea pragmatically true. But James adds the caveat that the ideas are truer that last longer, and that the ideal long run consensus of all inquirers constitutes a kind of pragmatic absolute truth[650].

2.6.2.2. The Realism/Idealism Debate

The pragmatic theory of truth is utterly mired in debates and controversies. This was true in James's day, and it continues to be true today. Among those debates we may distinguish one in particular that is important for our purposes; the debate between epistemological realist and epistemological idealist interpreters of the pragmatic theory of truth. Realist interpreters hold that truths, for James, are about external realities that exist independently of individual minds, while idealist interpreters hold that truths are about mental phenomena internal to individual minds (i.e. about sense-data, or about other ideas/beliefs). This debate is important because the idealist connotations of the pragmatic theory of truth are often held up as a point of conflict between pragmatism and naturalism. Our view, by contrast, is that pragmatism and naturalism are closely aligned. In what follows we will therefore consider this debate in some detail.

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[648] James, *Pragmatism*, p223

[649] James, *Pragmatism*, p224. For an excellent debate between relativist and absolutist interpreters of James, see the following discussions/articles by David Lamberth and Hilary Putnam: H. Putnam, 'James's Theory of Truth', in *The Cambridge Companion to William James*, ed. by R. A. Putnam, pp166-185; Lamberth, *William James and the Metaphysics of Experience*, pp215-223; H. Putnam, 'James on Truth (Again)', in *William James and the Varieties of Religious Experience*, ed. by Carrette, pp172-182; David Lamberth, 'James and the Question of Truth: A Response to Hilary Putnam', in *William James and the Varieties of Religious Experience*, ed. by Carrette, pp221-234.

[650] It must be admitted that James's account, on our reading, is not so much a 'theory of truth' as a deflationary account of truth plus a theory of warranted assertibility. He thinks that truth as traditionally conceived (i.e. tenselessly and as possessing some metaphysical status independent of human minds) does not exist. His occasional equivocations on this point have no doubt contributed to of the much confusion surrounding this topic in the secondary literature.

In lecture VII of *Pragmatism*, on 'Pragmatism and Humanism' James supplements the pragmatic theory of truth with the principle that, all other criteria being met, the truest belief is the one which best satisfies our passional nature[651]. Many of James's commentators, including R. B. Perry, Russell, Moore, and more recently Richard Gale, take this principle to be at the heart of James's account, and to motivate an idealist interpretation of the pragmatic theory of truth[652]. Gale for instance thinks that this principle, coupled with James's analysis of 'The Perception of Reality' in PP, leads to a doctrine which he calls 'ontological relativism'[653]. According to ontological relativism, Gale says, human beings literally *make* their own realities; not just in the sense of shaping them in accordance with their interests, but also in the sense of actually bringing them into existence (possibly at will)[654].

Ellen Kappy Suckiel takes a slightly different route to a similar conclusion. One consequence of the pragmatic theory of truth is that it makes the truth of an idea depend on human interests and purposes. Thus, James says, depending on the circumstances it may work well to carve up the sky into one set of constellations or another; to treat a human being as a collection of atoms, a collection of cells, an integral consciousness, or a social unit, etc. Evidently, not all of these distinctions can correspond to natural kinds; and yet according to pragmatism they are all true. On the basis of considerations like these Suckiel takes James to be endorsing a form of epistemological idealism. "James", she says, "considers common-sense physical objects to be the product of a pragmatic construction". And this, she thinks, commits him to the view that "realities may differ, depending upon personal interpretations of experience", and thereby to "a constructionalist view of reality"[655].

Now, it is our contention that Gale's and Suckiel's interpretations cannot possibly be correct. James makes far too many statements which seem to directly contradict them; in particular in the eighth essay of *The Meaning of Truth*, on 'The Pragmatist Account of Truth and its Misunderstanders', where he addresses the misunderstanding that "No pragmatist can be a

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[651] James, *Pragmatism*, pp239-272
[652] See: Ralph Barton Perry, 'Review of Pragmatism as a Philosophical Generalization', *Journal of Philosophy, Psychology, and Scientific Method*, 4 (1907), pp421-428; George Edward Moore, 'Professor James's Pragmatism', *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society*, 8 (1907-8), pp33-77; Bertrand Russell, 'Transatlantic 'Truth'', *Albany Review*, 2 (1908), pp393-410
[653] Gale, *The Divided Self of William James*, pp190-198
[654] Gale does not say that James is wholly consistent on this point. He acknowledges that many of James's statements seem to go against the thrust of this ontological relativism. He traces this inconsistency to James's own divided self. As promethean pragmatist he wants to *make* reality; as anti-promethean mystic he wants to *discover* it. Accordingly, Gale refers to this tension as James's 'discovering-making aporia'. See: Gale, *The Divided Self of William James*, pp190-198.
[655] Ellen Kappy Suckiel, *The Pragmatic Philosophy of William James* (Notre Dame: The University of Notre Dame Press, 1982), p140

realist in his epistemology"[656]. This misunderstanding, James thinks, arises chiefly from the notion

that pragmatic truth consists in 'satisfaction'. This, recall, was the source of Gale's irrealist

reading of the theory. Here, in MT, James gives an utterly unambiguous rebuttal of such readings:

> The pragmatist calls satisfactions indispensable for truth-building, but I have
> everywhere called them insufficient unless reality be also incidentally led to. If the
> reality assumed were cancelled from the pragmatist's universe of discourse, he
> would straight-way give the name of falsehoods to the beliefs remaining, in spite of
> all their satisfactoriness. For him, as for his critic, there can be no truth if there is
> nothing to be true about. Ideas are so much flat psychological surface unless some
> mirrored matter gives them cognitive lustre. This is why as a pragmatist I have so
> carefully posited 'reality' ab initio, and why, throughout my whole discussion, I
> remain an epistemological realist.[657]

Such a direct statement hardly needs further comment. The question is why, given statements

like this one, interpretations like Suckiel's and Gale's have arisen?[658]

There are, we suggest, two key factors that give rise to idealist/irrealist interpretations of the

pragmatic theory of truth. First, there is James's rejection of the popular and ingrained notion

that truth is ascribable to propositions (conceived as sharable quasi mind-independent objects

that are distinct from beliefs). On this view propositions are the ultimate bearers of truth, and

their truth entails that the states of affairs which they describe are realities. Thus, true

propositions attain a status almost equivalent to realities. The true proposition 'that Caesar

crossed the Rubicon' passes, in common parlance at least, for the *actual fact* of Caesar crossing

the Rubicon. It is on this basis that some commentators interpret James's belief that truths are

shaped by human interests as entailing that *realities* are shaped by human interests. In fact,

however, James ascribes truth to *beliefs*; and holds that the truth of a belief entails only its

agreeably leading into the vicinity of its objects. Thus truths, for James, are by no means

equivalent to realities, and their being shaped by human interests does not entail that realities are

so shaped.

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[656] James, *The Meaning of Truth*, p190

[657] James, *The Meaning of Truth*, p195

[658] Wesley Cooper offers a slightly more nuanced version of the idealist interpretation, suggesting that James, although an epistemological idealist, was a metaphysical realist. He believed, in other words, that there were external realities existing independently of individual minds, but held that truth/knowledge did not involve a relation to those external realities. This, according to Cooper, is because realities, for James, consisted in pure experience, which is essentially preconceptual, while truths always took a conceptual form. Seeing as the conceptual cannot possibly *correspond* with the preconceptual, truths must be supposed to correspond with experiences that have already been conceptually cooked by some individual mind. See: Cooper, *The Unity of William James's Thought*, pp219-220.

The other key factor that gives rise to idealist/irrealist interpretations of the pragmatic theory is the fact that it tacitly presupposes the metaphysics of radical empiricism. James has said that the key realities with which our ideas correspond are experiences. To those not familiar with ERE, this seems immediately to commit him to idealism, for experiences are usually supposed to be mental phenomena that are confined to individual minds. The *typical* epistemological realist, by contrast, believes that ideas correspond with the material realities that are *represented* by experiences. However, as we know from our treatment of ERE in section 2.5, James does *not* believe that experiences are mental phenomena that are confined to individual minds. Rather he believes that they are neutral phenomena that are accessible to multiple minds (neutral monism/naive realism), or else that they are the outer appearances of 'experiences for themselves'; i.e. psychical realities existing independently of the minds that encounter them (panpsychism)[659]. In either case, experiential realities, for James, clearly require a metaphysically and epistemologically realist interpretation.

Robert Schwarz suggests that the apparent irrealist/constructionist strain in the pragmatic theory of truth amounts to a 'world-making thesis' according to which our experience is conceptually cooked and shaped by human interests to a much greater extent than common-sense would lead us to suppose[660]. On this reading, Suckiel, for instance, is quite right to say that common-sense physical objects are pragmatically constructed for James, but wrong to say that *realities* are pragmatically constructed. Common-sense physical objects are not realities; only pure experiences are realities. Common-sense physical objects are not pure experiences; they are experiences that have been conceptually cooked. As such, their being shaped by human interests leaves the realities untouched[661]. Pragmatic world-making is therefore perfectly consistent with epistemological realism. And with the supposed idealist connotations of pragmatism

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[659] This seems to raise an interesting potential conflict between the pragmatic theory of truth and panpsychism. If panpsychism is true, and realities consist in experiences for themselves, then how can truth processes ever actually *terminate.* The termination of a truth process, in this case, would involve the knower's stream of consciousness actually passing *into* that of the object. As a matter of fact, James frankly entertains this possibility, calling it 'telepathic confluence', and holding that it may, for all we know, really be possible. If not, he says, then (given the truth of panpsychism) all truths will be of the virtual or substitutional kind; only ever leading us into the vicinity of their objects, and never right up to them. See: James, *The Meaning of Truth*, pp129-133

[660] Robert Schwartz, *Rethinking Pragmatism* (Oxford: Wiley Blackwell, 2012), pp124-139. Sami Pihlström offers an alternative reading which, although it also invokes the notion of 'world-making', concludes in favour of an irrealist interpretation of pragmatism. See: Pihlström, *Pragmatism and Philosophical Anthropology*, pp1-30. Both authors refer to Nelson Goodman's theory of worldmaking in: Nelson Goodman, *Ways of Worldmaking* (Hassocks: Harvester Press, 1992)

[661] Strictly speaking we should say that common-sense physical objects, considered in the first intention, *are* pure experiences, and thus are realities (See Lamberth's discussion referenced in footnote 633 above). This, however, is evidently not the manner in which Suckiel is taking them in the above discussion.

undermined, Schwarz thinks, the path is now open for the development of a distinctively

pragmatic naturalism:

> For the Pragmatists, inquiry guided by the tenets of scientific method *is* naturalism.
> Pragmatic naturalism does not demand an additional commitment to materialism,
> physicalism, or the elimination of the intentional. Indeed, it questions the
> significance and intelligibility of such projects when they are forced to confront and
> comprehend experience.[662]

Philip Kitcher offers an essentially similar reading of the relationship between pragmatism and

realism[663]. He too, thinks that such a reading establishes the possibility of a doctrine of pragmatic

naturalism, characterized by an emphasis on human nature and on the social dimension of human

inquiry, as well as by its rejection of strong, austere versions of scientism[664]. Evidently pragmatic

naturalism, as Kitcher and Schwarz conceive it, is a species of liberal naturalism[665]. Its source in

James's *Pragmatism* bodes well, therefore, for our placement of him in the liberal naturalist

tradition[666]. In the next section we shall see another striking manifestation of the affinity

between pragmatism and naturalism; one that sheds further light on the realism/idealism debate.

2.6.2.3. The Pragmatic Theory of Truth as an Evolutionary Theory of Cognition

The real key to the pragmatic theory of truth, in our view, is understanding its evolutionary

dimension. In a review of Schiller's 'Humanism', published in 1904, James describes pragmatism

as "a novel way of looking at the mind's relations to reality"[667]. He lists three influences that have

conspired to make it fashionable: i) the criticisms of Mill, Lotze, and Sigwart, against the notion

that ideas straightforwardly 'copy' reality, ii) the rising popularity of instrumentalist conceptions

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[662] Schwartz, p76.

[663] Philip Kitcher, 'Pragmatism and Realism: A Modest Proposal', in *Preludes to Pragmatism* (New York: OUP, 2012), pp128-144

[664] Philip Kitcher, 'Pragmatic Naturalism', in *Philip Kitcher: Pragmatic Naturalism*, ed. by Kaiser & Seide, pp15-44

[665] David Lamberth argues persuasively that pragmatism is strongest when kept free from such associations with naturalism. He thinks that pragmatism, with its essential methodological focus, obviates the metaphysical opposition of naturalism and supernaturalism. See: Lamberth, 'Pragmatism and Naturalism: An Inevitable Conjunction?', p85. This does not bear directly on our thesis, which seeks to establish a Jamesian naturalism; not necessarily a pragmatic naturalism.

[666] There is a question, of course, as to the extent to which such a doctrine was already at work in James's texts, and the extent to which the other aspects of his philosophy – in particular his religious views – are consistent with it. John Ryder for instance argues that, whatever the independent merits of pragmatic naturalism as a philosophical doctrine, William James was probably not a proponent of it. See: John Ryder, 'Reconciling Pragmatism and Naturalism', in *Pragmatic Naturalism and Realism*, ed. by Shook, pp55-77 (p56).

[667] *The Works of William James: Essays, Comments, and Reviews*, ed. by Burkhardt, p550. This review originally appeared in *Nation*. See: William James, 'Humanism', *Nation*, 78 (1904), pp175-178. We refer to *The Works* reprint for reasons of accessibility.

of science/scientific theories, and iii) the growing acceptance of the doctrine of evolution. On this last point James says the following:

> [N]ot only has the doctrine of evolution weaned us from fixities and inflexibilities in general, and given us a world all plastic, but it has made us ready to imagine almost all our functions, even the intellectual ones, as 'adaptations,' and possibly transient adaptations, to practical human needs.[668]

In other words, evolution has made us realise that even the function of knowledge/knowing truth is shaped by evolutionary pressures, and geared towards adaptivity. He elaborates, saying that "All our mental categories without exception have been evolved because of their fruitfulness for life, and owe their being to historic circumstances"[669]. And not only the functions, he suggests, but any products of the functions – i.e. specific ideas, theories, and conceptions – are likewise to be regarded as adaptations[670]. Thus, he refers approvingly to Georg Simmel's view that "no human conception whatever is more than an instrument of biological utility; and that if it be successfully that, we may call it true, whatever it resembles or fails to resemble."[671]

In this little review on 'Humanism' then, James seems to present the doctrine of evolution as utterly central to the pragmatic theory of truth. Indeed, he presents that theory as an inevitable consequence of applying evolutionary principles to our understanding of the phenomenon of cognition. A number of commentators have noted this evolutionary connection, but few have set much store by it. Sprigge for instance acknowledges that Darwinism is "one of the several tributaries leading to James's pragmatism"[672], but downplays its relevance to the final theory. It is "doubtful" he thinks, that the theory of evolution really favours a pragmatist conception of truth over a common-sense correspondence theory:

> The correspondence theorist may grant that conscious thought has developed as a survival instrument, but he will claim that it is useful precisely to the extent that it provides the organism with a map of the world in which it must behave in ways which help it prosper. Thus, since its particular utility to the organism lies in its correspondence to the environment, there will be a strong tendency for truth and survival value to the organism to go together, but this, so far from making them identical, depends on the fact that the first is a means to the second.[673]

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[668] *The Works of William James: Essays, Comments, and Reviews*, ed. by Burkhardt, p551
[669] *The Works of William James: Essays, Comments, and Reviews*, ed. by Burkhardt, p552
[670] Recall James's statement from VRE regarding the adaptive value of religious beliefs: "It is but the elimination of the humanly unfit, and the survival of the humanly fittest, applied to religious beliefs; and if we look at history candidly and without prejudice, we have to admit that no religion has ever in the long run established or proved itself in any other way." See: James, *The Varieties*, p331
[671] *The Works of William James: Essays, Comments, and Reviews*, ed. by Burkhardt, p551
[672] Sprigge, *James and Bradley*, p25
[673] Sprigge, *James and Bradley*, p25

The pragmatists' reasoning, Sprigge thinks, is wrong-headed. They say that ideas are *counted* as true insofar as they prove adaptive, but it is much more natural to suppose that ideas prove adaptive insofar as they *just are* true; i.e. insofar as they accurately represent reality. Both ways of conceiving the matter are, we suggest, not without merit. However, in the final analysis it is the pragmatists' conception that is the more profound. To see why this so, consider the phenomenon of so-called 'satisficing perceptions', as highlighted by cognitive scientist Donald Hoffman:

> Male jewel beetles fly about looking for the glossy, dimpled, and brown wing-casings of females. When males of H. sapiens began tossing out empty beer bottles that were glossy, dimpled, and just the right shade of brown, the male beetles swarmed the bottles and ignored the females, nearly causing the extinction of the species (Gwynne and Rentz 1983).[674]

In this, Hoffman says, the beetle's perceptions "relied not on veridical information but rather on heuristics which worked in the niche where they evolved". The reason they worked well is because fallible, heuristic-based perceptual systems, are relatively simple and efficient to produce/run. This is what Sprigge's analysis fails to take into account. Even granting that accurate perceptions are more adaptive, accuracy is not the only criterion of adaptivity. All other things being equal, simplicity and efficiency are at least as important, if not more so. Hoffman argues that the same analysis may apply to human perception. It may be adaptive before it is objectively true, and where adaptivity diverges from objective truth, it may well be objectively false.

Now, it is our contention that the pragmatic theory of truth embodies essentially the same logic, but applies it to cognition rather than perception. Human cognition, it says, yields adaptive

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[674] Donald Hoffman, Manish Singh, Chetan Prakash, 'The Interface Theory of Perception', *Psychonomic Bulletin & Review*, 22 (2015), pp1480-1506 (p1481). The reference to Gwynne and Rentz is to the following article: Darryl T. Gwynne & David C. Rentz, 'Beetles on the Bottle: Male Buprestids Make Stubbies for Females', *Journal of Australian Entomological Society*, 22 (1983), pp79-80. Hoffman also describes an example of satisficing perceptions in dragonflies: "Dragonflies, for instance, have aquatic larvae and must find water to lay their eggs. Dragonfly vision has a simple trick to find water: Find horizontally polarized light reflections (Horváth et al 1998, 2007). Water strongly reflects horizontally polarized light, so this trick often guides successful oviposition. Unfortunately for the dragonfly, oil slicks and shiny tombstones also reflect such light, sometimes more strongly than water. Dragonflies are fooled by such slicks and tombstones to lay eggs where they cannot survive. In the niche where dragonflies evolved, their perceptual strategy normally works, but where that niche has been disturbed by H. sapiens with oil slicks and tombstones, the same strategy can be fatal." See: Hoffman, Singh, & Prakash, 'The Interface Theory of Perception', p1481. The reference to Horváth et al are to the following articles: Gábor Horváth, Balazs Bernath, & Gergely Molnar, 'Dragonflies Find Crude Oil Visually More Attractive than Water: Multiple Choice Experiments on Dragonfly Polarotaxis', *Naturwissenschaften*, 85 (1998), pp292-297; Gábor Horváth, Péter Malik, György Kriska, & Hansruedi Wildermuth, 'Ecological Traps for Dragonflies in a Cemetery: The Attraction of Sympetrum Species (Odonata: Libelluide) by Horizontally Polarizing Black Gravestones', *Freshwater Biology*, 52 (2007), pp1700-1709

heuristics rather than objective truths; it yields 'satisficing cognitions', selected more for their efficiency than for their accuracy. James finds support for this way of conceiving of cognition in the fact that we frequently find that different and incompatible ideas and theories work well in different circumstances. This is obviously the case, he contends, with our ideas about the mereological constitution of objects; i.e. about how we divide objects up into constituent parts. Thus, in psychology it often works well to treat an organism as an indivisible whole or integral consciousness; in biology it is best to treat it as a collection of cells; in chemistry, as a collection of molecules; and in physics, as a collection of particles[675]. Depending on the particular domain of phenomena we are investigating different and often incompatible ideas/theories prove to be most useful. This is true within science, where physicists and biologists carve up reality in different and incompatible ways, and it is also true of the competing theories of science and common-sense. Sometimes it is useful to treat of colour exclusively in terms of surface reflectance and the wavelength of light; sometimes it is useful to treat of it in terms of phenomenal properties. The fact that different and incompatible ideas/theories work better in different circumstances, should incline us, James thinks, towards the pragmatic association of truth with adaptivity:

> Ought not the existence of the various types of thinking which we have reviewed, each so splendid for certain purposes, yet all conflicting still, and neither one of them able to support a claim of absolute veracity, to awaken a presumption favourable to the pragmatist view that all our theories are instrumental, are *mental modes of adaptation* to reality, rather than revelations or gnostic answers to some divinely instituted world-enigma? [our emphasis][676]

Cognition, James says, yields "mental modes of adaptation" – i.e. adaptive heuristics – rather than objective truths. We may call such heuristics *true* provided they meet James's pragmatic criteria; provided they lead us into the vicinity of sense perceptions of their objects, and fit in with our stock of past truths[677]. We note that this reading confirms James in his avowal of a qualified epistemological realism; it allows that true ideas, whilst not exactly *copying* reality, are constrained by and adapted to it. It also makes sense of James's unshakable confidence that the pragmatic theory of truth was destined to be accepted. He had intuited, but not quite

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[675] James, *Pragmatism*, pp253-254

[676] James, *Pragmatism*, pp193-194

[677] Adaptive heuristics are not automatically counted as true just because they are adaptive. For instance, many of us employ the heuristic device of believing that a car may be coming down the road we are about to cross, and of checking the road before we cross. We sometimes employ this heuristic even when we are quite certain that there is no car, because doing so reinforces the habit. In this sense we might say that the idea that a car may be coming down the road serves as an adaptive heuristic even when it is not true; i.e. even when it fails to lead us into the vicinity of a sense perception of its objects.

successfully articulated, the fact that it was an inevitable consequence of the theory of evolution[678].

2.6.3. Pragmatism, Science, and Religion

2.6.3.1. The Pragmatic Critique of Scientificism

In section 2.3 we discussed James's critique of scientificism. We divided it up, recall, into three parts: i) the critique of scientism, ii) the critique of hyperscientific realism, and iii) the critique of the notion that there are sharp boundaries between science and non-science. In each case, we said, pragmatism would supplement these critiques. It would supplement the critique of scientism by introducing a theory of cognition that recognized non-scientific avenues to knowledge; it would supplement the critique of hyperscientific realism by setting out an instrumentalist account of scientific theories; and it would supplement the critique of sharp scientific boundaries by showing the underlying logic of science to be broad enough to encompass certain traditionally non-scientific disciplines. In the present section we will complete James's critique of scientificism by considering each of these pragmatic contributions in turn.

i)   The Pragmatic Critique of Scientism

The thesis of scientism states that only science can provide us with genuine knowledge/truth about reality. It is not difficult to see how the pragmatic theory of truth undermines this thesis. The pragmatic theory of truth says that human cognition, whether employed in scientific pursuits or otherwise, cannot give us objective truth; the best it can give us are adaptive heuristics. It says, moreover, that the truth of these heuristics is not determined by the nature of the enterprise which produced them, but by their successful fulfilment of the function of agreeable leading; of leading us into the vicinity of sense perceptions of their objects, and of cohering with our stock of past truths. Nowhere in this theory does James invoke science or any other discipline as an exclusive arbiter of truth or of genuine knowledge. Indeed, the theory seems designed in part to preclude such arbitration.

ii)   The Pragmatic Critique of Hyperscientific Realism

The thesis of hyperscientific realism states that only the terms of scientific theories refer to actual entities; i.e. that only entities postulated by science really exist. James's pragmatism undermines this thesis by adopting an instrumentalist analysis of scientific theories:

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[678] For an enlightening discussion of the relationship between the evolutionary theories of cognition and philosophical pragmatism more generally (one, however, which omits an extended treatment of James's views), see: Schulkin, 'Evolutionary Origins: Oriented to Kinds', in *Naturalism and Pragmatism*, pp56-82

> [A]s the sciences have developed … the notion has gained ground that most, perhaps all, of our laws are only approximations. The laws themselves, moreover, have grown so numerous that there is no counting them; and so many rival formulations are proposed in all the branches of science that thinkers have become accustomed to the notion that no theory is absolutely a transcript of reality, but that any one of them may from some point of view be useful. Their great use is to summarize old facts and to lead to new ones. They are only a man-made language, a conceptual shorthand, as someone calls them, in which we write our reports of nature; and languages, as is well known, tolerate much choice of expression and many dialects.[679]

James explicitly mentions Duhem (among others) as a source of this view. In chapter one, recall, we saw liberal naturalist critiques of scientism and hyperscientific realism invoking Duhem's famous 'underdetermination thesis', according to which the approximate nature of scientific data, together with the fact that multiple conflicting theories can explain that data, leads to the conclusion that scientific theories are underdetermined by evidence. James seems here to be invoking the same thesis, and to the same effect. This thesis, we said in chapter one, not only undermines hyperscientific realism, but also helps to bolster certain arguments against scientism. Part of James's argument against scientism in WB for instance, revolves around the notion that normative elements play a role in scientific theory selection. This argument assumes as a premise that scientific theories are sometimes underdetermined by data[680].

iii)   The Pragmatic Critique of Sharp Scientific Boundaries

We said in section 2.3 that the notion that there are no sharp boundaries between science and non-science is connected with the so-called 'unity of science' thesis which we discussed in chapter 1. The unity thesis, recall, states that all sciences are united by their possession of some single feature; a single subject matter, a single sociological form, a single method, etc. James, we said, did not exactly reject the unity thesis. Rather he endorsed it, but conceived of the shared scientific method in such broad terms that various traditionally non-scientific enterprises could also be said to employ it. In WB he characterised that method as 'the method of verification'. It consisted, he said, in the formulation of hypotheses, the determining of the empirical consequences of those hypotheses, and the performance of experiments to test those consequences. Post *Pragmatism*, we suggest, 'the method of verification' should be taken to have been superseded in James's analysis by 'the pragmatic method'. The pragmatic method, after all, may be said to *contain* the method of verification as construed by James in WB: it asks

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[679] James, *Pragmatism*, pp56-57
[680] For a more general discussion of the relationship between the pragmatic tradition and key issues in the philosophy of science, see: Robert Almeder, 'Pragmatism and Philosophy of Science: A Critical Survey', *International Studies in the Philosophy of Science*, 21 (2007), pp171-195

what *practical effects* a hypothesis will have – what sensations we may expect from it and what reactions we must prepare – and it proposes to *test* hypotheses according to their practical effects. Insofar, therefore, as the method of verification constitutes the essence of the scientific method, the pragmatic method may be said to contain that also[681]. As James says in a letter to Charles Strong in 1907, the pragmatic method "completes and enlarges" the scientific method[682]. The conclusion, as regards the question of the boundaries of science, is that legitimate knowledge-producing enterprises are to be distinguished by their employment of the *pragmatic method*, rather than by their employment of any special method of the sciences. This, as we suggested in section 2.4, may explain why James drops the term 'Science of Religions' after VRE. He comes to appreciate that the important element in the legitimate study of religion is not so much any particular scientific method as the underlying pragmatic method.

2.6.3.2. The Pragmatic Truth of Religion

In some ways we may say that the tension between naturalism and religion that pervades James's work becomes most overt in *Pragmatism*. In this text, after all, James presents mediation between the naturalistic and religious worldviews as his explicit goal. In the opening lecture of *Pragmatism*, we see James present this tension in terms of the contrasting tendencies of two kinds of temperament; the tender-minded and tough-minded temperaments. The former, James says, are inclined towards rationalism and spiritualism, while the latter are inclined towards empiricism and naturalism. The antagonism between these temperaments has, according to James, played a significant part in shaping philosophical debate throughout the ages. For the majority of our history – from Plato all the way through to the great 17th century rationalists – the tender-minded have had the upper hand. But now, James remarks, tough-mindedness is on the rise:

> For a hundred and fifty years past the progress of science has seemed to mean the enlargement of the material universe and the diminution of man's importance. The result is what one may call the growth of naturalistic or positivistic feeling.[683]

This, in turn, has led to an intensification of the opposition between the tender-minded and tough-minded temperaments. The philosophical constructions of each have tended to take more

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[681] Peirce, indeed, had always intended that the pragmatic method should express the underlying logic of science. It represented, as it were, the scientific method stripped of all incidental accretions. See: Charles Sanders Peirce, *Illustrations of the Logic of Science*, ed. by Cornelis de Waal (Chicago: Open Court, 2014). For an excellent discussion of this series of articles and their relation to William James's conception of the scientific method, see: Croce, *Science and Religion in the Era of William James*, pp204-224

[682] *The Correspondence of William James*, ed. by Skrupskelis & Berkeley, XI, p343

[683] James, *Pragmatism*, p16

and more extreme forms, with empiricists embracing epiphenomenalism and scientificism, and rationalists embracing absolutism[684]. Meanwhile the common man, who typically embodies a mixture of the two temperaments, and hankers for a middle way, is left without proper philosophic representation. The common man, James says, "wants facts; he wants science; but he also wants a religion"[685]. What he finds however, is "an empirical philosophy that is not religious enough, and a religious philosophy that is not empirical enough" for his purposes[686]. Pragmatism, James suggests, is able to find a middle way between these extremes: "It can remain religious like the rationalisms, but at the same time, like the empiricisms, it can preserve the richest intimacy with facts."[687]

The key to pragmatism's success as mediator between naturalism and religion is the pragmatic theory of truth. According to the pragmatic theory, religious ideas, like many of the other products of human cognition, are to be understood as adaptive heuristics for dealing with experience. That religious heuristics are adaptive is of course part of the argument of VRE. However, although adaptivity is a significant part of truth for James, it is not the whole of it. Adaptive heuristics, in order to be counted as true, must lead into the vicinity of sensory experiences of their objects, and must cohere with our stock of past truths. Now, according to popular opinion religious ideas are suspect precisely because they fail to meet the former criterion. Thus, James says, he fears that his exposition of the pragmatic theory "may have left the impression on many of you that pragmatism means methodically to leave the superhuman out."[688] This, he assures us, was not his intention. James's own views, after all, do not coincide with popular opinion on this matter. He believes that religious ideas and theories lead, whether through conscious cultivation or subconscious incubation, to religious and mystical experiences; and he believes that religious and mystical experiences are "absolutely sensational in their

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[684] James says the following regarding naturalism's commitment to epiphenomenalism: "The laws of physical nature are what run things, materialism says. The highest productions of human genius might be ciphered by one who had complete acquaintance with the facts, out of their physiological conditions…". See: James, *Pragmatism*, p93. We take this statement to imply the doctrines of CCP and POR (possibly also PER). James goes on to say that this position "may better be called naturalism", and that it is to be distinguished from 'materialism' insofar as the latter is taken to stand for a doctrine which holds that a nonexperiential substance underlies the phenomenal world. James opposes naturalism to 'spiritualism', which "says that mind not only witnesses and records things, but also runs and operates them: the world being thus guided, not by its lower, but by its higher element." See: James, *Pragmatism*, p93. We note that James characterizes spiritualism not in terms of transcendent agents intervening in the world's events, but in terms of the world's own "higher element" having causal power.
[685] James, *Pragmatism*, p15
[686] James, *Pragmatism*, p15
[687] James, *Pragmatism*, p33
[688] James, *Pragmatism*, pp298-299

epistemological quality"[689]. As such James holds that the hypothesis of God meets the first pragmatic criterion; it agreeably (adaptively) leads us into the vicinity of sensory experiences of its objects. It is in this way that pragmatism acts as a mediator between religion and naturalism. It offers us a method and a theory of cognition/truth that can establish religious hypotheses upon empirical principles. It thereby treads the line "[b]etween the two extremes of crude naturalism … and transcendental absolutism"[690], avoiding scientificism on the one hand and excessive rationalism on the other. All that remains therefore is to show that it satisfies the second criterion; i.e. "to build it out so that it will combine satisfactorily with all the other working truths"[691]. James insists, however, that *Pragmatism* is not the place to embark upon that task, electing to postpone it until another occasion.

2.6.4. Conclusions

In *Pragmatism* James's naturalistic strain once again has a strong showing. The pragmatic method, we saw in section 2.6.1, is perfectly aligned with the methodological thesis of naturalism; it aims to bring science and philosophy much closer together. Some commentators (i.e. Kitcher and Schwarz) have even suggested that this is enough to qualify pragmatism itself as a *form* of naturalism. In section 2.6.2, we saw that James, putting that method into practice, devised a pragmatic theory of cognition inspired in large part by the theory of evolution. This theory, moreover, avoided some of the metaphysical excesses of its rivals. It deliberately eschewed notions of the self-transcendency of thought, and of the instantaneous hooking-up of thought with reality. In *The Meaning of Truth*, James suggests that one distinct advantage of the pragmatic account is that it utilizes "no other categories than those which we employ in describing other natural processes"[692], and that it aims to show that "[k]nowing is just a natural process like any other"[693]. One might almost construe it as an attempted naturalization of intentionality.

The only part of *Pragmatism* that might be said to break from this overtly naturalistic pattern is its treatment of religion. However, such a judgement rests, we think, on the preconceived notion that there is some essential incompatibility between naturalism and religion. It is one of the explicit goals of this thesis – one that is consonant, on our reading, with the spirit of *Pragmatism* – to challenge this supposed incompatibility. The pragmatic synthesis of religion and naturalism is

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[689] James, *The Varieties*, p424
[690] James, *Pragmatism*, p301
[691] James, *Pragmatism*, p299
[692] James, *The Meaning of Truth*, p142
[693] James, *The Meaning of Truth*, p149

only half complete however. James, as we said, leaves the task unfinished. He has yet to show that the hypothesis of God can be made consistent with our stock of past truths. This, we suggest, is what he tries to accomplish in *A Pluralistic Universe*, which is the subject of the final section of this chapter.

2.7.   A Pluralistic Universe

A Pluralistic Universe is the consummation of a number of tendencies in James's philosophy. It is his chance to recoup the material he had planned for his second course of Gifford lectures; to articulate his polytheistic vision of the universe as "a collection of … selves, of different degrees of inclusiveness". It is his chance, also, to make good on the promise of ERE, to flesh out "the relations between radical empiricism and panpsychism". Finally, as we have just seen, it is his chance to build out the hypothesis of God so as to be consistent with his stock of past truths. PU is justly regarded, therefore, as a supremely important text in James's works. As we said in the introduction to this chapter, we join David Lamberth in counting it as the definitive statement of his mature philosophical position.

In what follows we will investigate PU under four heads. In section 2.7.1 we will consider James's novel classification of his worldview as a form of pluralistic pantheism (as opposed to piecemeal supernaturalism). We shall see that pluralistic pantheism is committed to substance-monism, thing-pluralism, strong emergentism, and macro-causation. By the lights of the schema we developed in chapter 1, it is therefore a species of radical religious naturalism. In section 2.7.2 we will review James's investigations of Fechner, and the doctrine of panpsychism he develops on their basis. In section 2.7.3 we will look at Fechner's/James's notion that smaller consciousnesses combine into larger ones. Finally, in section 2.7.4 we will try to establish the content of James's mature concept of God as presented in PU. We shall see that James defends a doctrine of finite theism, for which God is identical with a portion of the physical universe, and for which God's consciousness constitutes the inner nature of that portion of the universe. This finite theism, supplemented by James's reconstructed doctrines of panpsychism and emergentism, will be a central part of our restoration of his theistic naturalism in chapter 3.

2.7.1. Pluralistic Pantheism

James begins his Hibbert lectures by revisiting one of his favourite themes; the relationship between philosophical preferences and psychological temperament. There are, he says, two kinds of temperament that are decisive in determining philosophical preferences: the cynical temper and the sympathetic temper[694]. Which temperament we possess determines what sort of worldview will appeal to us. If cynical, James says, broadly materialistic philosophies will appeal

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[694] We may safely presume that the cynical and sympathetic tempers correspond closely with the tough-minded and tender-minded temperaments of *Pragmatism*.

to us; if sympathetic, broadly spiritualistic ones will[695]. The fundamental distinction between these types of philosophy, James suggests, is that the former defines the world "so as to leave man's soul upon it as a sort of outside passenger or alien, while the latter insists that the intimate and human must surround and underlie the brutal."[696] This distinction, James thinks, is best construed as being one between 'foreignness' and 'intimacy'[697]. Materialistic philosophies tolerate and even celebrate foreignness; spiritualistic philosophies require a high degree of intimacy.

The category of spiritualistic philosophy, James says, itself subdivides into a less intimate and a more intimate branch[698]. On the one hand we have theism, which conceives of human beings as radically separate from and other than God; on the other hand we have pantheism, which conceives of human beings as "entitatively one with God"[699]. "The essential dualism of the theistic view", according to James, "has all sorts of collateral consequences" that make for foreignness:

> Man being an outsider and a mere subject to God, not his intimate partner, a
> character of externality invades the field. God is not heart of our heart and reason of
> our reason, but our magistrate, rather; and mechanically to obey his commands,
> however strange they may be, remains our only moral duty.[700]

At this point, James chooses to narrow the scope of his discussion. Neither "cynical materialism" nor "old-fashioned theism" attain the degree of intimacy sought by modern men and women of the sympathetic temper:

> Our contemporary mind having once for all grasped the possibility of a more intimate
> weltanschauung, the only opinions quite worthy of arresting our attention will fall
> within the general scope of what may roughly be called the pantheistic field of vision,
> the vision of God as the indwelling divine rather than the external creator, and of
> human life as part and parcel of that deep reality.[701]

For the remainder of the discussion, he will focus on the pantheistic branch of spiritualistic philosophy, of which, he says, there are once again two main species[702]. On the one hand there is

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[695] James, *A Pluralistic Universe*, p23
[696] James, *A Pluralistic Universe*, p23
[697] James, *A Pluralistic Universe*, pp31-32
[698] James, *A Pluralistic Universe*, p24
[699] James, *A Pluralistic Universe*, p25
[700] James, *A Pluralistic Universe*, p27. James notes that theism, holding that man is made in God's image, still attains a high degree of intimacy, but insists that "to be like a thing is not as intimate a relation as to be substantially fused into it, to form one continuous soul and body with it", and therefore that pantheism attains a yet higher degree of intimacy. See: James, *A Pluralistic Universe*, p25.
[701] James, *A Pluralistic Universe*, p30
[702] James, *A Pluralistic Universe*, p31

the monistic or 'all-form' of pantheism, which holds that the totality – the all – constitutes a single, all-inclusive entity which alone is genuinely real, and that finite beings – the 'eaches' – are somehow illusory. On the other hand we have the pluralistic or 'each-form' of pantheism, which holds that finite beings are genuinely real, and that the totality does not constitute a single entity in the strong sense that monists claim[703]. James contends that the monistic form of pantheism, because it condemns the experience of finite beings to relative unreality and postulates a total or absolute perspective that is utterly unlike that of finite beings, "leaves us almost as much outside of the divine being as dualistic theism does"[704]. The pluralistic form, on the contrary, leaving our finite experience intact, allows that human beings, as they are, may be genuine participants in the divine reality. This, by James's lights, makes pluralistic pantheism the more intimate variety.

It is at this point that James situates his own worldview with respect to the types of philosophy under discussion. Absolute idealism, he says, is an example of the monistic form of pantheism; his own view – radical empiricism – is an example of the pluralistic form[705]. James is perfectly explicit on this point. Radical empiricism is a form of pantheism. It conceives of God as being of one substance with nature; not as a supernatural being interacting with nature from the outside. We know from *Pragmatism* that the core metaphysical difference between materialism and spiritualism is the former's endorsement of CCP and the latter's endorsement of macro-causation[706]. The core metaphysical difference between pantheism and theism, we suggest, is the former's endorsement of substance-monism (and/or CCN) and the latter's endorsement of substance-dualism[707]. Finally, the core metaphysical difference between monistic and pluralistic pantheism is the former's endorsement of thing-monism (according to which the world as a whole is the only genuine entity) and the latter's endorsement of thing-pluralism (according to which the world is comprised of a plurality of genuine entities)[708].

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[703] James, *A Pluralistic Universe*, p34
[704] James, *A Pluralistic Universe*. p44
[705] James, *A Pluralistic Universe*, p35
[706] James, *Pragmatism*, p93. See also: footnote 684 to section 2.6.3.2.
[707] That James held this view is confirmed by his comments on theism and pantheism in the preface to Paulsen's *Introduction to Philosophy*: "For Christianity, e.g., Nature is something opposed to the truer unseen world, a surface of recoil to which we must first die. For the more pantheistic systems the relation of Nature to the Unseen is not one of contrast but rather of less and more – there is but one world, partly seen and partly unseen, and its evolution is simple and direct." See: James, 'Preface', in Paulsen, *Introduction to Philosophy*, trans. by Thilly, p. iii-iv. Reprinted in: *The Works of William James: Essays in Philosophy*, ed. by Burkhardt, pp90-93 (p92).
[708] We take the terms 'thing-monism' and 'thing-pluralism' from Galen Strawson's discussion of panpsychism in *Consciousness and Its Place in Nature*. See: Galen Strawson, 'Realistic Monism: Why Physicalism Entails Panpsychism', in *Consciousness and Its Place in Nature*, ed. by Anthony Freeman (Exeter: Imprint Academic, 2006). Jonathan Schafer, whose seminal article on monism ought to serve as the basis for any in-depth discussion of the doctrine, uses the terms 'existence monism' and 'existence pluralism' in

David Lamberth translates this discussion into a helpful tabulated schema, which we reproduce

below along with some annotations of our own in square brackets[709]:

Fig. 22

Temper	Genus	Species	Subspecies
Cynical	→ Materialistic [CCP] (foreign)		
Sympathetic	→ Spiritualistic [MC] (intimate)	→ Theistic [Substance-dualism] (foreign)	
		↘ Pantheistic [Substance-monism] (intimate)	→ Absolutism [Thing-monism] (foreign)
			↘ Radical Empiricism [Thing-pluralism] (intimate)
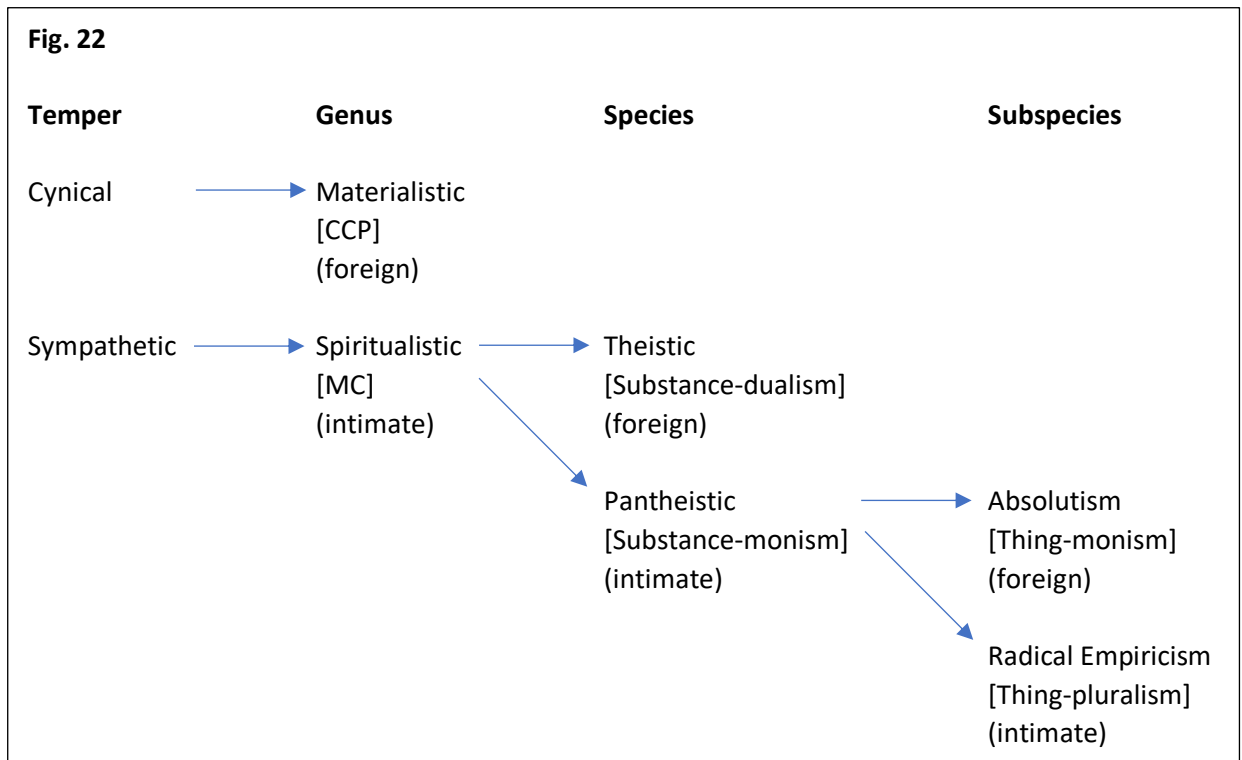
James's worldview – radical empiricism – is a subspecies of pantheism, which is a species of

spiritualism, which is a genus of philosophy that appeals to people of a sympathetic

temperament. It endorses substance-monism, thing-pluralism, strong emergentism, and macro-

causation[710]. In what follows we will attempt to flesh out some more features of James's

pluralistic pantheism.

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place of these terms. See: Jonathan Schafer, 'Monism: The Priority of the Whole', *Philosophical Review*, 119 (2010), pp31-76. We use Strawson's formulation because it is simpler, and because our own discussion of the doctrine does not go into a great deal of depth.

[709] Lamberth, *William James and the Metaphysics of Experience*, p154

[710] David Lamberth correctly points out that PU "is notably silent concerning any alliance between supernaturalism and radical empiricism". See: Lamberth, 'Pragmatism and Naturalism: An Inevitable Conjunction?', p80. The introduction of 'pluralistic pantheism', it seems, signals James's parting of ways with 'piecemeal supernaturalism'. For Lamberth, this is indicative of the fact that James's mature metaphysics transcends the old opposition between naturalism and supernaturalism. We, for our part, should rather say that James's mature metaphysics transcends the opposition between *scientific naturalism* and supernaturalism. It transcends them by tacitly endorsing a form of naturalism that had yet to be formally articulated.

2.7.2. Panpsychism

Monistic pantheism, in its absolutist guise, is, James says, an exceedingly *thin* philosophy. By this he means two things. First, that the arguments it invokes are extremely tenuous, and second, that its almost total disconnection from experience and science makes it highly abstract and unrelatable[711]. By way of contrast with absolutism, James wishes to outline the tenets of a philosophy which, although in many respects similar to it, stands at the opposite pole as regards thinness and thickness. The philosophy he has in mind is that of Gustav Theodor Fechner, whose method was empirical and inductive, and whose arguments relied on analogies to concrete experiential facts rather than appeals to apriori principles[712]. Fechner's philosophy, the chief statement of which occurred in his book *Zend-Avesta*[713], attempted to establish the truth of what he called 'the daylight view of world', according to which "the whole universe in its different spans and wave-lengths, exclusions and envelopments, is everywhere alive and conscious"[714].

Fechner's main argument for this claim, according to James, is an analogical one: "My body moves by the influence of my feeling and will; the sun, moon, sea, and wind, being themselves more powerful, move by the influence of some more powerful feeling and will."[715] This, of course, is a highly simplified rendition of the argument in question. It appears, in essence, to be a version of what contemporary philosophers call 'the argument by continuity for panpsychism'[716]. It says that the intrinsic nature of one portion of the physical universe – namely my body (or my brain and nervous system) – is experiential, and that, this being the only portion of the physical universe whose intrinsic nature we are acquainted with, we may rightfully suppose that the intrinsic nature of other portions of the physical universe is likewise experiential. We may also suppose, Fechner thought, that just as the human body is correlated with an integral or 'collective' consciousness, so certain other physical entities are correlated with integral consciousnesses:

> The entire earth on which we live must have, according to Fechner, its own collective
> consciousness. So must each sun, moon, and planet; so must the whole solar system
> have its own wider consciousness, in which the consciousness of our earth plays one
> part. So has the entire starry system as such its consciousness; and if that starry
> system be not the sum of all that is, materially considered, then that whole system,

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711 James, *A Pluralistic Universe*, pp136-143
712 James, *A Pluralistic Universe*, p145
713 Gustav Theodor Fechner, *Zend-Avesta* (Leipzig, Leopold Voss, 1851)
714 James, *A Pluralistic Universe*, p149
715 James, *A Pluralistic Universe*, p151
716 David Skrbina, *Panpsychism in the West* (Cambridge MA: The MIT Press, 2005), p251

along with whatever else may be, is the body of that absolutely totalized consciousness of the universe to which men give the name of God.[717]

James counts it as a considerable advantage of Fechner's view that it allows for a high degree of variegation and complexity in the universe's inner life. Whereas absolutism postulates integral consciousness at only two levels – at the level of human beings and at the level of the universe as a whole – Fechner postulates it at a variety of levels, both infrahuman and superhuman. He presumes not only that superhuman entities like planets and solar systems may possess an integral consciousness, but that infrahuman entities like plants, cells, molecules, and electrons may possess them too[718].

We must be exceedingly careful, James says, when engaging in this type of analogical thinking, not to neglect important differences between the proposed analogues. Most people, he says, reasoning justly that, since the human mind is correlated with a body, so infrahuman and superhuman minds must be correlated with bodies, proceed to suppose, unjustly, that the bodies in question must be similar in every respect to animal bodies. This, he insists, is a mistake. "[A]ll that the analogy comports is a body"; not any particular kind of body. The particular features of animal bodies, he says, are adaptations to particular habitats. We should not necessarily expect non-animal bodies to possess those features[719]. The earth's body, for instance, has no use of the special features that prove adaptive for animal life. "What need has she of arms," James asks, "with nothing to reach for? of a neck, with no head to carry? of eyes or nose when she finds her way through space without either…"[720] So much for arms and eyes, but what about the organ most frequently deemed to be a necessary correlate of consciousness; "Can there be consciousness," James asks, "where there is no brain?":

> But our brain, which primarily serves to correlate our muscular reactions with the external objects on which we depend, performs a function which the earth performs in an entirely different way. She has no proper muscles or limbs of her own, and the only objects external to her are the other stars. To these her whole mass reacts by most exquisite alterations in its total gait, and by still more exquisite vibratory responses in its substance. … For these cosmic relations of hers, then, she no more needs a special brain than she needs eyes or ears.[721]

The body of the earth is thus radically different from the bodies of animals. We may therefore expect the earth's *consciousness* to be radically different from the *consciousness* of animals. And

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[717] James, *A Pluralistic Universe*, pp152-153
[718] James, *A Pluralistic Universe*, p175
[719] James, *A Pluralistic Universe*, p152
[720] James, *A Pluralistic Universe*, p159
[721] James, *A Pluralistic Universe*, pp160-161

this line of reasoning applies just as much to infrahuman consciousness as it does to superhuman consciousnesses. Plants for example are often held to possess no consciousness on account of their lacking a central nervous system. But according to Fechner plants may possess an entirely different kind of consciousness than animals, correlated with an entirely different kind of organization. "Violins and pianos give out sounds because they have strings", James says; "Does it follow that nothing but strings can give out sound?"[722]

This is an incredibly important point to get across in establishing any doctrine of panpsychism. Because our own consciousness, which is the only example of consciousness with which we are directly acquainted, is highly complex and receptive to its environment, we often suppose that consciousness is *essentially* complex and receptive to its environment; we think, for instance, that it is something that only arises in complex organisms, and that it is bound up with sensations of the external world. But to raise this as an objection to panpsychism is obviously to beg the question. It assumes that consciousness is an emergent phenomenon, and that the conditions for its emergence have to do with an entity's complexity, its biological constitution, its capacity for sensation, etc. But this is just what the doctrine of panpsychism calls into question. Panpsychism rests on the premise that consciousness is not an emergent property but a fundamental one. Even bottom level physical entities – elementary particles or what have you – will possess some form of consciousness. The consciousness of such entities will not, however, be complex or receptive to its environment; it will not involve anything like the sensory consciousness of complex organisms. Rather the consciousness of such entities will be as radically different from animal consciousness as elementary particles are from animal bodies. It may consist in a single self-enclosed phenomenal quality, without any internal variation, and without any receptivity to the external world. It is naturally very difficult to conceive of such radically different forms of consciousness, but conceivability is by no means a perfect indicator of possibility[723].

The question which naturally arises out of the above discussion is this: what is the relation between integral consciousnesses at different scales? What is the relation between the consciousness of elementary particles and the consciousness of human beings, or between the consciousness of human beings and the consciousness of the earth? This is the question that James sets out to answer in lecture five of PU on 'The Compounding of Consciousness', which we will address in the next section.

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[722] James, *A Pluralistic Universe*, p166

[723] Nagel's classic essay 'What is it Like to be a Bat?' is obviously relevant here. For a more radical exploration of the same principle see David Chalmers's musings on the possible consciousness of thermostats: David Chalmers, *The Conscious Mind* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), pp293-297

2.7.3. The Compounding of Consciousness

"The special thought of Fechner's", James says, with which he is chiefly concerned in the Hibbert

Lectures, "is his belief that the more inclusive forms of consciousness are in part constituted by

the more limited forms."[724] Thus, for Fechner the human stream of consciousness is in part

constituted by the consciousness of our sense organs. Each sense organ, James explains,

elaborating on this claim, has a stream of consciousness associated with it; a stream of

consciousness that is ejective to other such streams. At the same time however, these streams,

which in themselves are self-enclosed and ejective to one another, come together into a single

perceptual field in the consciousness of the human being as a whole:

> While you listen to my voice, for example, you are perhaps inattentive to some bodily
> sensation due to your clothing or your posture. Yet that sensation would seem
> probably to be there, for in an instant, by a change of attention, you can have it in
> one field of consciousness with the voice. It seems as if it existed first in a separate
> form, and then as if, without itself changing, it combined with your other co-existent
> sensations.[725]

Fechner claims that human minds stand in the same relation to a higher collective consciousness

as the several forms of sensory consciousness stand to the human mind:

> Quite similarly, then, says Fechner, we must suppose that my consciousness of
> myself and yours of yourself, altho in their immediacy they keep separate and know
> nothing of each other, are yet known and used together in a higher consciousness,
> that of the human race, say, into which they enter as constituent parts. Similarly, the
> whole human and animal kingdoms come together as conditions of a consciousness
> of still wider scope. This combines in the soul of the earth with the consciousness of
> the vegetable kingdom, which in turn contributes its share of experience to that of
> the whole solar system, and so on from synthesis to synthesis and height to height,
> till an absolutely universal consciousness is reached.[726]

The important claim here is that an entity's consciousness is partially constituted out of the

consciousness of its parts[727]. James uses the combination of sensory consciousness as an example

because he thinks that the different forms of sensory consciousness are intuitively separable;

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[724] James, *A Pluralistic Universe*, p168

[725] James, *A Pluralistic Universe*, pp181-182

[726] James, *A Pluralistic Universe*, pp155-156

[727] Robert J. Vanden Burgt has suggested that James's adoption of the notion of the compounding of
consciousness was more or less ad hoc, and that he only did so in order to provide a framework for the
divine-human relationship. See: Robert J. Vanden Burgt, *The Religious Philosophy of William James*
(Chicago: Nelson-Hall, 1981), p108. We disagree. We think that James was bound to accept the notion of
compounding on account of his antecedent commitment to panpsychism. Given panpsychism, some form
of compounding is mandatory. The only question is whether that compounding will follow a 'layered' or a
'fusionist' model. We will revisit these issues in chapter 3 (section 3.1.1).

each being associated with a particular sense organ. If this is correct, he thinks, then their coming together in the human perceptual field is an absolutely definite instance of combination. But he does not deny that there are other instances of combination involved in human consciousness. Indeed, on James's premises it must be assumed that the consciousnesses of the sense organs are themselves constituted out of the consciousnesses of their cells; the consciousnesses of the cells out of that of their constituent molecules; of the molecules out of that of their constituent atoms, and so on. The important thing is not the character of the consciousness combined, but the fact that combination occurs at all; the fact, or so Fechner asserts, that "states of consciousness, so-called, can separate and combine themselves freely, and keep their own identity unchanged while forming parts of simultaneous fields of experience of wider scope."[728] It was this assumption, recall, that lead James to formulate the combination problem in PP. He insists that it is not one we can "let pass without scrutiny."[729]

James begins the ensuing discussion with a restatement of the combination problem:

> We can't say that awareness of the alphabet as such is nothing more than twenty-six awarenesses, each of a separate letter; for those are twenty-six distinct awarenesses, of single letters without others, while their so-called sum is one awareness, of every letter with its comrades. There is thus something new in the collective consciousness.[730]

In other words, macro-conscious states possess a unity that cannot conceivably be reduced to features of an aggregate of micro-conscious states; and, conversely, micro-conscious states possess a self-enclosedness that cannot conceivably be thought to exist at the same time that those states are co-conscious with other such states as parts of a macro-conscious state. But this is precisely what Fechner believes. He thinks that there are conscious wholes which, although in some sense more than the sums of their parts, are not something distinct from or additional to their parts; and he thinks that those parts, even whilst forming the whole, continue to exist as self-enclosed individual entities:

> As our mind is not the bare sum of our sights plus our sounds plus our pains, but in adding these terms together also finds relations among them and weaves them into schemes and forms and objects of which no one sense in its separate estate knows anything, so the earth-soul traces relations between the contents of my mind and the contents of yours of which neither of our separate minds is conscious. It has

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[728] James, *A Pluralistic Universe*, p181
[729] James, *A Pluralistic Universe*, pp177
[730] James, *A Pluralistic Universe*, p188

schemes, forms, and objects proportionate to its wider field, which our mental fields are too narrow to cognize.[731]

How then, is Fechner to avoid the combination problem? According to James, he faces the following dilemma: either he must concede that conscious wholes are something additional to their parts, or he must reject the logic of identity upon which the combination problem rests[732]. Taking the first horn of the dilemma, he insists, would amount to a relapse into substance dualism; a move that he himself simply refuses to make[733]. But taking the latter – rejecting the logic of identity – seems on the face of it to be nothing short of absurd. This, nevertheless, is the solution that James ultimately recommends:

> For my own part, I have finally found myself compelled to give up the logic, fairly, squarely, and irrevocably. It has an imperishable use in human life, but that use is not to make us theoretically acquainted with the essential nature of reality – just what it is I can perhaps suggest to you a little later.[734]

We will postpone out treatment of James's solution to the combination problem until chapter 3. For now, let us consider how James's panpsychism intersects with his mature conception of God.

2.7.4. God

James now considers the combination problem neutralised. The hypothesis that human and other minds combine into a superhuman consciousness is therefore a legitimate one. The question is, he says, whether this hypothesis should be considered "more probable or more improbable"[735]. There are, for James, two pieces of evidence that count decisively in its favour. The first are the "abnormal or supernormal facts" that have been discovered by psychical researchers:

> I doubt whether we shall ever understand some of them without using the very letter of Fechner's conception of a great reservoir in which the memories of earth's inhabitants are pooled and preserved, and from which, when the threshold lowers or the valve opens, information ordinarily shut out leaks into the mind of exceptional individuals among us.[736]

This of course is a reference to individuals like Leonora Piper, who James believes to be capable of accessing supernormal knowledge that could not have been acquired though the senses. He had

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[731] James, *A Pluralistic Universe*, pp168-169.
[732] James, *A Pluralistic Universe*, p208
[733] James, *A Pluralistic Universe*, pp209-210
[734] James, *A Pluralistic Universe*, p212
[735] James, *A Pluralistic Universe*, p298
[736] James, *A Pluralistic Universe*, p299

already entertained the hypothesis of a mother-sea of consciousness as a way of explaining this capacity in *Human Immortality*[737]. Now, unsurprisingly, he suggests that it counts towards the probability that there are superhuman consciousnesses. But this particular sort of evidence, he concedes, comes from a region of inquiry "too spook-haunted to interest an academic audience"[738]. The other key piece of evidence is drawn from the phenomenon of religious experience:

> I think it may be asserted that there are religious experiences of a specific nature, not deducible by analogy or psychological reasoning from our other sorts of experience. I think that they point with reasonable probability to the continuity of our consciousness with a wider spiritual environment from which the ordinary prudential man (who is the only man that scientific psychology, so called, takes cognizance of) is shut off.[739]

Religious and mystical experiences, James argued in VRE, are quasi-sensory experiences of religious objects. Although not coercive for non-mystics, they do at least create a presumption of truth in favour of the hypothesis that God exists. In *Pragmatism* James suggested that this presumption, although valid, lacks force until it can be shown how the hypothesis of God is consistent with our stock of past truths. The key truths, for James, were the doctrines of radical empiricism on the one hand, and the fundamentals of the scientific worldview on the other. The Fechnerian doctrine of panpsychism, he thinks, demonstrates that the hypothesis of God is consistent with those truths[740]. Consistency having thus been achieved, he finds himself justified in declaring the hypothesis of God true (or reasonably probable at any rate). In the remainder of lecture seven, and in his concluding lecture, James attempts to flesh out his concept of God more fully.

Now that the combination problem has been neutralized, James concedes that the absolute is not the impossible being he had once thought it was[741]. The consciousness of absolutely everything in the universe really may come together into a single absolute experience. This, he notes, seems to be Fechner's view. Fechner believes that God is the "integrated soul of all things in the cosmos without exception"[742]. It is not however a view to which James himself subscribes. There are a number of reasons for this. Firstly, conceiving of God as absolutely all-inclusive makes him

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[737] William James, *Human Immortality* (London: Archibald Constable & Co., 1898), p55
[738] James, *A Pluralistic Universe*, p299
[739] James, *A Pluralistic Universe*, pp299-300
[740] It does in the former case because it makes the inner natures of all realities psychical or experiential as per MTPE, and it does so in the latter case because Fechner's panpsychism is 'thick', and thereby preserves the reality of entities postulated by scientific theories.
[741] James, *A Pluralistic Universe*, p292
[742] James, *A Pluralistic Universe*, p293

responsible for evil. Secondly, it makes the universe deterministic. Thirdly, in the view of many of James's philosophical contemporaries, it makes God timeless. James thinks that each of these notions make for intolerable foreignness, and ought to be rejected:

> [T]he only way to escape from the paradoxes and perplexities that a consistently thought-out monistic universe suffers from as from a species of auto-intoxication – the mystery of the 'fall' namely, of reality lapsing into appearance, truth into error, perfection into imperfection; of evil, in short; the mystery of universal determinism, of the block universe eternal and without a history, etc.; – the only way of escape, I say, from all this is to be frankly pluralistic and assume that the superhuman consciousness, however vast it may be, has itself an external environment, and consequently is finite.[743]

"Having an environment, being in time, and working out a history just like ourselves," James says, "he [God] escapes from the foreignness from all that is human, of the static timeless perfect absolute."[744]

This then, is James's mature conception of God. God is a *finite being*, existing *within the universe*. Like everything else in the universe, he is comprised of pure experience, which appears to outward perception in the form of matter. He is in fact the intrinsic nature, or thing-in-itself, of a large portion of the physical universe; or to put it another way, that portion of the physical universe is his body[745]. Just as that portion of the physical universe includes myriad other entities as its parts, so God's consciousness includes the consciousnesses of those entities as its parts. Although in themselves they remain self-enclosed and ejective to one another, as parts of God's consciousness they are co-conscious, and their contents are knitted together into schemes and patterns of which, by themselves, they know nothing.

2.7.5. Conclusions

A Pluralistic Universe constitutes the definitive statement of the metaphysical basis of James's worldview. In it, the piecemeal supernaturalism of VRE gives way to a doctrine of pluralistic pantheism. The core tenets of this doctrine are substance-monism, thing-pluralism, strong emergentism, macro-causation, and the existential thesis of religious naturalism (according to which nature, or something within nature, merits a religious response). In addition, James

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[743] James, *A Pluralistic Universe*, pp310-311
[744] James, *A Pluralistic Universe*, p318
[745] Mind-body metaphors for the relation between God and nature are replete in PU. See: James, *A Pluralistic Universe*, p150; p152; p153. We take it that James intends these metaphors in a loose sense. He is saying that God is the 'inner nature' of a portion of the universe; not that God is a proper part of said portion of the universe. If philosophic clarity were his goal, he might have done better to use mind-*brain* metaphors instead of mind-*body* metaphors.

articulates a doctrine of panpsychism, according to which the intrinsic nature of the physical universe is consciousness; and a doctrine of finite theism, according to which God's consciousness is coextensive with a large portion of the physical universe. None of the above, we contend, is overtly in conflict with naturalism. The only possible point of conflict concerns James's notion of macro-causation. We know from VRE that he holds God to possess causal power, and to enter into causal relations, not only with human beings, but with the wider cosmos. A key question yet to be answered is just how we ought to conceive of God's macro-causal activity. In order to answer this question, we will need to establish the precise nature of James's doctrines of panpsychism and emergentism in much closer detail. This will constitute the major task of chapter three. Before we embark upon this task however, we wish to survey and summarise our findings in the present chapter, and to lay out our plan for the final part of the thesis.

2.8. The Arch of James's Naturalism

We now have some sense of the development of James's naturalism. He began his career as a scientific naturalist, endorsing epiphenomenalism, and believing that "God is dead or at least irrelevant"[746]. Upon falling into a depression in 1870, he found that his only way of escape was through a belief in freewill, and thereby amended his naturalism so as to accommodate a doctrine of mental causation[747]. As we saw in *The Principle of Psychology*, he found the means of accommodating mental causation within a naturalistic worldview through a doctrine of emergentism. He argued that integral consciousness was emergent from the physical properties of the human body, and that it realized its macro-causal power by influencing the outcomes of indeterministic events in the brain. At the time of his writing PP James had had great confidence in the scientific method, believing science to be totally autonomous from metaphysics. His abandonment of this pretence to autonomy in *Psychology: Briefer Course*, and his subsequent critique of scientificism in *The Will to Believe*, signalled the dawning in James of a more critical attitude towards science, and a corresponding shift of his naturalism in the direction of liberality. Also in WB, we saw James's first flirtations with an overtly religious worldview. Although he developed a thoroughly naturalistic ethical theory in 'The Moral Philosopher and the Moral Life', he supplemented it with a doctrine of metaethical theological voluntarism that seemed in some respects to be in tension with his naturalism. Next, in *The Varieties of Religious Experience*, we witnessed James straining his naturalism to make yet another significant accommodation; this time, of religious realism. He had originally supposed such an accommodation to be possible, thinking to describe the resulting position as "theistic naturalism". However, upon his reading of Ward's *Naturalism and Agnosticism*, he considered the term 'naturalism' irrevocably tarred with the brush of mechanicalism and scientificism, and abandoned the project. Instead he declared himself a 'piecemeal supernaturalist', defining supernaturalism primarily in terms of the rejection of CCP. Upon his return to America, James began work on a book of metaphysics that would fulfil

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[746] *The Correspondence of William James*, ed. by Ignas K. Skrupskelis & Elizabeth M. Berkeley, 12 vols (London: University Press of Virginia, 1995) IV, p303

[747] This decision was recorded by James in his diary: "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." See: *The Letters of William James*, ed. by Henry James III, 2 vols (Boston: The Atlantic Monthly Press, 1920) I, p147. The work of Renouvier to which James refers is: Charles Renouvier, *Traité de Psychologie Rationnelle*, 2 vols (Paris: Librairie Armand Colin, 1912). Bernard Brennan likewise recognizes this as a significant turning point in James's relationship to naturalism. He, however, unlike ourselves, takes it to herald James's turn *against* naturalism. Before reading Renouvier, Brennan thinks, James found naturalism "inescapable and irrefutable"; afterwards, he became "an implacable, lifelong foe of naturalism and materialism". See: Brennan, *The Ethics of William James*, p53

his original plan for a second course of Gifford Lectures. The book was never completed, but several essays composed in this period were later published as the *Essays in Radical Empiricism*. In these essays James attempted to devise an empirical methodology that could accommodate religious experience, and took definite steps towards the doctrine of panpsychism that would play an important role in his mature religious/naturalistic synthesis. In *Pragmatism* we saw James working diligently towards that synthesis, attempting to mediate between crude naturalism and crude supernaturalism. To that end, he developed a naturalistic theory of cognition, that served to undermine scientificism on the one hand and religious dogmatism on the other. Finally, in *A Pluralistic Universe*, the 'piecemeal supernaturalism' of VRE gave way to a doctrine of 'pluralistic pantheism'. The term 'naturalism', it seems, had still not recovered for James from Ward's attacks, but the position articulated in PU is naturalistic in everything but name. God, in PU, is identical with/emergent from a large portion of the physical universe. His causal activity is confined to the space-time-causal system we call nature. His existence is inferred by empirical means, from quasi-sensory experiences of his presence. Given that James's God is finite, and given that naturalism is free, at long last, from its associations with mechanicalism, we think that 'theistic naturalism' is a fitting term to describe this doctrine. According to the schema we developed in chapter one, it is undoubtedly to be classified as a form of radical religious naturalism.

However, James's naturalism, as it stands, is far from complete. A number of loose ends remain to be tied up. Firstly, we have yet to determine the precise character of James's panpsychism. As David Skrbina remarks in his recent study, *Panpsychism in the West*, panpsychism is really a meta-theory of mind. It does not make any explicit statements about the nature of mind itself, but simply holds that "however one conceives of mind, such mind applies to all things"[748]. Thus, one can be a panpsychist interactionist dualist, holding that all physical entities interact with ontically distinct cartesian minds; a panpsychist reductive materialist, holding that all entities possess minds that reduce to their physical parts; a panpsychist identist, holding that minds constitute the intrinsic natures of all physical entities, etc.[749] We have hinted that James was amenable to a doctrine of panpsychist identism, but we have certainly not yet established this point beyond doubt. This issue is vitally important vis a vis our naturalistic interpretation of James, because different forms of panpsychism are differently compatible (or incompatible) with naturalism. Panpsychist interactionist dualism for instance, from a metaphysical perspective, is scarcely an improvement on traditional substance-dualism. Panpsychist identism, meanwhile, looks to be

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[748] Skrbina, p2
[749] Skrbina, p2

totally compatible with science and naturalism. Secondly, we have yet to properly reconstruct James's doctrine of emergentism. As we said in the introduction to this chapter, it will be necessary, in order to make James's mature worldview coherent, to develop his doctrine of the strong emergence/macro-causal power of mental phenomena from PP into a broader doctrine of emergentism and macro-causation that applies to integral consciousness generally. Finally, a number of questions remain regarding our proposed restoration of James's theistic naturalism. We have hinted that God, for James, is emergent from a portion of the physical universe, and that his causal activity is to be conceived after the analogy of human causal activity, but we have not clarified this account in detail. We have also hinted at the possible reconciliation of James's naturalistic ethics and his theological voluntarism, but once again, the details of this account remain to be worked out. Our task in chapter three will be to address these various outstanding issues.

In an oft-quoted memorandum regarding the publication of *Some Problems of Philosophy* James remarked that his philosophical system was "too much like an arch built only on one side"[750]. He had hoped, indeed, that SPP might remedy this state of affairs; but alas, he died before it could be completed[751]. This little note serves as a useful device for framing the third chapter of this project. In that third chapter, as we said in the introduction, our interpretation will adopt a more constructive approach. We may view it then, as an effort towards the completion of the arch of James's system. Now an arch, as any good mason will tell you, consists in a column, several voussoirs – the most important of which is the springer – and a keystone. The column serves as the mount for the springer, which supports the other voussoirs. The keystone, of course, is the most integral part, locking all the other pieces into position, and allowing the arch to stand up. James has completed one half of his arch. He has a column: radical empiricism – a springer: pragmatism – and half of the keystone: his doctrine of religious experience. In what follows we propose to submit our plans for the other side. The column shall consist in a refurbished doctrine of panpsychism; the springer in a reconstructed doctrine of emergentism; and the other half of the keystone, in a restored doctrine of theistic naturalism. Once these plans have been approved, construction can begin.

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[750] James, *Some Problems of Philosophy*, p. xiv

[751] SPP, in the form James left it, does not contain a great deal that is new as regards the essential content of his philosophy. The most novel thing it contains is, fittingly, a long discussion of the concept of novelty. Even this discussion however recapitulates much that James had already said regarding indeterminism in WB. Certainly, SPP cannot amount to anything like the completion of James's philosophy that he had intended.

Chapter 3 – The Religious Naturalism of William James

Our aim in the present chapter is to reconstruct the arch of James's naturalism. In order to do so we will have to refurbish James's panpsychism, reconstruct his emergentism, and restore his theistic naturalism. Each of these tasks are interrelated and mutually supportive, just like the parts of an arch. Before we begin, we propose to consider each of them in more detail.

i)   The Column: Panpsychism

Panpsychism is the column in James's arch. There are two primary reasons for our attempting to refurbish it. Firstly, as we have said, some forms of panpsychism are more compatible with naturalism than others. We therefore wish to establish James's commitment to a doctrine of panpsychist identism, which is inherently compatible with science and naturalism. Secondly, panpsychism is one of the means by which James is able accommodate a personal God within the natural world, for it allows him to say that God's consciousness is the inner nature of a portion of the physical universe[752]. It thereby serves as a vital foundation for his theistic naturalism. In section 3.1, we will attempt to clarify and refurbish James's panpsychism in several respects. First, in section 3.1.1, we will draw on a number of excellent contemporary studies to provide a thorough overview of panpsychism. We will survey different possible versions of the theory, examine its presuppositions and commitments, and consider some of its philosophical consequences. Next, in section 3.1.2, we will look at two popular arguments for panpsychism; the argument from non-emergence and the argument by continuity, both of which James gave versions of in the course of his career. Following this, in section 3.1.3, we will review a particularly effective version of the argument by continuity, known as the intrinsic nature argument for panpsychism, and we will develop a Jamesian rendition of this argument. Finally, in section 3.1.4, we will investigate the combination problem, discuss James's solution to it, and situate James's panpsychism with respect to contemporary versions of the theory.

ii)   The Springer: Emergentism

Emergentism is the springer in James's arch. It is the other means, besides panpsychism, by which James is able to accommodate a personal God within nature. For God's personality entails more than just consciousness; it entails an integral, powerful consciousness. And this can only be

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[752] David Lamberth has pointed out this function of panpsychism in James's philosophy. Panpsychism, he thinks, provided James with the means of conceiving of God and the universe after a social analogy, and thereby of achieving the greater heights of intimacy (in the sense of PU). See: David Lamberth, 'Interpreting the Universe After a Social Analogy: Intimacy, Panpsychism, and a Finite God in a Pluralistic Universe', in *The Cambridge Companion to William James*, ed. by R. A. Putnam, pp237-259

achieved with a doctrine of emergentism. Emergentism therefore, serves as a crucial support for the keystone of James's theistic naturalism. Our reconstruction of James's emergentism will begin, in section 3.2.1, by laying some essential groundwork; we will attempt to further establish the legitimacy of an emergentist reading of James, and we will articulate the basic features of James's emergentism. We will then proceed, in section 3.2.2, to argue that James's essay 'On the Experience of Activity' from ERE provides a mandate for developing his model of mental causation from PP into a general doctrine of macro-causation. Finally, in section 3.2.3 we will attempt to deliver that doctrine, considering the applicability of the British Emergentist and quantum approaches to James's account.

iii)   The Keystone: Theistic Naturalism

Theistic naturalism is the keystone in James's arch. It is made secure by the column and the springer – by James's doctrines of panpsychism and emergentism – and at the same time it secures the entire substructure. Religion, James declared, is "mankind's most important function"[753]; in opening ourselves to God's influence, he said, "our deepest destiny is fulfilled"[754]. It is only fitting, therefore, that James's religious doctrines, which collectively comprise his theistic naturalism, should constitute the keystone in the arch of his philosophy. In section 3.3 we will present a restored version of James's theistic naturalism. We will begin in section 3.3.1 with a reconsideration of James's finite theism. This will involve updating the doctrine in light of the results of the preceding sections, and discussing the application of James's model of macro-causation to God's causal activity. Next, in section 3.3.2, we will re-examine the ethics of MPML. We will attempt to clear up some of the tensions in James's account, and to supplement it with a reconstruction of the dispositional model of value experience that is nascent in James's essay 'The Place of Affectional Facts in a World of Pure Experience'. Finally, in section 3.3.3, we will revisit James's account of religious experience. We will attempt to flesh out that account, and to resituate it in the context of James's restored theistic naturalism.

3.1. Panpsychism

William James would certainly have agreed with the observation that philosophical doctrines may come into and fall out of fashion due to factors that have little to do with their purely logical or theoretic merits. Some, however, once out of fashion, seem to stay out, whilst others have a habit of returning over and over again. In *Panpsychism in the West*, David Skrbina argues that

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[753] *The Correspondence of William James*, ed. by Skrupskelis & Berkeley, IX, p186
[754] James, *The Varieties*, p517

panpsychism is an example of the latter, recurrent sort of doctrine. It made decisive appearances in Ancient Greece, where for a time it was almost the orthodox view. It re-emerged among the great philosophical rationalists of the 17th century (notably Spinoza and Leibniz). And it persisted into the 18th and 19th centuries in the philosophy of German Romanticism. Since then it has come into fashion, or at least into the limelight, on two more occasions. Once in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, in the philosophies of William James, Henri Bergson, Bertrand Russell, and Alfred North Whitehead, and a second time, in the present day, when the doctrine is being widely discussed by such prominent analytic philosophers as William Seager, Thomas Nagel, David Chalmers, Galen Strawson, and a whole host of others. In the intervening periods panpsychism was by no means absent; but it was not so widely endorsed or discussed. And yet despite this venerable history, and the recent resurgence of interest, panpsychism remains a fringe view among professional philosophers, and is frequently derided and dismissed without argument. Thus, Paul Edwards, in the *Encyclopaedia of Philosophy*, called panpsychism an "unintelligible" and "meaningless" doctrine[755]; Madden and Hare described it as "an unmitigated disaster in the eyes of a great many contemporary philosophers"[756]; Karl Popper dismissed it as "fantastic" and "baseless"[757]; and Colin McGinn said it was "metaphysically and scientifically outrageous"[758]. More recently, in an exchange with David Chalmers in the *New York Review of Books*, John Searle dismissed panpsychism, without any real argument, as "breathtakingly implausible" and "absurd"[759]. Given the centrality of panpsychism to James's worldview, a worldview whose continuing fecundity we are keen to demonstrate, it will be necessary to push back against these prevalent anti-panpsychist intuitions.

3.1.1.   Panpsychism: An Overview

As we have already said, panpsychism is really a meta-theory of mind. It says that mind accompanies all things, but it does not say anything about the nature of mind itself. As such, a number of varieties and permutations of the doctrine are possible. David Chalmers, in a recent article on 'Panpsychism and Panprotopsychism', surveys a series of distinctions in/varieties of the doctrine. We will discuss some of these together with others suggested in the literature in what

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[755] Paul Edwards, 'Panpsychism', in *The Encyclopaedia of Philosophy*, ed. by Paul Edwards (London: Macmillan, 1967) pp22-31

[756] Edward Madden & Peter Hare, 'The Powers that Be', *Dialogue*, 10 (1971), pp12-31 (p23)

[757] Karl Popper & John Eccles, *The Self and Its Brain* (Berlin: Springer, 1977), p69; p71

[758] Colin McGinn, *The Character of Mind* (Oxford: OUP, 1997), p34

[759] John Searle, 'Consciousness and the Philosophers', *The New York Review of Books*, 44 (1997) <https://www.nybooks.com/articles/1997/03/06/consciousness-the-philosophers/>

follows. As we go we will attempt to situate James's doctrine with respect to these various distinctions.

i)   Panpsychism vs Panprotopsychism

To begin with we may distinguish between panpsychism and panprotopsychism. Whereas panpsychism says that the 'mind' which attends all things is *conscious* mind – i.e. mind constituted of phenomenal properties – panprotopsychism says that the 'mind' which attends all things is *protoconscious*; i.e. that it is constituted of 'protophenomenal properties'. Chalmers stipulates that protophenomenal properties are "special properties that are not phenomenal (there is nothing it is like to have a single protophenomenal property) but that can collectively constitute phenomenal properties, perhaps when arranged in the right structure"[760]. According to panprotopsychism then, fundamental physical entities possess protophenomenal properties, such that when they are arranged into certain structures – the human brain/nervous system for instance – they collectively constitute phenomenal properties.

Russell, recall, interpreted James as a kind of panprotopsychist. He thought that the metaphysics of radical empiricism led to a doctrine according to which the mental and the physical were differentiated out of an original neutral substance that possessed neither physical nor mental properties. Chalmers, incidentally, offers a somewhat similar interpretation of James. He reads 'Does Consciousness Exist?' as implying a deflationary account of awareness, according to which awareness – i.e. the phenomenal or conscious aspect of experience – can be subtracted from the qualities of experience, leaving behind what Chalmers calls 'Edenic qualities'. The "sensible natures" that constitute pure experience, on this view, are Edenic qualities rather than phenomenal properties. Which makes James a 'panqualityist' rather than a panpsychist. Edenic qualities, unlike phenomenal properties, are supposed to be attributable to external, mind-independent objects, so this interpretation also makes sense of James's flirtations with naïve realism[761].

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[760] David Chalmers, 'Panpsychism and Panprotopsychism' in *Panpsychism: Contemporary Perspectives*, ed. by Brüntrup & Jaskolla, pp19-47 (p31)

[761] As we mentioned earlier in connection with ERE, Wesley Cooper holds an essentially similar view: "James was not a physicalist, according to the Two-Levels View, although others have interpreted him in that way. He rejects any form of the reduction of the mental to the physical, but he accepts a broader reduction of both the mental and the physical to pure experience. This broader reduction may be a place where mental-to-physical reductionists and their opponents, advocates of irreducible subjectivity, *qualia*, and the like, can meet. Experience makes us imminently aware of something nonphysical, as the "qualia freaks" have always insisted; but we are not aware of something irreducibly mental, as the physicalists have always insisted. We are aware rather of pure experience." See: Cooper, *The Unity of William James's Thought*, p8. In holding this view, Cooper seems to interpret James as a panprotopsychist, for whom mental and physical properties are differentiated out of an original neutral substance possessing neither physical nor mental

The foregoing, however, is contrary to our own reading of ERE. By our lights 'Does Consciousness Exist?' was aimed at rejecting substance dualism and at defining cognition in functional terms rather than at questioning the existence of phenomenal consciousness. Chalmers's interpretation requires that we assume a dramatic and unannounced shift in James's views; namely from the 'esse est sentiri' doctrine of PP to a putative deflationary account of awareness in ERE. In PP, recall, James stated that "There is only one 'phase' in which an idea can be, and that is a fully conscious condition"[762]. If not in that condition, he said, then what you have is not an idea at all, but a "physical brain process". On the basis of this doctrine James explicitly rejected the notion of unconscious mental states; or, what he regarded as an equivalent notion, that consciousness could be "nascent" in physical states/entities[763]. We hold, contrary to Chalmers, that James's mature view is consistent with PP in this respect. Thus, on our interpretation, James is a panpsychist rather than as a panprotopsychist.

ii)   Constitutive vs Non-constitutive Panpsychism

Next, we ought to distinguish between constitutive and non-constitutive panpsychism. The former holds that macroexperience is "constituted" or "realized" by microexperience such that "macrophenomenal truths obtain in virtue of microphenomenal truths". Thus, if 'Jones is having a visual experience of a dog' is a macrophenomenal truth, this truth will obtain in virtue of truths like 'Jones's neurons/molecules/atoms, or what have you, possess XYZ phenomenal properties'. To put it intuitively, Chalmers says, constitutive panpsychism holds "that microexperiences somehow add up to yield macroexperience"[764]. In other words, constitutive panpsychism holds that macroexperiences are the sum of their microexperiential parts. Non-constitutive panpsychism, meanwhile, holds that macroexperiences are *more* than the sum of their microexperiential parts.

Now, as we shall see in the next section, one of the key arguments for panpsychism entertained by James is a so-called 'argument from non-emergence'. This argument says that, seeing as phenomenal properties are genuine properties, and seeing as all genuine properties are identical

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properties. At the same time however he evidently interprets James as a naïve realist, for whom perceptual qualities are public and accessible to multiple subjects (i.e. for whom perceptual qualities are 'edenic' in the above sense). As we mentioned in chapter 2, this conception seems on the face of it to be incoherent. For the naïve realist perceptual qualities are qualities of external realities; for the panprotopsychist they are qualities of the perceiver's brain. We have yet to find a really lucid exposition of this 'edenic qualities' version of panprotopsychism.

[762] James, *The Principles*, I, p173
[763] James, *The Principles*, I, pp148-149
[764] Chalmers, 'Panpsychism and Panprotopsychism' in *Panpsychism: Contemporary Perspectives*, ed. by Brüntrup & Jaskolla, p25

with properties of atoms, phenomenal properties must be identical with properties of atoms. It implies, therefore, that macrophenomenal properties must be identical with – i.e. wholly constituted out of – microphenomenal properties. And this, evidently, suggests a leaning towards a constitutive form of panpsychism. However, as we saw in section 2.2, during in our investigation of PP, James also holds that consciousness is an integral thing not made of parts, possessing a strongly emergent unity/boundary (INC). And *this*, it would seem, *precludes* a constitutive form of panpsychism. Ultimately, we suggest, the apparent leaning towards constitutive panpsychism must be taken as superficial. James's comments in PU about collective consciousnesses being more than "the bare sum" of their parts, and weaving their parts into "schemes and forms" of which the parts know nothing, can only be read as advocating a non-constitutive form of panpsychism.

iii)   Holistic vs Emergent Panpsychism

There are, broadly speaking, two possible forms of non-constitutive panpsychism; holistic and emergent panpsychism. Holistic panpsychism appeals to putative "fundamental physical entities that are not atomic or localized" as the physical counterparts to macroexperiences[765]. In other words, it appeals to a doctrine of ontological holism, for which there are fundamental physical entities that are not constituted out of basic physical parts, or in which the whole has ontological priority over the parts[766]. It says that such holistic physical entities are the counterparts to holistic macroexperiences. Thus, Chalmers notes, certain idealist philosophers have claimed that the universe is such a holistic entity, and that it is the counterpart to a universal consciousness or oversoul. Typically, such philosophers have combined this with the view that human consciousness is identical with the universal consciousness, yielding a position which Chalmers calls 'identity cosmopsychism'. Some of James's absolutist opponents, we suggest, may well have advanced a doctrine very close to this[767].

Emergent panpsychism on the other hand holds that macroexperiences are *strongly emergent* from microexperiences, or that they are the counterparts to physical entities that are strongly

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[765] David Chalmers, 'The Combination Problem for Panpsychism', in *Panpsychism: Contemporary Perspectives*, ed. by Brüntrup & Jaskolla, p195

[766] The advent of quantum mechanics has brought about a renewed interest in ontological holism in recent decades. So-called 'quantum holism' attributes irreducible holistic features to certain quantum systems. See: Richard Healey, 'Holism and Nonseparability in Physics', *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. by Edward N. Zalta (Spring 2016 Edition) <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2016/entries/physics-holism/> [accessed: 5/11/2019]

[767] Certainly, this description matches Timothy Sprigge's exposition of F. H. Bradley's philosophy in *James and Bradley*. See: Sprigge, *James and Bradley*, pp259-291

emergent from their physical parts[768]. James, we suggest, must be counted as an emergent rather than a holistic panpsychist. Ontological holism plainly goes against the spirit of his radical empiricism, which, as he says, always "starts with the parts, and makes of the whole a being of the second order"[769]. Emergent panpsychism, moreover, synergizes with his emergentist view of consciousness in PP. Integral consciousness, he there said, emerges from the atoms that constitute the brain. On the emergent panpsychist reading, it emerges from the microexperiences that are the psychical counterparts to those atoms. As Chalmers notes, it is an advantage of emergent forms of panpsychism that they easily avoid certain aspects of the combination problem. On the downside however, they face all the same empirical problems that other doctrines of emergentism face.

iv)   Layered vs Fusionist Panpsychism

The next distinction we wish to discuss is that between layered and fusionist doctrines of panpsychism. According to the former, microexperiences continue to exist as individual, self-identical entities, even after they have come together to constitute macroexperiences (or after macroexperiences have emerged from them). According to the latter, microexperiences fuse together – and so cease to exist as individuals – once they have come together to constitute macroexperiences (or once macroexperiences have emerged from them). James, we contend, must certainly adopt a layered account. He believes, after all, that the consciousnesses of human beings and other organisms come together as parts of God's consciousness, and yet continue to exist as individuals. This is an utterly essential part of his mature philosophical worldview. Without it, his concept of God would lose much of its essential content.

v)   Russellian vs Non-russellian Panpsychism

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, we wish to discuss the distinction between what Chalmers calls 'russellian' and 'non-russellian panpsychism'. In this case russellian panpsychism is the really distinctive view; non-russellian panpsychism being any panpsychist view that does not endorse the theses of russellian panpsychism. Those theses may be characterized as follows. Firstly, russellian panpsychism follows its namesake, Bertrand Russell, in holding that physical properties are essentially abstract, structural, relational, or dispositional, rather than intrinsic or categorical. In other words, physical properties like mass, charge, and spin, are properties that obtain in virtue of an entity's relation to other entities; not in virtue of that entity's intrinsic nature. Secondly, it

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[768] For a contemporary exposition of this version of panpsychism, see: Godehard Brüntrup, 'Emergent Panpsychism', in *Panpsychism: Contemporary Perspectives*, ed. by Brüntrup & Jaskolla, pp48-71

[769] James, *Essays in Radical Empiricism*, pp41-42

holds that structural properties must be grounded in a base of intrinsic properties. And thirdly, it holds that the required intrinsic properties – or some of them at any rate – are phenomenal properties[770]. Thus, russellian panpsychism gives phenomenal properties ontological priority over physical properties. It says that phenomenal properties are the fundamental realities, and that physical properties merely describe the relationships between phenomenal properties. Another way of putting this would be to say that for russellian panpsychism *conscious experiences are the possessors of physical properties*. Conscious experiences possess mass, charge, and spin; they are located in space, endure in time, and attract one another with a force proportional to their masses, and inversely proportional to the square of the distance between them.

The question of whether James was a russellian panpsychist is, we suggest, more difficult to answer than the others we have considered in this section. He did of course make various statements that might encourage an affirmative response: for instance, "that inner experience is the [fundamental] reality, and that matter is but a form in which inner experiences may appear to one another when they affect each other from the outside". However, the ideas and concepts involved in this question are clearly highly complex. No single statement will settle it definitively. Yet we contend that settling it may be vitally important. Russellian panpsychism has certain distinct advantages over other forms of the doctrine. It is, metaphysically speaking, much simpler, postulating only one kind of intrinsic property rather than two. Furthermore, it answers certain crucial metaphysical questions; namely the question of how phenomenal properties fit into the natural world, and of what the intrinsic properties underlying physical structure are. At the same time, it avoids certain metaphysical questions faced by other forms of the doctrine; such as the question of what the causal role of microphenomenal properties is[771]. And finally, it is inherently compatible with scientific structural realism, and therefore with the fundamentals of the scientific worldview. If James is a russellian panpsychist, we think, this would bode well for naturalistic interpretations of his worldview. We will therefore come back to this question in section 3.1.3. But first, in section 3.1.2, we will address two popular arguments for panpsychism, both of which James gives versions of in the course of his career.

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[770] Chalmers, 'Panpsychism and Panprotopsychism' in *Panpsychism: Contemporary Perspectives*, ed. by Brüntrup & Jaskolla, p26
[771] Chalmers, Panpsychism and Panprotopsychism', in *Panpsychism: Contemporary Perspectives*, ed. by Brüntrup & Jaskolla, p26

3.1.2.   Two Arguments for Panpsychism

3.1.2.1.   The Argument from Non-Emergence

In the long history of panpsychism in the West, Skrbina manages to identify nine different kinds of argument for the theory. Of these nine two in particular are of special interest to us on account of James having appealed to them at different points in his career. The first is the 'argument from non-emergence', which Skrbina states as follows: "it is inconceivable that mind should emerge from a world in which no mind existed; therefore mind always existed, in even the simplest of structures."[772] James's rendition of this argument occurs in *The Principles of Psychology*, where he seems to consider it the most compelling argument for the mind-dust theory. He begins his exposition of the argument by establishing its key premise, namely the reducibility (or non-emergence) of properties that come later in the course of nature (biological properties/mental properties, etc.) to the most original kind of properties (the properties of atoms/physical ultimates):

> The point which as evolutionists we are bound to hold fast to is that all the new forms of being that make their appearance [in the course of evolution] are really nothing more than results of the redistribution of the original and unchanging materials. The self-same atoms which, chaotically dispersed, made the nebula, now, jammed and temporarily caught in peculiar positions, form our brains; and the 'evolution' of the brains, if understood, would simply be the account of how the atoms came to be so caught and jammed. In this story no new natures, no factors not present at the beginning, are introduced at any later stage.[773]

This statement seems essentially to express the principle of ontological reducibility (POR) described in chapter 1 as a core tenet of scientific naturalism. POR states that whatever genuine properties there are, they are identical with properties of the lowest level physical entities. James's statement expresses this in negative form, emphasising the non-emergence of new properties rather than the reducibility of all properties to physical properties, but the content is basically the same. And so, we are led to the following argument from non-emergence:

- P1: States of consciousness exist (phenomenal properties are genuine properties).

- P2: Whatever genuine properties there are, they are identical with properties of the lowest level physical entities.

- C1: Phenomenal properties are properties of the lowest level physical entities.

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[772] Skrbina, p250
[773] James, *The Principles*, I, p146

The resultant doctrine of "atomistic hylozoism" postulates "an infinite number of degrees of consciousness, following the degrees of complication and aggregation of the primordial mind-dust". It is, says James, "an indispensable part of a thorough-going philosophy of evolution"[774].

The argument from non-emergence, also known as the genetic argument for panpsychism, is one of the more popular arguments among contemporary proponents of the doctrine. It does however face certain prima facie difficulties. To begin with, many people seem to possess an intuition that runs counter to it; namely, the intuition that mental properties *are* emergent. It is this intuition, presumably, that informs John Searle's claim, in the aforementioned exchange with David Chalmers, that a thermostat "does not have enough structure even to be a remote candidate for consciousness"[775]. The implication seems to be that consciousness is an emergent phenomenon, and that the conditions for its emergence have to do with the structure of its emergence-base. This intuition is certainly widespread. It receives support, in the present day, from the reigning functionalist paradigm in philosophy, and from the popular analogy between brains and computers. Just as the total functional organization of a computer is required in order for the monitor present its display, so the total functional organization of the brain is required in order for consciousness to be present. However, appeals to functionalism and to analogies like this one may well be misleading. We are speaking, after all, about *phenomenal* consciousness, abstracted from any supposed functional properties. The display on a computer monitor, and its relation to the functional organization of the computer, can easily be understood in purely physical/functional terms. The relation between phenomenal consciousness and the brain seems to be very different. There is an explanatory gap in the latter case that is not present in the former.

Certain contemporary philosophers argue that the emergence of phenomenal consciousness from purely physical entities is too brute a case of emergence to be countenanced. Galen Strawson for instance, in *Consciousness and its Place in Nature*, distinguishes between cases of intuitive emergence and putative cases of brute emergence. He gives the phenomenon of liquidity as an example of the former kind. Liquidity is not a property of physical ultimates or of H2O molecules, but when you put lots of H2O molecules together, they possess the property of liquidity. Liquidity therefore, may be said, in some sense, to be an emergent property. The emergence of liquidity, Strawson suggests, is relatively easy to grasp:

> We can easily make intuitive sense of the idea that certain sorts of molecules are so constituted that they don't bind together in a tight lattice but slide past or off each

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[774] James, *The Principles*, I, pp149-150
[775] John Searle, 'Consciousness and the Philosophers'

other (in accordance with van de Waals interaction laws) in a way that gives rise to – is – the phenomenon of liquidity.[776]

Strawson insists that in making sense of the emergence of liquidity we need appeal to nothing more than "a small set of conceptually homogeneous shape-size-mass-charge-number-position-motion-involving physics notions"; indeed, we naturally suppose that the phenomena of liquidity "reduce without remainder to shape-size-mass-charge-etc. phenomena"[777]. When we move to the case of the putative emergence of phenomenal consciousness from the physical world, he thinks, the situation is quite different. There is no such homogeneity between physical concepts and phenomenal concepts, and no simple story to be told about how we get from the one to the other. We can understand, to be sure, how intelligence, cognition, wakefulness, etc. (i.e. consciousness conceived of in the *functional* sense) might emerge from physical entities, but we cannot understand how *phenomenal* consciousness emerges from physical entities. Clearly, Strawson thinks, there is a fundamental disanalogy between the emergence of liquidity and the putative emergence of phenomenal consciousness. The one is perfectly intuitive; the other is brute to the point of unintelligibility. Ultimately, he thinks we have to dispense with the notion of brute emergence altogether[778].

3.1.2.2.   The Argument by Continuity

The next argument we wish to consider is the argument by continuity: "a common principle or substance exists in all things; in humans it accounts for our soul or mind, and thus by extrapolation it infers mind in all things."[779] This argument, Skrbina notes, is a species of a more general kind of argument known as an 'argument by analogy': "The root assumption is that humans possess a mind, and this fact is taken in connection with other points to show that all things possess mind."[780] We already noted that James employs a version of this argument in PU.

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[776] Strawson, 'Realistic Monism: Why Physicalism Entails Panpsychism', in *Consciousness and Its Place in Nature*, ed. by Anthony Freeman, p13

[777] Strawson, 'Realistic Monism: Why Physicalism Entails Panpsychism', in *Consciousness and Its Place in Nature*, ed. by Anthony Freeman, p13

[778] We note a seeming contradiction between James's emergentist account of the mind in PP and his adoption of the argument from non-emergence just outlined. If James believes that all properties are identical with properties of physical ultimates as per P2, then how can he endorse an emergentist account of integral consciousness? We may respond along the following lines. One can adopt a doctrine of emergentism whilst refusing to accept certain cases of brute emergence like the emergence of phenomenal consciousness (as per Strawson's claim). James, we suggest, held that the boundary, unity, and macro-causal power of consciousness were emergent, but that phenomenal consciousness was not emergent. In this case we may have to amend P2 of our reconstructed version of James's argument in section 3.1.2.1 above. We can say 'P2: phenomenal consciousness cannot have emerged from lower-level entities that do not possess any phenomenal properties'.

[779] Skrbina, p250

[780] Skrbina, p251

"My body", he said, "moves by the influence of my feeling and will; the sun, moon, sea, and wind, being themselves more powerful, move by the influence of some more powerful feeling and will."[781] James here begins with the premise that his body possesses a mind. But then he moves immediately to the conclusion that other physical objects possess minds. As Skrbina says, in order for this argument to get off the ground, there need to be some "other points" in connection with which the initial premise is supposed to justify an analogy between the body and other physical objects. What, we may ask, for James, *are* these other points?

The answer, we suggest, can be traced back to the metaphysics of radical empiricism. We know from ERE that James endorses the metaphysical thesis of pure experience (MTPE), according to which everything in the world is comprised of one kind of "primal stuff or material" called pure experience. Because of his endorsement of MTPE, he insisted that external objects, insofar as they exist independently of the perceptions of humans and other organisms, must be 'experiences for themselves' in the panpsychist sense[782]. This, it seems, will serve as the required supplement to the Fechnerian analogy. If physical objects must, in any case, be experiences for themselves, then it makes sense to conceive of them after the analogy of the experience we know best; namely human experience. The question is, why does James accept MTPE in the first place? In section 2.5, recall, we suggested that James's adoption of the thesis had to do with traditional Berkleyan considerations. Here, however, we are after an explicit argument, and so we will attempt to reconstruct one on James's behalf.

The argument will take as premises three claims that James defends consistently throughout his career, together with a fourth that is implicit in his work, and that is, in any case, relatively uncontroversial. The first of these claims, stated most explicitly in ERE, is that substance dualism is no longer tenable, and that some form of substance monism must be true; i.e. that reality is comprised of only one kind of stuff[783]. The second claim, stated most explicitly in PP, is that experience, in the sense of phenomenal consciousness, is real and irreducible[784]. The third claim, defended most explicitly in *Pragmatism*, is that the notion of a non-experiential substance is meaningless, and that the pragmatic meaning of 'material substance' is to be cashed out in exclusively experiential terms; i.e. that physical stuff is reducible to experience[785]. Finally, the fourth claim, which is commonplace in the philosophy of mind, is that there are basically just two

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[781] James, *A Pluralistic Universe*, p151
[782] James, *Essays in Radical Empiricism*, p88
[783] James, *Essays in Radical Empiricism*, p3
[784] James, *The Principles*, I, p173
[785] James, *Pragmatism*, pp89-90

candidates for fundamental kinds of stuff: experiential stuff and physical stuff. Taking these four claims as our premises, we can construct the following argument for MTPE:

- P1: Reality is comprised of just one kind of stuff.

- P2: That stuff is either physical or experiential.

- P3: Experience is real and irreducible.

- P4: Physical stuff is reducible to experience.

- C: Reality is comprised of experiential stuff (MTPE)

The above argument does not, by itself, constitute an argument for panpsychism. As we discussed in the section on ERE, it is also compatible with doctrines of phenomenalism, idealism, and naïve realism. In order to get to panpsychism we must combine it with something like Fechner's argument by analogy. We then get the following:

- P1: Reality is comprised of experiential stuff.
- P2: My body (or a portion of my brain/nervous system), which appears outwardly as a physical object, is inwardly constituted out of an independent stream of experiential stuff.
- C3: We may suppose, by analogy, that other physical objects are likewise inwardly constituted out of independent streams of experiential stuff.

This then, is our reconstruction of James's argument by continuity for panpsychism. It is not, we think, wholly uncompelling. It does however suffer certain defects. Two in particular stand out as needing to be addressed before the total argument can be made persuasive. Firstly, the notion that physical stuff is reducible to experience (premise 4 of the argument for MTPE) needs to be carefully qualified. It is by no means obvious that this premise is true; indeed, professional philosophic and scientific opinion tends to point in the opposite direction. Secondly, the conclusion to the argument by analogy for panpsychism is a rather weak one, giving us only the legitimacy of panpsychism as a hypothesis, rather than the probable truth of the doctrine. Both of these defects, we suggest, are significantly ameliorated in the best contemporary versions of the argument by continuity. Moreover, the new forms of the argument which we have in mind are highly compatible with James's views. We shall therefore investigate them in closer detail in the following section.

3.1.3.   The Intrinsic Nature Argument for Panpsychism

3.1.3.1.   Contemporary Versions of the Argument

The contemporary version of the argument by continuity to which we have just alluded is known
in analytic circles as 'the intrinsic nature argument for panpsychism'[786]. Along with the argument
from non-emergence, it has proved to be the most popular argument for panpsychism among
contemporary philosophers. Seeing as James himself does not explicitly formulate his own
version of the intrinsic nature argument, we propose to first unpack the argument on its own
terms before considering how it intersects with certain of James's ideas. The argument goes as
follows:

- P1: Physics only tells us about the structural properties of reality.

- P2: Structural properties must be grounded in a base of intrinsic properties.

- P3: Phenomenal properties are intrinsic properties.

- P4: Phenomenal properties are intrinsic properties of a certain portion of physical reality,
  namely the brain/nervous system.

- C: We may expect the intrinsic properties of other portions of physical reality to be of a
  nature continuous with familiar phenomenal properties.

i)   P1: Physics only tells us about the structural properties of reality.

Most contemporary versions of the intrinsic nature argument appeal to certain of Bertrand
Russell's ideas; ideas which Russell himself credits James with having inspired[787]. This is especially
true of their justification of P1 and P4. In *The Analysis of Matter*, Russell argues that there is an
important sense in which modern physics, and the knowledge it gives us, is fundamentally
"abstract"[788]. The average non-physicist, according to Russell, tends to suppose a far higher
degree of continuity between the world of physics and the world of common-sense (between the
scientific and manifest images) than really exists. She/he supposes this because physics education
begins with the manipulation of manifest objects like levers, weights, and pulleys. Russell insists
however that "in proportion as physics increases the scope and power of its methods, in that
same proportion it robs its subject matter of concreteness"[789]. The spacetime of general relativity

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[786] Godehard Brüntrup & Ludwig Jaskolla, 'Introduction', in *Panpsychism: Contemporary Perspectives*, ed. by
Brüntrup & Jaskolla, p3
[787] Bertrand Russell, *The Analysis of Mind* (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1921), p7
[788] Bertrand Russell, *The Analysis of Matter* (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trübner & Co. Ltd, 1927), pp130-
138
[789] Russell, *The Analysis of Matter*, p130

is incompatible with the phenomenal space and time that is perceived by human beings[790]; the matter which comprises Eddington's common-sense table has little to do with the imperceptible entities that comprise his physicist's table, etc.[791] Matter, as far as modern physics is concerned, is only the abstract bearer of certain structural or relational properties. William Seager explains:

> If someone asks what an electron is, all we can say is that it is a 'particle' with a certain mass (9.10938188 x 10-31 kilogram), electric charge -1, spin ½, etc. Each of these attributes can only be defined relationally and all we know about them is what these relations provide. A mass of m is just that property such that something with it will obey the relation that m=F/a for a force F and acceleration a, and so on.[792]

All the fundamental properties described by physics are relational in this sense. They are defined in terms of the way that they dispose their bearers to interact with other such bearers of relational properties. They tell us "nothing", Russell says, about the "intrinsic quality" of their bearers; about what those bearers are like considered in themselves, or independently of other things[793].

ii)   P2: Structural properties must be grounded in a base of intrinsic properties.

There is, we suggest, little in the way of explicit argument to support premise 2. Its strength lies more or less exclusively in its intuitive plausibility. Russell expresses this by saying that a world without intrinsic properties would be one in which "all things in the world will merely be each other's washing"[794]. In *A Place for Consciousness*, Gregg Rosenberg attempts to articulate the relevant intuition by way of an analogy. A universe without intrinsic properties, he says, would be like a game of chess without a board or pieces[795]. Consider the following. There is a story of two chess grandmasters turning up to a poorly organized tournament and, not being provided with a board or pieces, agreeing to engage in a game of chess without them. The grandmasters notated the entire game on a sheet of paper, passing it between themselves after finishing each turn. This, according to Rosenberg, invites an interesting hypothesis: that the game of chess may consist solely in its rules together with the 'moves' of the players. In order for this analogy to be perfect of course, we would have to imagine the game taking place without the paper, or indeed the physical brains of the players, or anything else extrinsic to the rules and the players' moves. But the point is clear enough. We can understand the claim that chess is purely relational; that it

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[790] Russell, *The Analysis of Matter*, p132
[791] Russell, *The Analysis of Matter*, p136
[792] William Seager, 'The 'Intrinsic Nature' Argument for Panpsychism', *Journal of Consciousness Studies*, 13 (2006), pp129-145 (pp134-135)
[793] Russell, *The Analysis of Matter*, p264
[794] Russell, *The Analysis of Matter*, p325
[795] Gregg Rosenberg, *A Place for Consciousness* (Oxford: OUP, 2004), pp234-235

has no intrinsic properties. The question is, can we *accept* this claim? Can we accept the claim that any system of purely relational properties like chess could exist without any concrete entities to realize/instantiate it? And more importantly, can we accept the claim that our own universe is such a purely relational system? Rosenberg joins Russell in answering in the negative[796].

William Seager, in his article 'The 'Intrinsic Nature' Argument for Panpsychism', offers a slightly different version of premise 2 which he calls 'The Principle of the Reducibility of Relations' (PRR). This principle, which he traces back to Leibniz, states that "all extrinsic properties are determined by intrinsic properties"[797]. In the case of certain extrinsic properties, like 'being taller than', the principle seems intuitively applicable; one person's being taller than another can be analysed in terms of the intrinsic heights of each person. In other cases, such as those of spatial relations, the principle is not so easy to apply. "The idea that my intrinsic properties somehow determine that I am 50 miles from a burning barn", Seager suggests, "seems ridiculous."[798]. He notes however that panpsychism, in conceiving of intrinsic properties as phenomenal, offers us one of the more promising prospects for the application of PRR to spatial relations; "for it does not seem altogether hopeless to define space and time in terms of perceptual contents, given that there are sufficient perceiving subjects to 'nail down' the infinite and continuously varying spatial and temporal relations that structure our world."[799] We will revisit this point in the next section.

iii)   P3: Phenomenal properties are intrinsic properties.

The most obvious route to premise 3 involves an appeal to our introspective knowledge of phenomenal consciousness. This is the strategy adopted, quite convincingly, by William Seager in the article just mentioned. Seager appeals to a traditional and plausible definition of intrinsic properties as those properties which an entity would possess considered independently of all other entities in the universe; or, in other words, those properties it would possess if it were completely alone in the universe[800]. From here Seager invokes certain Cartesian considerations to argue that states of consciousness are intrinsic properties. "The philosophical problem of the

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[796] For a contemporary defence of the affirmative response – i.e. of the claim that the universe is purely relational – see: Ladyman & Ross, *Everything Must Go: Metaphysics Naturalized.* Ladyman and Ross refer to the resultant position as 'ontic structural realism'. Following John Worrall, they endorse the doctrine of scientific structural realism, according to which scientific theories tell us about the structural properties of reality. However, they part from Worrall in claiming that the structural properties thus revealed are wholly constitutive of reality.

[797] Seager, 'The 'Intrinsic Nature' Argument for Panpsychism', p131

[798] Seager, 'The 'Intrinsic Nature' Argument for Panpsychism', pp131-132

[799] Seager, 'The 'Intrinsic Nature' Argument for Panpsychism', p132

[800] Strictly speaking, we should probably talk of intrinsic properties as those properties an entity would possess, not just if it were *alone* in the universe, but if it were itself the *sum-total* of the universe, for an entity "alone" in the universe might still be thought to be related to space.

external world", he says, "and the coherence of solipsism entail that consciousness is an intrinsic property of things."[801] It is not at first easy to see Seager's point here. States of consciousness, the critic will say, are dependent on states of the brain, which in turn are dependent on the state of the organism, which is dependent on the state of the environment, and so on. A brain could not exist completely alone in the universe, and neither, therefore, could consciousness. This objection both begs the question and misses the point however. Seager's point is that introspection reveals phenomenal properties to be properties that *could conceivably* – i.e. in some possible world – exist totally independently of anything else. Phenomenal properties are not defined, as structural properties are, in terms of how they dispose their bearers to interact with other bearers of phenomenal properties. They are not really defined at all. They just *are*. To possess a phenomenal property is, in an important sense, just to *be* that property; to have direct acquaintance with its qualitative character. Thus, we can conceive of a possible world that consists solely of phenomenal redness; we cannot conceive of a possible world that consists solely of a certain mass (or spin, or charge) [802].

iv)   P4: Phenomenal properties are intrinsic properties of a certain portion of physical reality; namely the brain/nervous system.

Now we come to premise 4, which in many ways is the most decisive premise for the intrinsic nature argument. Premise 4 may be said to follow from combining the preceding three premises with a certain kind of theory regarding the relation between mind and matter; namely a 'psychophysical identity theory'. Undoubtedly the most popular form of this theory among contemporary philosophers is the famous 'mind-brain identity theory'. We shall briefly consider it in what follows with a view to illustrating this point. The mind-brain identity theory says, roughly speaking, that any given mental state is *literally identical* with some neurophysiological state[803]. Most philosophers of course, have tended to view the identity theory as essentially reductive, and

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[801] Seager, 'The 'Intrinsic Nature' Argument for Panpsychism', p136

[802] It may be instructive in this regard to consider the coloured afterimages we see on the backs of our eyelids when we close our eyes after looking at a light source. In these cases, we have seemingly objectless experiences of phenomenal colour properties. It is certainly possible to *conceive* of such properties existing in total isolation, without any extrinsic or other properties to support them, in a way that it is not possible to conceive of physical properties existing.

[803] The identity theory is sometimes supposed to have been superseded by functionalism, which identifies mental states with functional states rather than with their neural realizers, but this claim is greatly overstated. Unless we hold that functional states/properties are *strongly emergent*, which few philosophers do, they too must ultimately be reducible to physical states/properties. The only way of parsing this reducibility, short of outright elimination, is through an identity theory. We note that even emergentists may endorse a version of the identity theory. They may hold that certain physical wholes are strongly emergent from their physical parts, and that mental states are identical with those emergent physical wholes. We take it then, that the identity theory is relatively uncontroversial.

to conceive of it asymmetrically, as entailing the reducibility of the mental to the physical. There is nothing however in the logic of the identity theory itself that requires that one conceive of it in this way; indeed, this conception would seem to be contrary to its basic logic. As Galen Strawson points out:

> [W]hen the identity theory makes its great identification, it doesn't (of course) take anything away from the nature of experience, as ordinarily and correctly conceived of … (if it did take something away from the nature of experience, it would no longer be identifying *experience* with anything, it would be talking about something else.) … Rather, it *adds* something to the nature of neural physical activity as ordinarily conceived of. It states that at least some neural physical activity consists, literally consists, of experience, experience in all its heady luxuriance.[804]

The identity theory, properly conceived, no more reduces the mental to the physical than it reduces the physical to the mental. It is at this point that the preceding three premises become relevant. For given premises 1 through 3, the identity theory would seem to make the phenomenal properties of brains overwhelmingly plausible candidates for being the intrinsic properties in which their physical counterparts are grounded[805].

v)   C: We may expect the intrinsic properties of other portions of physical reality to be of a nature continuous with familiar phenomenal properties.

Which brings us at last to the conclusion of the intrinsic nature argument. Seeing as physics tells us nothing about the intrinsic properties of the physical world, it gives us no reason to suppose that those properties must be non-experiential. And seeing as the only knowledge we have of the intrinsic properties of the physical world shows us that at least some of those properties *are* experiential, it is legitimate, and indeed economical, to suppose that others of them may also be experiential. We could not hope for a better summary than the one provided by Arthur Eddington in his Gifford Lectures on *The Nature of the Physical World*:

> The physical atom is, like everything else in physics, a schedule of pointer readings [i.e. it is known only abstractly]. The schedule is, we agree, attached to some unknown background. Why not then attach it to something of a spiritual [i.e. mental/phenomenal] nature of which a prominent characteristic is thought. It seems rather silly to prefer to attach it to something of a so-called "concrete" nature

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[804] Strawson, 'Real Naturalism', pp138-139
[805] This has the somewhat paradoxical but strangely beguiling result that, as Russell put it, "what the physiologist sees when he looks at a brain is part of his own brain, not part of the brain he is examining", and that "what is in our heads is the mind (with additions) rather than what the physiologist sees through his microscope". See: Russell, *The Analysis of Matter*, p383; p387. In other words, when a physiologist examines a brain, what he actually *experiences* are the *intrinsic properties* of his own brain, from which he *infers* (in some sense) the *structural properties* of the brain he is examining. Interestingly, Morton Prince, whom James references in connection with panpsychism in ERE (section 2.5.3.4), provides an analysis that is almost *identical* to Russell's. See: Prince, pp58-60.

inconsistent with thought, and then to wonder where the thought comes from. We have dismissed all preconception as to the background of our pointer readings, and for the most part we can discover nothing as to its nature. But in one case – namely, for the pointer readings of my own brain – I have an insight which is not limited to the evidence of the pointer readings. That insight shows that they are attached to a background [i.e. an intrinsic base] of consciousness. … I may expect that the background of other pointer readings in physics is of a nature continuous with that revealed to me in this particular case.[806]

So goes the intrinsic nature argument for panpsychism. It is not perhaps a knock-down argument, but combined with certain others, such as the argument from non-emergence, it is, we suggest, deeply compelling.

3.1.3.2.   James's Intrinsic Nature Argument

Let us now consider how James's views on panpsychism intersect with the intrinsic nature argument. It is our contention that James endorses some version of every premise in this argument, together with the conclusion. We propose to demonstrate this by working through the premises one by one, showing in each case how James's views can be seen to support them.

i)   P1: Physics only tells us about the structural properties of reality.

The key statements of James's which support premise 1 occur in PU in the context of his exposition of Bergson's critique of intellectualism. There James argues that "the sciences … of space and matter", which deal with "the transformations of external things", provide us with a purely "'theoretic' or scientific knowledge" that "touches only the outer surface of reality", and tells us nothing about its "inner nature"[807]. It is easy to see how these statements map onto Russell's analysis. The sciences of space and matter (i.e. physics) only give us knowledge of the outer surface (i.e. the structural properties) of reality, and not of its inner nature (i.e. its intrinsic properties).

ii)   P2: Structural properties must be grounded in a base of intrinsic properties.

Although there is a great deal of talk in PU about the "inner nature"[808], "inner dimension"[809], "inner quality"[810], and "inner life"[811] of reality, and although it is certainly implied that such an inner nature is required to support the "outer surface" of things studied by science, nowhere in

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[806] Arthur Eddington, *The Nature of the Physical World* (New York: Macmillan, 1928), p259
[807] James, *A Pluralistic Universe*, pp248-251. Compare: James, *Some Problems of Philosophy*, pp79-83
[808] James, *A Pluralistic Universe*, p248; p251; p272
[809] James, *A Pluralistic Universe*, p250
[810] James, *A Pluralistic Universe*, p24
[811] James, *A Pluralistic Universe*, p31; p165; p169; p246

the text does James make this claim explicitly. The closest he gets to doing so is not in fact in PU but in VRE, where he insists that "personal experience … is the one thing that fills up the measure of our concrete actuality, and any would-be existent that should lack such a feeling, or its analogue, would be a piece of reality only half made up."[812] This could be seen as an endorsement of both premise 2 and premise 3. The suggestion seems to be that an outer surface without an inner nature would be "a piece of reality only half made up" (i.e. that it would not be possible), and that personal experience is the only decent candidate (perhaps the only conceivable candidate) that we have for an inner nature of things.

Recall that Seager offered us an alternative version of premise 2 that he called 'The Principle of the Reducibility of Relations' (PRR). At first glance PRR might be thought to be in conflict with James's philosophy; did James not argue precisely for the *irreducibility* of relations? However, a moment's thought reveals that this conflict is merely apparent. What PRR claims is the analysability of relations in terms of intrinsic properties; not the possibility of eliminating relations altogether. James's theory of relations in ERE does in fact involve a more or less explicit endorsement of PRR. He claims that all relations, including the most problematic external relations like spatial relations, are wholly analysable in terms derived from experience. This then, is as straightforward an endorsement of premise 2 as we could hope to find.

iii)　　　P3: Phenomenal properties are intrinsic properties.

We have just seen James's claim from VRE that the inner nature of every piece of reality is personal experience. We know that James sharpened this thesis in ERE and PU, where he claimed that reality at large is comprised of pure experience, and that external entities are inwardly constituted out of independent streams of experience. This, we think, is sufficient to *imply* a commitment to premise 3. What we really want in the case of premise 3 however is not an endorsement of the claim that experience does, as a matter of *fact*, constitute the inner natures of certain things, but rather some suggestion of why experience is the sort of thing, in *principle*, that should constitute inner natures. Such an explanation is, so far as we can tell, lacking in the work of James, just as it is lacking in the work of Russell. Recall however that Seager appealed to very basic Cartesian intuitions in order to establish premise 3. It is very possible that James and Russell simply took these intuitions for granted, and saw no need of making them explicit.

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[812] James, *The Varieties*, p499. Some scholars may question the validity of invoking VRE in this connection on the basis that it predates the metaphysics of radical empiricism. As we have already noted however, we agree with David Lamberth that the metaphysics of radical empiricism was mostly worked out as early as 1895.

iv)   **P4: Phenomenal properties are intrinsic properties of a certain portion of physical reality; namely the brain/nervous system.**

Given our conclusions regarding premises 1 and 2, it follows that James must also endorse premise 4. The brain and nervous system plainly have an 'outer surface' the properties of which are discoverable by physics; that 'outer surface' must be grounded in an 'inner nature'; and that 'inner nature' must be comprised of experience (which for James is constituted of phenomenal properties). There is however one more thing to be said on this point. Recall that in PP James established a thoroughgoing parallelism of mind and brain. He refrained, at that stage, from identifying the mind with the brain, or from supposing that mental properties were properties *of* the brain. He abstained altogether, in fact, for methodological reasons, from offering any definitive metaphysical account of the relation between mental properties and physical properties. Later however, in ERE, he made a formal break with dualism, and embraced the metaphysical thesis of pure experience (MTPE). As such, we must reconceive his commitment to parallelism in light of this change. The mental and the physical – the mind and the brain – are no longer to be conceived as two parallel realities, but as "co-eternal aspects of one self-same reality, much as concave and convex are aspects of one curve"[813]. Thus, the human stream of consciousness, in James's mature worldview, is the 'inner nature' of the human brain; and the human brain is the 'outer surface' of the human stream of consciousness. We take this to be equivalent to premise 4.

v)   **C: We may expect the intrinsic properties of other portions of physical reality to be of a nature continuous with familiar phenomenal properties.**

Finally, the conclusion is more or less equivalent to the basic Fechnerian argument from analogy which we outlined in section 3.1.2. "My body moves by the influence of my feeling and will; the sun, moon, sea, and wind, being themselves more powerful, move by the influence of some more powerful feeling and will." Just substitute "my body" for 'my brain' (as per P4); "moves by the influence of" for 'is the outer surface of' (as per P1); and "feeling and will" for 'stream of consciousness/experience' (as per P4). Adding all of this together, we get the following Jamesian intrinsic nature argument:

- P1: "the sciences … of space and matter" touch only "the outer surface of reality".
- P2: An outer surface without an inner nature would be "a piece of reality only half made up".

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[813] William James, 'Introduction', in Gustav Theodor Fechner, *The Little Book of Life After Death*, p. xiii

- P3: The human stream of consciousness is the "inner nature" of a certain portion of physical reality, namely the human brain.

- C: We may expect the inner natures of other portions of physical reality to be of a nature continuous with human consciousness.

Given that James holds streams of consciousness to be comprised of pure experience, and holds pure experience to be constituted of sensible natures (phenomenal properties), we suggest that this conclusion is basically equivalent to that given by contemporary versions of the argument.

3.1.4.   The Combination Problem

We have now considered some of the strongest arguments in favour of panpsychism, and have demonstrated how they intersect with James's views. The next thing to do will be to discuss what many philosophers, including James himself, see as the most serious problem with the theory. This is the so-called combination problem, first formulated by James in PP, and later named by William Seager in his 1995 article 'Consciousness, Information, and Panpsychism'[814]. James's original statement of the problem is as follows:

> Take a hundred of them [feelings/microexperiences], shuffle them and pack them as close together as you can (whatever that may mean); still each remains the same feeling it always was, shut in its own skin, windowless, ignorant of what the other feelings are and mean. There would be a hundred-and-first feeling there, if, when a group or series of such feelings were set up, a consciousness *belonging to the group as such* should emerge. And this 101st feeling would be a totally new fact; the 100 original feelings might, by a curious physical law, be a signal for its *creation*, when they came together; but they would have no substantial identity with it, nor it with them, and one could never deduce the one from the others, or (in any intelligible sense) say that they *evolved* it.

> Take a sentence of a dozen words, and take twelve men and tell each one word. Then stand the men in a row or jam them in a bunch, and let each think of his word as intently as he will; nowhere will there be a consciousness of the whole sentence. We talk of the "spirit of the age," and the "sentiment of the people," and in various ways we hypostatize "public opinion." But we know this to be symbolic speech, and never dream that the spirit, opinion, sentiment, etc., constitute a consciousness other than, and additional to, that of the several individuals whom the words "age," "people," or "public" denote. The private minds do not agglomerate into a higher compound mind.[815]

[814] William Seager, 'Consciousness, Information, and Panpsychism', *Journal of Consciousness Studies*, 2 (1995), pp272-288
[815] James, *The Principles*, I, p160

As with the doctrine of panpsychism itself, contemporary philosophers have located a number of interesting distinctions in the combination problem, and have given it a variety of distinct formulations. These formulations, according to Chalmers, can be said to fall into three broad categories: the subject combination problem ("How do microsubjects combine to yield macrosubjects?"), the quality combination problem ("How do microqualities combine to yield macroqualities?"), and the structure combination problem ("How does microexperiential structure … combine to yield macroexperiential structure?")[816]. Within these categories there are one or two sub-problems that are especially relevant to our discussion. Thus, within the subject combination problem we are particularly interested in the 'subject-summing problem', according to which no group of microsubjects necessitates the existence of a macrosubject[817], and the 'synchronic constitution problem', according to which no group of microsubjects can synchronically constitute a macrosubject[818]; i.e. can maintain their own identities whilst at the same time being parts of a macrosubject. Within the structural combination problem, we are particularly interested in the so-called 'boundary/unity problem', according to which the boundary/unity of macroexperiences cannot be analysed into a mere aggregate of microexperiences[819].

Now, the question for us is this: which version of the combination problem is *James* advancing? According to Chalmers, James is best understood as advancing a version of the subject-summing problem. James says, after all, that one "could never deduce" a macrosubject from a group of microsubjects. Indeed, he states bluntly that "private minds do not agglomerate into a higher compound mind". Statements like these can easily be read as implying a version of the subject-summing problem. As Chalmers says, "Given 101 subjects, it seems that the existence of the first 100 does not necessitate the existence of the 101st"[820]. Chalmers even suggests that James's

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[816] Chalmers, 'The Combination Problem for Panpsychism', in *Panpsychism: Contemporary Perspectives*, ed. by Brüntrup & Jaskolla, pp182-183

[817] Chalmers, 'The Combination Problem for Panpsychism', in *Panpsychism: Contemporary Perspectives*, ed. by Brüntrup & Jaskolla, pp182-183

[818] Chalmers does not actually name this problem but implies it in the following statement regarding the prospects of a fusionist solution to the combination problem: "Many questions could be raised about this view, but a basic question is the following: Is the relation between the original subjects and the merged subject a synchronic or a diachronic relation? If it is a synchronic relation, then presumably the low-level and high-level subjects exist at the same time, and we have lost the distinctive aspect of this view whereby the high-level subject supersedes the low-level subject. This version of the view will be faced with the original worries about how a number of subjects could ever synchronically constitute another subject."
See: Chalmers, 'The Combination Problem for Panpsychism', in *Panpsychism: Contemporary Perspectives*, ed. by Brüntrup & Jaskolla, p198.

[819] Chalmers, 'The Combination Problem for Panpsychism', in *Panpsychism: Contemporary Perspectives*, ed. by Brüntrup & Jaskolla, p183

[820] Chalmers, 'The Combination Problem for Panpsychism', in *Panpsychism: Contemporary Perspectives*, ed. by Brüntrup & Jaskolla, p182

deflationary account of the soul in PP, and his questioning of the existence of consciousness in ERE, constitute attempts to circumvent the subject-summing problem by undermining the notion that subjects are a condition for experience at all[821]. This, no doubt, is an ingenious reading, but it is not one that we can wholly endorse. The subject-summing problem, we contend, is only peripheral for James. The much more serious problem is undoubtedly the boundary/unity problem. That this is so is perfectly evident from James's discussion of the compounding of consciousness in PU. There, recall, he restates the combination problem as follows:

> We can't say that awareness of the alphabet as such is *nothing more* than twenty-six awarenesses, each of a separate letter; for those are twenty-six *distinct awarenesses*, of single letters without others, while their so-called sum is *one awareness*, of every letter with its comrades. *There is thus something new in the collective consciousness*. [our emphasis][822]

The problem, evidently, is not that the microsubjects do not *necessitate* the macrosubject; it is that the macrosubject is *more than the sum of* the microsubjects. It is an integral consciousness, possessing a strongly emergent boundary/unity that cannot be analysed into a mere aggregate of microexperiences. It is for this reason that James raises the combination problem as an objection to absolutism, and says that it leads to theism. The absolute, he says, being more than the sum of its parts, cannot be analysed into an aggregate of finite subjects. As such, we must suppose that it is something *additional* to the universe of finite subjects; namely, the God of traditional theism[823]. The whole discussion of combination in PU would make no sense if subject-summing was the crux of the problem.

Now, perceptive readers may have noticed a seeming contradiction in our interpretation. We said earlier, in section 3.1.1, that James was best conceived of as an emergent panpsychist. But emergent panpsychism clearly avoids the boundary/unity problem altogether. There is no need for *emergent* panpsychists to explain how an aggregate of microexperiences constitutes a bounded/unified macroexperience, because *emergent* panpsychists *do not hold* that aggregates of microexperiences constitute macroexperiences. Rather, they hold that macroexperiences *emerge* from microexperiences. They may therefore simply grant that macroexperiences possess strongly emergent features. James, it seems, cannot have conceived of himself as an emergent panpsychist, or else he would not have been troubled by the boundary/unity problem. Our response is simply to concede that James did not conceive himself as an emergent panpsychist.

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[821] Chalmers, 'The Combination Problem for Panpsychism', in *Panpsychism: Contemporary Perspectives*, ed. by Brüntrup & Jaskolla, p183
[822] James, *A Pluralistic Universe*, p188
[823] James, *A Pluralistic Universe*, p195

Indeed, we find it unlikely that such distinctions/possibilities had consciously occurred to him. We hold, nevertheless, that his total worldview implied such a doctrine, and that it constitutes the best interpretation of his underlying philosophic vision. Furthermore, we hold that there was another aspect of the combination problem that troubled James – one which was not solved, but rather exacerbated by his emergentism – and that James did not clearly distinguish between these aspects. When, later in PU, he comes to discuss his solution to the combination problem, he seems, without acknowledging any distinction, to emphasize what we called the synchronic constitution problem rather than the boundary/unity problem.

In lecture VI James frames the combination problem as having arisen iatrogenically, as a result of philosophers' misapplication of conceptual logic. "Conceptualisation", he tells us, "involves placing parts of experience in classes, and treating them by the law of their class."[824] Thus, in a classic example, we place 'Socrates' in the class 'man' and then, treating him by a law of this class – that 'all men are mortal' – we deduce that 'Socrates is mortal'. Sometimes, James says, this process of conceptualization goes awry. This occurs when we employ concepts privatively rather than positively; when we use them "not merely to assign properties to things, but to deny the very properties with which the things sensibly present themselves."[825] Thus, in an example James takes from Sigwart, a horseman is denied the capability of going by foot because it is part of the definition of the concept of a horseman that he rides on a horse[826]. To give a more pragmatic example, a platypus might be denied the capability of laying eggs because it is part of the definition of the concept of mammal that all mammals give birth to live young. It is James's contention that the combination problem arises out of a similar instance of vicious conceptualisation.

> The particular intellectualistic difficulty that held my own thought so long in a vice was, as we have seen at such tedious length, the impossibility of understanding how 'your' experience and 'mine', which 'as such' are defined as not conscious of each other, can nevertheless *at the same time* be members of a world-experience defined expressly as having all its parts co-conscious, or known together. [our emphasis][827]

Although this statement is somewhat ambiguous, the preamble concerning conceptual logic seems to suggest the following reading. It is part of the definition of a stream of consciousness that it is entirely self-enclosed or ejective to other streams of consciousness. Streams of consciousness cannot, therefore, according to conceptual logic, figure *at the same time* in a

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[824] James, *A Pluralistic Universe*, p217
[825] James, *A Pluralistic Universe*, pp218-219
[826] James, *A Pluralistic Universe*, p220
[827] James, *A Pluralistic Universe*, p221

context in which their self-enclosedness is somehow ameliorated or overcome. They can be self-enclosed or co-conscious, but they cannot be both at once[828]. This, it seems, is a statement of the synchronic constitution problem rather than the boundary/unity problem. James, we suggest, did not really distinguish between the two. This is part of the reason why he continued to be troubled by the combination problem even after his own thinking began to move in the direction of emergentism.

Contrary to Chalmers's reading, we hold that the boundary/unity problem and the synchronic constitution problem are at the heart of the combination problem for James. The subject-summing problem, although certainly implied by some of what he says, figures only peripherally. Our reading is leant further support, we suggest, by the fact that James's final solution to the combination problem, pace Chalmers, does not invoke a deflationary account of the subject. Rather, it may be said to consist in the following three claims. First, as we have already seen, the claim that the combination problem arises iatrogenically, as a result of philosophers' misapplication of conceptual logic. Second, the claim that conceptual logic is an evolved capacity, which subserves "practical adaptation"[829]; i.e. which yields adaptive heuristics rather than objective truths. And third, the claim that conceptual logic is specifically adapted to dealing with the "outer surface" of reality rather than with its "inner dimension"[830]. He elaborates on this last claim by saying that conceptual logic is best utilized in "the sciences … of space and matter, where the transformations of external things are dealt with"[831]. In other words, conceptual logic is best adapted to dealing with the structural properties of things rather than with their intrinsic properties. James concludes that the combination problem is not a real problem at all. It only arises due to the misapplication of conceptual logic to a part of reality that it is not adapted to handle. The solution, accordingly, is simply to abandon the combination problem altogether. This solution, we contend, is aimed primarily at the synchronic constitution problem, and *might* have some limited success therein. But it utterly fails as a solution to either the subject-summing problem or the boundary/unity problem.

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[828] Another statement that invites this interpretation goes as follows: "It is the general conceptualist difficulty of any one thing being the same with many things … for the abstract concepts of oneness and manyness must needs exclude each other. In the particular instance that we have dwelt on so long, the one thing is the all-form of experience, the many things are the each-forms of experience in you and me. To call them the same we must treat them as if each were simultaneously its own other, a feat on conceptualist principles impossible of performance." See: James, *A Pluralistic Universe*, p281.

[829] James, *A Pluralistic Universe*, p249

[830] James, *A Pluralistic Universe*, p250

[831] James, *A Pluralistic Universe*, p248

3.1.5.   Conclusions

In conclusion we would like to suggest that James's panpsychism is an 'emergent layered russellian panpsychism'. It holds that macroexperiences are strongly emergent from microexperiences; that they exist synchronically with their microexperiential parts; that experiential/phenomenal properties constitute the intrinsic natures of physical objects; and that they exist in a fully conscious condition. Because it is a panpsychism, and not a panprotopsychism, it avoids the need of invoking the brute emergence of consciousness. Because it is russellian, it is compatible with scientific structural realism, and eludes Colin McGinn's accusation of scientific outrageousness[832]. Because it is layered, it allows a place in nature for superhuman consciousness, without thereby diminishing human consciousness. And because it is emergent, it escapes the boundary/unity problem. James's panpsychism is so important to our interpretation because it allows him to identify God's consciousness – one of his key characteristics – with the intrinsic nature of a portion of the physical universe. It thereby makes the existence of a divine consciousness consistent with the causal closure of nature. In section 3.3 we shall see how James's panpsychism combines with his emergentism to serve as the basis for his theistic naturalism. But first we must proceed with our reconstruction of that doctrine of emergentism.

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[832] Robert Almeder has recognized the potential affinity between pragmatism and structural realism. See: Almeder, 'Pragmatism and Philosophy of Science: A Critical Survey', pp180-186

3.2. Emergentism

3.2.1.   From Combination to Emergence

The boundary/unity problem, according to Chalmers, is that of explaining how a mere aggregate of microexperiences can constitute a bounded/unified macroexperience. We have suggested that James's panpsychism, being emergent, avoids this problem. However, there is another side to the boundary/unity problem that is not so easily dealt with. Gregg Rosenberg, who, as Chalmers notes, is a key contemporary exponent of this problem[833], presents a quite different formulation than the one we have just seen. For him it is not so much the combination of microsubjects into a bounded/unified macrosubject that is the problem; but the putative correspondence or identity of a bounded/unified macrosubject with physical facts that are supposed to be essentially atomistic:

> I start with the observation that consciousness has inherent boundaries. Only some experiences are part of my consciousness; most experiences in the world are not. Arguably, these boundaries are what individuate me as an experiencing subject in the world. I argue that this poses a problem that any theory of consciousness must answer. How can consciousness have boundaries? What element of the natural world dictates the way these boundaries are drawn?[834]

> The difficulty is really the odd empirical facts about bounded phenomenal fields existing surprisingly at a midlevel of the physical world, at a scale corresponding to physical activity in animal brains.[835]

It is surprising for Rosenberg that bounded subjects exist at a midlevel of the physical world because he takes for granted – along with the majority of contemporary naturalists – the principle of ontological reducibility (POR). According to this principle there *is* no midlevel of the physical world; there is really only the bottom-level. Now, the boundary problem, in Rosenberg's formulation, may sound somewhat familiar. This, we contend, is because it is essentially a version of James's 'problem of stating the connection between the mind and the brain' (PCMB):

PCMB: every fact about the mind must correspond with some fact about the brain (parallelism) with which it is structurally isomorphic (PPSI); but the mind being holistic (INC) and the brain atomistic (mereological atomism/POR), structural isomorphism fails to hold between them.

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[833] Chalmers, 'The Combination Problem for Panpsychism', in *Panpsychism: Contemporary Perspectives*, ed. by Brüntrup & Jaskolla, p183

[834] G. Rosenberg, *A Place for Consciousness*, p80

[835] Gregg Rosenberg, 'Land Ho? We Are Close to a Synoptic Understanding of Consciousness', in *Panpsychism: Contemporary Perspectives*, ed. by Brüntrup & Jaskolla, p156

At the time of writing PP, recall, we said that James could envision only two possible solutions to the problem: the material monad theory, according to which the total stream of consciousness is correlated with a single mereological atom, and the soul-theory, according to which the total stream of consciousness is not, strictly speaking, correlated with any physical object. In PP he elected to adopt a version of the soul theory, which we argued was equivalent to a doctrine of strong emergentism about the mental. He thereby admitted an exception to his psychophysical parallelism. Post ERE and PU however, this solution is plainly no longer viable. The methodological psychophysical parallelism of PP has given way to a full-blown psychophysical identity theory. The mental and the physical are no longer to be thought of as two kinds of entity or stuff that we ought, for methodological purposes, to regard as being correlated; they are now to be thought of as "co-eternal aspects of one self-same reality, much as concave and convex are aspects of one curve." How then, we must ask, is James supposed to have solved PCMB after ERE and PU?

3.2.1.1.   Two Divergent Readings of James Concerning Emergence

PCMB results from the conjunction of psychophysical parallelism (and thus PPSI), INC, and mereological atomism. We have just said that post ERE/PU *some* form parallelism is beyond reproach. Which means that James must either significantly *modify* his parallelism (so as not to entail PPSI), or he must abandon either INC or mereological atomism. That he continued to endorse INC cannot, we contend, be doubted[836]. To begin with the boundary/unity problem is predicated on INC. If consciousness were not integral in the sense of INC, then there would be nothing to stop us from identifying it with an aggregate of mental atoms. Secondly, as we shall see shortly, James makes a number of statements in PU that all but explicitly confirm the thesis. Which leaves us with two options. Either James modified his parallelism so as not to entail PPSI, or he abandoned mereological atomism. These two options form the bases of two divergent readings of James's mature philosophy. The first we shall call the 'conservative reading'; the

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[836] David Lamberth and others note that James seems to recant his notion that states of consciousness are integral in his 1895 address on 'The Knowing of Things Together'. There he says the following: "I am willing … that mental contents should be called complex, just as their objects are, and this even in psychology." However, immediately afterwards he adds: "Not because their parts are separable, as the parts of objects are; not because they have an eternal or quasi-eternal individual existence, like the parts of objects; for the various 'fields' of which they are parts are integers, existentially, and their parts only live as long as *they* live. Still, *in* them, we can call parts, parts." See: *The Works of William James: Essays in Philosophy*, ed. by Burkhardt, p88. Evidently these statements are concerned with how we ought to *speak* about states of consciousness; not with their actual ontological constitution. In PP James had worried about even *distinguishing* the parts of mental states conceptually; now he concedes that doing so may be valid and useful. He still holds however that conscious fields are "integers" with ontological priority over their parts, and therefore remains committed to INC.

second, the 'emergentist reading'. In what follows we will briefly consider them both, before settling on a preferred option to address in greater detail.

Before we begin, a word of explanation is due concerning different forms of emergentism. We have already argued of course, in chapter two, that James endorsed a doctrine of strong emergentism about mental phenomena. There we were speaking specifically about the emergence of integral consciousness from physical atoms. We also argued, in the section preceding this one, that James endorsed a doctrine of emergent russellian panpsychism. In this case the claim was that integral consciousness was strongly emergent from *mental* atoms. Now, depending on one's views regarding the metaphysical status of emergents, both of these doctrines might be compatible with mereological atomism. Thus, one might hold that integral consciousness is strongly emergent from an aggregate of mereological atoms, or from an aggregate of mereological mental atoms. The 'emergentist reading' that we are about to consider differs from both of these doctrines in attributing to James the view that there are *physical wholes* that are strongly emergent from their physical parts. In other words, it finds him to endorse a doctrine not dissimilar to classic British Emergentism, with its different kinds of material substances existing at different levels of nature. *This* form of emergentism, is *not* compatible with mereological atomism. It says that certain physical objects, like brains for instance, are *more* than mere aggregates of atoms.

i)   The Conservative Reading

According to the conservative reading, James adopted a modified version of parallelism at some point between PP and PU. In support of this reading we may point to the fact that James makes statements in PU that seem to imply his continued endorsement of both INC and mereological atomism. Consider the following statement, which he makes after invoking the relation between a bird and its feathers as a metaphor for the relation between the total stream of consciousness and its putative microconscious parts:

> The bird-metaphor is physical, but we see on reflection that in the *physical* world there is no real compounding. 'Wholes' are not realities there, parts only are realities. 'Bird' is only our *name* for the physical fact of a certain grouping of organs, just as 'Charles's Wain' is our name for a certain grouping of stars. The 'whole,' be it bird or constellation, is nothing but our vision, nothing but an effect on our sensorium when a lot of things act on it together. It is not realized by any organ or any star, or experienced apart from the consciousness of an onlooker. In the physical world taken by itself there is thus no 'all,' there are only the 'eaches' – at least that is the 'scientific' view. In the mental world, on the contrary, wholes do in point of fact

realize themselves *per se*. The meaning of the whole sentence is just as much a real experience as the feeling of each word is…[837]

This statement would seem to imply James's endorsement of both mereological atomism and INC in one stroke. In the 'physical world', there are no wholes, but only parts. If we follow this to its logical conclusion, as James did in PP, we arrive at the doctrine of mereological atomism, according to which all physical entities are wholly reducible to their lowest-level parts. In the 'mental world' meanwhile, wholes "realize themselves per se"; they exist in themselves, independently of the experience of any onlooker. Hence, INC is true.

If this reading of the above statement is correct, then there are only two options as regards James's response to PCMB. Either he has modified his parallelism so as not to entail PPSI, and thus believes that an atomistic brain *can* serve as the objectively real counterpart to an integral consciousness, or he has simply forgotten or become confused about PCMB, and so no longer feels its force. Given that the latter option leads us to conclude that James has fallen into obvious contradiction, the principle of charity dictates that we must assume the former to be correct. However, the former option is not without its difficulties. The plain fact of the matter is that the form of panpsychism that James endorses *does* commit him to PPSI. In order not to entail PPSI, James's panpsychism would have to be of the non-identist, non-russellian variety. It would have to hold that consciousness – macro-consciousness at any rate – does not constitute the *intrinsic nature* of its physical counterpart, but that it is merely *correlated* with it in some weaker sense. In combination with his doctrine of mental causation from PP, this would give James's view an uncomfortably dualistic tinge. In this respect, the conservative reading would seem to go against the spirit of his radical empiricism, and his intrinsic nature type arguments for panpsychism. It has the advantage however of involving minimal deviation from established interpretations of his work.

ii)   The Emergentist Reading

According to the emergentist reading, James continued to endorse the same form of parallelism throughout his career. If anything, his transition from methodological parallelism to panpsychism only strengthened his commitment to PPSI. What changed was rather his attitude towards mereological atomism. In the days of PP, he had been dazzled by science into believing that the doctrine was unassailable. But after PP, especially during the writing of WB, he developed a more critical attitude towards science. He grew suspicious of hyperscientific realism, and therefore, of

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[837] James, *A Pluralistic Universe*, pp194-195

mereological atomism. This suspicion was later compounded by his reading of Bergson and his critique of intellectualism.

On the emergentist reading, the conservative reading misunderstands passages like the one quoted above. James, in the above passage, is not stating his present view, but rehearsing an old argument/playing devil's advocate for expositional purposes. The line of reasoning encapsulated in the passage above is one that, "*if* I had been lecturing … a very few years ago, I *should* unhesitatingly have urged…"[838] (my emphasis). "So long", he says, "as this *was* the state of my own mind," – so long, that is, as the above passage characterised his beliefs – "I could accept the notion of self-compounding in the supernal spheres of experience no more easily than in that chapter on mind-dust I had accepted it in the lower spheres." (my emphasis)[839] This "*was*" the state of James's mind; i.e. it was the state of his mind *some years ago*, before his reading of Bergson. Look again at the passage quoted above. James qualifies his description of mereological atomism with the statement: " – at least that is the 'scientific' view*.*" He implies, therefore, that it is not necessarily his own view. Indeed, he places 'scientific' in inverted commas, as if to question its scientific status. Perhaps he means to suggest that it is really only the *scientificistic* view.

In support of the emergentist reading we may cite comments like the following, from *Some Problems of Philosophy*. James begins chapter VI with a familiar description of the empirical method, according which it "proceeds from parts to wholes, treating the parts as fundamental both in the order of being and in the order of our knowledge."[840] But to this he affixes the following footnote:

> Naturally this applies in the present place only to the greater whole which philosophy considers; the universe namely, and its parts, for there are plenty of minor wholes (animal and social organisms, for example) in which both the being of the parts and our understanding of the parts are founded.[841]

The implication, according to the emergentist reading, is clear enough. Whilst the universe is a mere aggregate, such entities as animals and social organisms are genuine *physical* wholes. In entities like these the whole has ontological priority over the parts; i.e. it is strongly emergent with respect to them. This, of course, is entirely incompatible with the doctrine of mereological atomism.

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[838] James, *A Pluralistic Universe*, p196
[839] James, *A Pluralistic Universe*, p196
[840] James, *Some Problems of Philosophy*, p98
[841] James, *Some Problems of Philosophy*, p98

Thus, on the emergentist reading, James abandons mereological atomism, and comes to believe that the brain is an emergent whole, structurally isomorphic with the integral consciousness that is its intrinsic nature. In this way PCMB is solved, and the spirit of James's radical empiricism/russellian panpsychism is preserved. The chief problem with the emergentist reading is that James nowhere explicitly disavows mereological atomism, and fails to articulate any detailed doctrine of emergence. A charitable explanation for the former fact might be that he did not wish to ruffle too many scientific feathers, but this hardly makes sense coming from one of the most avid supporters of psychical research on his side of the Atlantic. As for the latter fact, we might suppose that James lacked the conceptual tools to articulate a detailed doctrine of emergence, but once again, this is somewhat difficult to believe. The above quote, together with his various comments on emergence from PP, surely demonstrate that he was capable of framing the concept of emergent physical wholes, and yet they stand more or less alone in suggesting that he held this view.

Neither of these readings then, are without their difficulties. The truth of the matter may well be that James simply had not worked out his position thoroughly in regard to these issues. Whatever the case may be, it is our contention that the emergentist reading presents us with an intriguing new window into James's philosophy, and one that it worth exploring. In the remainder of this section therefore, we will attempt to reconstruct James's nascent emergentism in some detail. Doing so, we suggest, is the key to restoring his theistic naturalism, and to completing the arch of his philosophy.

3.2.1.2.   The Emergence of Psycho-physical Wholes

Let us suppose then that post ERE the notion of an emergent consciousness that is not structurally isomorphic with its physical counterpart has been definitively abandoned. The mental is henceforth to be conceived of as the *inner nature* of the physical; the human stream of consciousness as the inner nature of the human brain, etc. It seems, on these terms, and contrary to James's contention in PP, that the brain *can* and *must* serve as the "objectively real counterpart" to the human stream of consciousness. The brain, therefore, must be *more* than an aggregate of mereological atoms. It must be a genuine entity in its own right; strongly emergent with respect to its parts. Consider the following line of reasoning:

- P1: Human consciousness is an integral thing not made of parts (INC).
- P2: The human brain, in order to serve as the objectively real counterpart to human consciousness, must be more than an aggregate of atoms; i.e. it must be a strongly emergent entity (because of PPSI).

- P3: The human brain (post ERE) *is* the objectively real counterpart to human consciousness.

- C: The brain is a strongly emergent entity.

This specifically Jamesian line of reasoning can be expanded into the following general argument:

- P1: The human stream of consciousness possesses a strongly emergent boundary/unity (INC).

- P2: This boundary/unity constitutes a structural feature of human consciousness.

- P3: Physical facts must be structurally isomorphic with their mental counterparts (PPSI).

- P4: The human brain is the physical counterpart of human consciousness.

- P5: The human brain must possess a strongly emergent boundary/unity.

- C: The human brain is a strongly emergent entity.

There are those of course who will dispute P1, but the boundary/unity problem, which is taken seriously by a number of contemporary philosophers, would seem to imply some version of it. P2 appears to be on safe ground; such notions as 'boundary' and 'unity' seem intuitively to suggest a structural component (e.g. we may speak of the boundary and unity of a cell as being an element of or a result of its structure). P3, as we have said, is implied by any psycho-physical identity theory; even those who reject it will likely accept this implication. P4 is accepted, in one form or another, by the majority of contemporary philosophers. And P5 and the conclusion are logically entailed by P1-4. Not just James then, but anyone who accepts INC, can be led logically to the conclusion that the brain, or some portion of the brain and nervous system, is a strongly emergent physical whole[842].

Now as we have seen, the human stream of consciousness is not, for James, the only example of integral consciousness in nature. We know from PU that such entities as electrons, molecules, plants, animals, planets, galaxies, and of course God, are also supposed to possess integral consciousnesses. All of these entities, by way of arguments like those just outlined, must therefore be supposed, like the brain, to be genuine entities that are strongly emergent with respect to their parts. In order to proceed with this discussion, it will be necessary to have a name for entities like these. We propose to call them 'psycho-physical wholes' or 'psycho-physical individuals'[843]. They are integral (bounded/unified) psychophysical entities that are

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[842] This, indeed, is precisely the conclusion that Gregg Rosenberg is led to. See: G. Rosenberg, *A Place for Consciousness*, pp272-281

[843] Gregg Rosenberg, who, as we have said, has been led to essentially similar conclusions to James, calls such emergent psychophysical wholes 'natural individuals'. See: G. Rosenberg, *A Place for Consciousness*, p87; pp178-182; pp272-296

strongly emergent with respect to their psycho-physical parts. They are contrasted with psychophysical aggregates, which are mereological (unbounded/ununified) aggregates of lower-level psychophysical entities that are wholly reducible to those lower-level entities. Thus, we might presume that whereas electrons, molecules, and organisms are psychophysical wholes, rocks, wisps of smoke, and arbitrary clusters of atoms are psychophysical aggregates. If we translate the Fechnerian speculations of PU into this terminology, we may say that God, for James, is the largest psycho-physical whole in the universe; that he crowns a nested hierarchy of lesser psycho-physical wholes, from galaxies and planets, to animals and plants, to molecules and physical ultimates; and that those lesser wholes, whilst being parts of God, and being co-conscious with one another in his consciousness, nevertheless remain bounded and unified in themselves.

At this point, PCMB has dissolved. There is no longer any structural mismatch between an integral consciousness and an atomistic brain. Once we have embraced something like the notion of emergence outlined above, the brain ceases to be wholly atomistic; it too becomes something integral, possessing a boundary and unity over and above its parts. Psychophysical structural isomorphism is thereby restored. And it holds throughout nature. Wheresoever there is integral consciousness, there is an integral physical entity; and together they constitute an emergent psychophysical whole. Likewise, where there are only aggregates of physical entities, there are only aggregates of consciousness, possessing no shared boundary or unity[844]. In the next section we will turn to the vital question of how we should understand the macro-causal power of psychophysical wholes.

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[844] The above discussion of course raises the question of what the criteria for emergence are. Some popular possible criteria include: i) having a certain configuration (as per Brian McLaughlin's analysis which we discussed in section 1.4.2.1), ii) having 'non-aggregative properties' (see: William Wimsatt, 'Aggregativity: Reductive Heuristics for Finding Emergence', in *Emergence: Contemporary Readings in Philosophy and Science*, ed. by Bedau & Humphreys, pp99-110), iii) having a certain degree of complexity/chaos (see: Herbert Simon, 'Alternative Views of Complexity', in *Emergence: Contemporary Readings in Philosophy and Science*, ed. by Bedau & Humphreys, pp249-258), iv) being in an 'entangled' state (see: Paul Humphreys, 'How Properties Emerge', in *Emergence: Contemporary Readings in Philosophy and Science*, ed. by Bedau & Humphreys, pp111-126), v) having a local maximum of integrated information (see: Masafumi Oizumi, Larissa Albantakis, & Giulio Tononi, 'From the Phenomenology to the Mechanisms of Consciousness: Integrated Information Theory 3.0', *PLOS Computational Biology*, 10 (2014), pp1-25), and vi) having the capacity for 'self-organization' (see: Julianne Halley & David Winkler, 'Classification of Emergence and its Relation to Self-Organization', *Complexity*, 13 (2008), pp10-15). Although James himself says almost nothing about the criteria for emergence/combination, Fechner, whose ideas on this topic James's closely follow, adopted an account according to which the emergence of integral consciousness was connected with a system's capacity for self-organization. See: Michael Heidelberger, *Nature From Within: Gustav Theodor Fechner and His Psychophysical Worldview*, trans. by Cynthia Klohr (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2004), pp118-119; pp248-272. It seems likely that something like Fechner's account would have suited James reasonably well.

3.2.2.   From Mental Causation to Macro-Causation

On the emergentist reading, James holds that certain natural systems constitute psychophysical wholes. Some of these systems, at least human organisms and God, possess macro-causal power over and above their parts. Although James does not explicitly say it, it seems perfectly plausible that other systems in this category might also possess macro-causal power. However, James only provides a model for understanding macro-causation in the case of human organisms. That model, from PP, was articulated in the context of a discussion of mental causation, without any reference to a broader category of macro-causation. It is not obvious, therefore, that we would be justified in extending this model to macro-causation in general. Furthermore, it is not obvious how this model could be translated in such a way as to accommodate entities other than the brain/human organism. In this section and the following one we will address both of these issues in turn. First, in the present section, we will argue that James's essay, 'The Experience of Activity', from ERE, mandates an extension of his model of mental causation from PP to macro-causation generally. Then, in the following section (3.2.3), we will attempt to translate James's model of mental causation into a viable approach to macro-causation.

3.2.2.1.   The Experience of Activity

In 'The Experience of Activity', James wishes to establish radical empiricism's commitment to two important claims:

i)   Our experience of effort and volition is the original datum of our concept of causal power.

ii)   Wheresoever we postulate causal power, we must conceive of it after the analogy of effort and volition.

Let us begin by unpacking the first claim. The context for this claim goes back to Hume's analysis of causation from *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*. According to Hume, our belief in causality amounts to nothing more than a custom or habit[845]. We experience certain events in constant conjunction with certain other events, and we habitually expect them to be conjoined in the future. At no point do we actually experience the causal connection between the events. Recall James's affirmation of Hume's analysis in WB:

> The principle of causality, for example, – what is it but a postulate, an empty name covering simply a demand that the sequence of events shall someday manifest a deeper kind of belonging of one thing with another than the mere arbitrary

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[845] Hume, *An Enquiry Concerning the Human Understanding*, p43

juxtaposition which now phenomenally appears? It is as much an altar to an
unknown god as the one Saint Paul found at Athens.[846]

'The Experience of Activity' marks a shift in James's views regarding causality. He now affirms the
methodological thesis of pure experience, according to which only the data of direct experience
can form the subject matter of philosophy. According to this thesis, he says, either the original
datum of the concept of causality must lie in experience, or the concept of causality must be
totally meaningless[847]. In searching experience for a plausible datum, we quickly come upon an
obvious candidate: namely the experience of effort and volition.

The experience of effort and volition, according to James, is a species of the more general
experience of activity. He explains this is the following way. Activity, in itself, is "the bare fact of
event or change"[848]. Such activity may be either "aimless or directed". When directed, it is said
to show a particular "tendency". If that tendency meets with resistance, we are said to
experience a kind of "strain or squeeze"[849]. It is only at this point, properly speaking, that effort
and volition come onto the scene. The experience of effort and volition consists in the experience
of sustaining a felt tendency in spite of strain or squeeze. It is *this*, according to James, that is the
original datum of our concept of causal power:

> Sustaining, persevering, striving, paying with effort as we go, hanging on and finally
> achieving our intention – this *is* action, this *is* effectuation in the only shape in which,
> by a pure-experience philosophy, the whereabouts of it anywhere can be discussed.
> Here is creation in its first intention, here is causality at work.[850]

This is James's first claim. Our experience of effort and volition is the original datum of our
concept of causal power. From here he leaps, almost immediately, to the second claim; that
wheresoever we postulate causality, we must conceive of it after the analogy of the experience of
effort and volition. Nowhere does he outline an explicit argument that takes him from the first
claim to the second. He simply insists that a radically empirical philosophy is "obliged" to
conceive of causal activity in this way[851]. It is possible, we think, to reconstruct James's reasoning
in the form of an argument by analogy:

- P1: Reality is wholly constituted of experiential stuff.

- P2: The inner nature of causal activity must therefore be experiential.

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[846] James, *The Will to Believe*, p147
[847] James, *Essays in Radical Empiricism*, p160
[848] James, *Essays in Radical Empiricism*, p161
[849] James, *Essays in Radical Empiricism*, p165
[850] James, *Essays in Radical Empiricism*, pp183-184
[851] James, *Essays in Radical Empiricism*, p182

- P3: The inner nature of human causal activity is the experience of effort and volition.

- P4: We may suppose, by analogy, that the inner nature of other causal activity is essentially continuous with the human experience of effort and volition[852].

With this, we contend, we have a mandate for developing James's account of mental causation from PP into a general account of macro-causation. But his discussion in 'The Experience of Activity' does not end here. He goes on to address the question of what the possible loci of causal activity might be, and of what the relationship between causally powerful wholes and causally powerful parts might entail. We will briefly examine both of these questions before moving on.

3.2.2.2.   The Loci of Macro-Causation

James has tried to establish that our experience of effort and volition is the original datum of our concept of causal power. And he has argued that wheresoever we postulate causal power, we must conceive of it after the analogy of effort and volition. He has said nothing yet, however, about where we *ought* to postulate causal power; he has said nothing, that is, about which entities he takes to be causally powerful. Certainly, he says, we *feel* causal activity to be going on at the level of the total stream of consciousness, in our efforts and volitions. This feeling, however, may be mistaken. In any case, he concedes, it surely does not account for the whole causal story of human behaviour. What about, for instance, our brain cells? If they cease to be active, then effort and volition will also cease. Ought we not then to postulate causal activity in brain cells? If we do so, then what is the relationship between their causal activity and the causal activity of the organism as a whole? And what, furthermore, is the relationship between the causal activity of cells and organisms and that of God? There are, according to James, at least four ways of envisioning the relationship between causally powerful entities at different levels[853]:

i)   Lower level causal activity takes precedence.

ii)   Middle level causal activity takes precedence.

iii)   Higher level causal activity takes precedence.

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[852] James does in fact imply something like this argument in SPP when he says: "If we took these experiences as the type of what actual causation is, we should have to ascribe to cases of causation outside of our own life, to physical cases also, an inwardly experiential nature. In other words we should have to espouse a so-called 'pan-psychic' philosophy." See: James, *Some Problems of Philosophy*, p218. Hedda Hassel Mørch has attempted to reconstruct/develop this argument in some detail. See: Hedda Hassel Mørch, 'Panpsychism and Causation: A New Argument and a Solution to the Combination Problem' (Unpublished Doctoral Dissertation, The University of Oslo, 2014); Hedda Hassel Mørch, 'The Argument for Panpsychism from Experience of Causation', in *The Routledge Handbook of Panpsychism*, ed. by William Seager.

[853] James, *Essays in Radical Empiricism*, pp174-176

iv)   Causal activity occurs on multiple levels, with none necessarily taking precedence.

The first scenario, taken to its logical conclusion, amounts to a version of the automaton theory, which we know from PP that James rejects. The second implies a denial of certain facts of physiology; how could we explain the dependence of mental phenomena on physiological conditions without assuming some causal power on the part of the latter? The third, if taken to its logical conclusion, gives all causal power to the universe, and leads to absolutism. James's preferred option is thus the fourth:

> Naively we believe, and humanly and dramatically we like to believe, that activities both of wider and of narrower span are at work in life together, that both are real, and that the long-span tendencies yoke the others in their service, encouraging them in the right direction, and damping them out when they tend in other ways.[854]

In other words, causally powerful entities exist at a variety of natural levels, with larger, more inclusive entities possessing proportionally more causal power, and exerting some degree of overriding influence upon smaller ones. To this he adds the following:

> But to represent clearly the *modus operandi* of such steering of small tendencies by large ones is a problem which metaphysical thinkers will have to ruminate upon for many years to come.[855]

The following section will attempt to do just that. It will attempt to represent the modus operandi of macro-causation in a fashion that is consistent with James's mature philosophy.

3.2.3.   Towards a Jamesian Account

Now that we have established our mandate for developing James's account of mental causation from PP into a general account of macro-causation, let us briefly reconsider some of the details of the former. In chapter 2 we provided the following diagram to illustrate James's model (constructed on the basis of Timothy Sprigge's description):

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[854] James, *Essays in Radical Empiricism*, p179
[855] James, *Essays in Radical Empiricism*, p179

Fig. 16
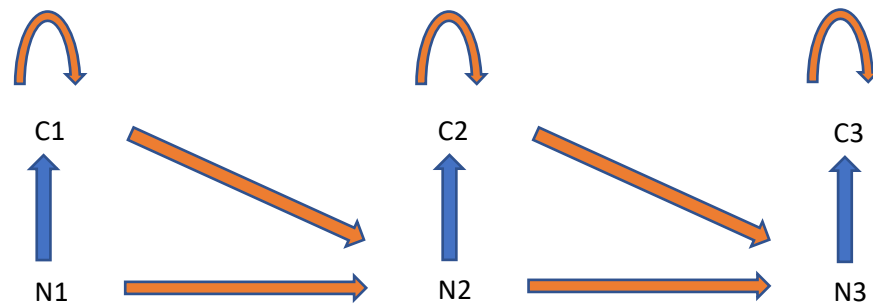
In PP, recall, mental events (the Cs) were construed as being emergent from neurophysiological events (the Ns). Post ERE and PU, it would be more accurate to say that higher-level psychophysical events emerge from lower-level psychophysical events. Regardless however, the basic picture remains the same. The character of C1 is largely but not entirely settled by the character of N1, and is partially spontaneous or self-chosen in virtue of exertions of effort on the part of the human being in whose brain the events are occurring. The character of N2, meanwhile, is largely but not entirely settled by the character of N1, and partially settled by the character of C1. And so on and so forth. This model, we suggest, fits into the broad emergentist schema. Consider the following diagram illustrating the emergentist model:

Fig. 8
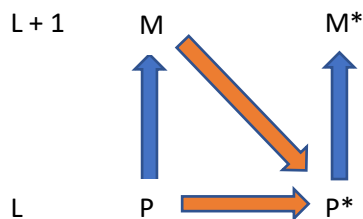
The only difference between the two models is the inclusion in James's of the series of curved arrows above the higher-level events (the Cs). These curved arrows are supposed to represent the spontaneous or self-chosen quality of higher-level events on James's account. But there is nothing in principle to stop the emergentist model from incorporating spontaneity/indeterminism. We take it therefore that James's account of mental causation is essentially consistent with emergentism.

In chapter 1 we examined two possible emergentist approaches to macro-causation; the British Emergentist approach, and the quantum approach. The British Emergentist approach appealed to emergent forces/laws which govern the motion of particles in novel ways. The quantum

approach appealed to the indeterministic events of quantum mechanics – specifically to the collapses of the wavefunctions of entities in the brain – as loci for the downward causal influence of emergent mental states. James's model of mental causation, we contend, could be adapted in either of these directions. In what follows therefore, we propose to sketch two renditions of a Jamesian account of macro-causation; a British Emergentist rendition and a quantum rendition. We will attempt to examine some of the advantages and disadvantages of each, and to settle on the solution that best suits James's philosophy.

3.2.3.1.   The British Emergentist Rendition

As we saw in chapter 1, the British Emergentist approach to macro-causation revolves around the classic scientific conception of causation in terms of forces and laws. James is certainly familiar with this conception. Indeed, he uses it to frame his discussion of mental causation in PP. Common-sense, he says, formulates the notion of mental causation in terms of the claim that feelings and ideas are forces. He suggests that a thorough-going metaphysical investigation of the notion of mental causation "will probably preserve the common-sense view that ideas are forces, in some translated form."[856] Later, in chapter XI of PP (on 'Attention'), James explicitly addresses the question of mental causation under the heading 'Is Voluntary Attention a Resultant or a Force?'[857]. Here he opposes the belief that voluntary attention is the outcome of "exclusively material laws" to the belief that voluntary attention may constitute "an original psychic force"[858]. The use of the term 'resultant' here is particularly significant. In physics this term designates the sum of two or more vectors (the magnitude and direction of forces in physics are described using vectors). Thus the 'resultant' of two or more forces acting upon an object is the sum of those forces combined through vector addition. H. G. Lewes and later British Emergentists deliberately defined 'emergent' forces and effects in contradistinction to 'resultant' forces and effects. The former, unlike the latter, were *more* than the sum of elementary physical forces. These statements, we contend, indicate that James's account of mental causation is susceptible of a British Emergentist interpretation. Further support for this contention can be found in James's later works[859].

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[856] James, *The Principles*, I, p137
[857] James, *The Principles*, I, p447
[858] James, *The Principles*, I, p448; p453
[859] James seems to reject a characterisation of mental causation in terms of forces in 'Human Immortality'. See: James, *Human Immortality*, note 4 to p13; pp55-56). However, this is largely because he finds such a characterisation opposed to the 'transmission theory of consciousness', a theory which he only flirts with temporarily during a transitional phase in his thought.

Consider the following passage from VRE. According to a popular belief, James tells us – one, he notes, that is yet to be defeated by science – certain entities in the world operate by "individualized personal forces"[860]:

> The savage thinks that things operate by personal forces, and for the sake of individual ends. For him, even external nature obeys individual needs and claims, just as if these were so many elementary powers. Now science, on the other hand, these positivists say, has proved that personality, so far from being an elementary force in nature, is but a passive resultant of the really elementary forces, physical, chemical, physiological, and psycho-physical, which are all impersonal and general in character.[861]

James here evidently conceives of 'personal forces' in the same way that he had conceived of 'original psychic forces' in PP. The difference is that here he is suggesting that such personal forces may be operative in nature outside of human brains/nervous systems. We note that James describes such personal forces as "individualized"; implying that they may apply uniquely to individual psycho-physical wholes, rather than – like other emergent forces – invariantly across members of their class. This may indicate the manner in which James intends an emergent-forces type conception of macro-causation to be consistent with a libertarian concept of freewill.

If our reading of the statements and comments above is correct, then James's position is easily construed as being essentially similar to British Emergentism. Certain configurations of matter – such as those which constitute brains – give rise to emergent forces, which enable novel sorts of motion and behaviour in the particles that comprise those configurations. The advantage of the British Emergentist rendition of James's approach to macro-causation is, firstly, its simplicity, and secondly, the fact that all of the ideas and concepts involved are of James's own time. It requires no great interpretative leap to imagine such a development of James's doctrines.

3.2.3.2.   The Quantum Rendition

The above reading is in tension with what we are calling the quantum rendition of a Jamesian account of macro-causation. As we saw in chapter 1, forces in physics combine by vector addition. As such, the existence of emergent forces requires no gap in the coverage of physical law; that is, it requires no appeal to indeterminism. Yet James explicitly states that mental causation, on his view, *would* require indeterminism. He repeatedly emphasises the "spontaneous" character of such causation, and seems to equate it with libertarian freewill. The

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[860] James, *The Varieties*, p123
[861] James, *The Varieties*, p119

implication, we suggest, is that mental causation is not to be regarded as law-governed at all.
Consider the following passage:

> If … the feeling which coexists with the brain-cells' activity reacts dynamically upon
> that activity, furthering or checking it, then the attention is in part, at least, a *cause*.
> It does not necessarily follow, of course, that this reactive feeling should be 'free' in
> the sense of having its amount and direction undetermined in advance, for it might
> very well be predetermined in all these particulars. If it were so, our attention would
> not be *materially* determined, nor yet would it be 'free' in the sense of being
> spontaneous or unpredictable in advance.[862]

Thus, even if mental phenomena are not determined by fundamental physical laws, they might
still be determined by emergent mental laws. In this case, according to James, they would not be
'free'. In order to be 'free', as he thinks they are, they must be "spontaneous or unpredictable".
In this respect the quantum approach to macro-causation, with its appeal to indeterminism,
seems to fit James's account better than the British Emergentist approach.

In PP, recall, James insisted that mental causation would require that the outcomes of certain
neural events be undetermined. From among the range of possible outcomes of such events, the
soul (i.e. the total stream of consciousness considered as an emergent phenomenon) would
"make one effective". This process would correspond, he said, with the conscious experience of
effort; specifically, with the effort to attend to particular ideas in the mind. Such efforts to attend
would delay or hasten an idea's stay in consciousness by a minute duration, thus increasing or
decreasing the likelihood of that idea taking hold, and of relevant actions being performed. The
similarity of James's account to the quantum approach of Henry Stapp is quite remarkable. For
Stapp mental causation is made possible because the outcomes of certain neural events – the
wavefunction collapses of calcium-ions exiting ion channels – are indeterministic. He proposes
that consciousness induces the collapse of calcium ion wavefunctions, thereby determining
which, out of a range of possible landing sites on vesicles, the calcium ion interacts with. This in
turn determines the conditions under which neurotransmitters are released, which effects
behaviour. Stapp even suggests, in terms almost identical to James, that this process corresponds
with the conscious experience of effort. The effect of exertions of effort, he says, is to determine
"attention density"; i.e. the amount and duration of attention paid to an object. By holding a
particular 'template for action' in place for a longer duration, consciousness increases the
probability that the intended action will occur[863]. Stapp notes the coincidence of his hypothesis

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[862] James, *The Principles*, I, p448
[863] Schwarz, Stapp, & Beauregard, pp1320-1321

with James's account, but insists that his own view was devised wholly independently of James, on the basis of "purely theoretical considerations of the quantum physics of this process"[864].

3.2.4.   Conclusions

Both of these renditions of James's account of macro-causation have considerable merit. There is a good deal in James's works to corroborate both of them. On the one hand he insists that a finally satisfactory account of mental causation "will probably preserve the common-sense view that ideas are forces, in some translated form". On the other hand, his appeal to indeterminism, and to the notion that mental causation works by operating on a space of possibilities, maps very closely onto the quantum approach. Although, as we said, there is some tension between these approaches, we think that the most natural reading of James would have us incorporate elements of both. Something like the following, we suggest, comes close to what he envisioned. Psychophysical wholes are configured in such a way as to give rise to emergent configurational forces, *and* to allow for the amplification of the effects of indeterministic events. They realize their macro-causal power by acting upon the space of possibilities left open by indeterminism (perhaps utilizing mechanisms like those described by Stapp), but the whole process operates in accordance with emergent configurational forces/laws. These laws, being individualized and probabilistic, leave room for an element of spontaneity. This then completes our reconstruction of James's doctrine of emergentism. In the final part of this chapter, we shall see how this doctrine combines with James's layered russellian panpsychism to serve as the foundation for his theistic naturalism.

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[864] Schwarz, Stapp, & Beauregard, p1321

3.3. Theistic Naturalism

We now have the column and the springer of James's arch assembled. All that remains is to lower the keystone – his theistic naturalism – into place, and to see if the arch stands up. We said in the introduction to this chapter that James's theistic naturalism may be said to consist in three key elements: i) his finite theism, ii) his theological voluntarism, and iii) his doctrine of religious experience. In what follows we will investigate each of these elements in turn. We will begin, in section 3.3.1, by exploring his finite theism, looking at his conception of God's finitude, his processual character, and his personality. We will proceed, in section 3.3.2, to examine his theological voluntarism, revisiting its roots in MPML, and reconsidering them in the light of our emergent panpsychist interpretation. Finally, in section 3.3.3, we will revisit James's doctrine of religious experience from VRE, and resituate it with respect to his restored theistic naturalism.

3.3.1.   Finite Theism

3.3.1.1.   God's Finitude

James's key claims regarding God's finitude occur in PU. Prior to that there are hints that he may be amenable to such a view, but in PU his statements on this point are absolutely unequivocal. The divine consciousness, James says, "however vast it may be, has itself an external environment, and consequently is finite"; "he is finite, either in power or in knowledge, or in both at once"; "Having an environment, being in time, and working out a history just like ourselves, he escapes from the foreignness of all that is human, of the static timeless perfect absolute."[865] God is a finite being existing *within* the universe, but at the same time he is a hugely expansive and powerful being. He may contain *almost everything* in the universe within him. Our own galaxy at least, together with everything that comprises it – its solar systems, planets, organisms, and molecules – are "internal parts of God"[866]. Presumably other galaxies are likewise parts of God. James's view only requires that God have "the least infinitesimal other of any kind" outside of himself[867]. Just what that 'infinitesimal other' consists in is not clear. We are left with the image of God as a kind of super-system of all the galaxies in the universe, fringed by a penumbra of slag and debris that it excluded from the divine being. Alternatively, we might suppose that entities which are parts of God – organisms for instance – break out of the divine being at certain points; i.e. at those points that are coextensive with their evil thoughts/acts. In this case it would be as though we are all ordinarily submerged in the waters of the divine ocean, but that in performing

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[865] James, *A Pluralistic Universe*, pp310-311; p311; p318
[866] James, *A Pluralistic Universe*, p318
[867] James, *A Pluralistic Universe*, p312

evil thoughts/acts we temporarily burst above the surface. The following diagram helps to illustrate James's mature conception of God and his relation to the universe and entities within it. The dotted line representing the boundary of the universe indicates that the universe itself is not, for James, a psychophysical whole. The area between the green line and the dotted line is that part of the universe that is not included in the divine being[868].

Fig. 23
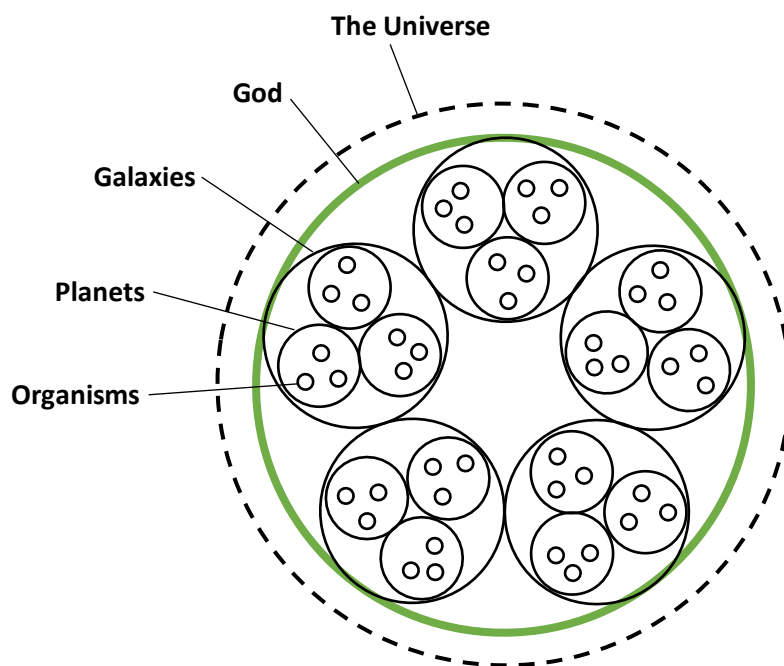
In light of our reconstructions of James's doctrines of panpsychism and emergentism, we offer the following summary. The universe, for James, is essentially psychophysical in constitution. Certain natural systems within the universe constitute causally powerful psychophysical wholes (the solid circles), strongly emergent from their psychophysical parts. God is the largest such system (the green circle). He contains myriad other psychophysical wholes within himself as parts. Those parts constitute part of the content of his consciousness, but in his consciousness they are woven

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[868] Whilst we have found the use of diagrams like fig. 23 indispensable in conveying James's basic metaphysical picture, we ought to be weary of possible misconceptions that may arise in connection with them. For instance, fig. 23 may seem to construe James's universe as a highly ordered affair, with almost all entities contained neatly and securely within the boundary of God's mind/body. In fact, however, the thrust of James's metaphysics is towards a messy, patchy, gothic universe. As he remarks in 'A World of Pure Experience': "*Prima facie*, if you should liken the universe of absolute idealism to an aquarium, a crystal globe in which goldfish are swimming, you would have to compare the empiricist universe to something more like one of those dried human heads with which the Dyaks of Borneo deck their lodges. The skull forms a solid nucleus; but innumerable feathers, leaves, strings, beads, and loose appendices of every description float and dangle from it, and, save that they terminate in it, seem to have nothing to do with one another." See: James, *Essays in Radical Empiricism*, p46

into schemes and patterns of which the parts themselves are unaware. Crucially, God does not contain *everything* within himself. There is always some slag or debris that falls out of his orbit; some dregs that are left in his cup.

Besides his metaphysical relation to the universe and entities within it, there is another important sense in which James's God is finite. James's universe, recall, is an indeterministic universe. Ontological indeterminism, for James, is a necessary condition for the possibility of free will and moral realism, and cannot be compromised at any cost. As such, God too, as a being within the universe, is subject to indeterminism. This means that he cannot possess certain attributes possessed by the God of traditional theism; for instance, omniscience and omnipotence. He cannot possess the former because he cannot know the outcomes of all indeterministic events. He may know all the *possible* outcomes of indeterministic events, and even the probabilities that given outcomes will occur, but he cannot know with certainty which will actually come to pass. He cannot possess the latter for essentially similar reasons. He may be able to *influence* the outcomes of almost all indeterministic events, but he cannot *decide* the outcomes of all them. For one thing, he cannot decide the outcomes of events outside of his being. For another, he cannot completely override the free causal activity of human beings and other responsible agents. As such, James says, God is in the position of an expert chess player facing up against a novice:

> The expert intends to beat. But he cannot foresee exactly what any one actual move of his adversary may be. He knows, however, all the possible moves of the latter; and he knows in advance how to meet each of them by a move of his own which leads in the direction of victory.[869]

James's God then, although limited in respect to his knowledge and power, is nevertheless able to steer things towards his intended course. In the next section we will try to say a little bit more about the nature of that intended course, and the manner in which it is taken.

3.3.1.2.   God's Processual Character

As James has said, being finite, God is not static and eternal, but exists in time and has a history. In other words, God may be said to possess a processual character to some degree. The notion of God as a processual being has become an increasingly important one in the past century. Building on the 'process philosophy' of Alfred North Whitehead, so-called 'process theology' has become an important research topic in theology and religious studies. A number of philosophers and theologians, not least Whitehead himself, have discussed James's relationship to the process

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[869] James, *The Will to Believe*, p181

tradition[870]. Johanna Seibt, in her excellent SEP article, acknowledges the importance of James's 'process-based account of the self' as a key source of inspiration for early process philosophers[871]. Both Nancy Frankenberry and David Ray Griffin have noted connections between the metaphysics of radical empiricism and the process view[872]. And Donald Viney recognizes the significance of James's meliorism for process theology[873]. Only a few commentators however, venture to suggest that James might actually have *been* a process theist of some sort. Mark Boone is among the few to have done so, suggesting that James's religious views may be interpreted as a kind of 'extreme process theology', for which God is "still in the making", and represents "the eventual stability of ideals"[874]. In this section we want to explore this notion of the processual character of James's God in more detail.

i)   Process vs Substance

The notion of 'process' and of 'process-philosophy' is typically defined in contradistinction to the notion of 'substance' and to the doctrine of 'substantialism'. The doctrine of substantialism may itself be said to have two parts. Firstly, it says that there are bare substances underlying the phenomenal world and grounding/carrying its properties. Secondly, it says that the typical constituents of reality – usually supposed to be substances of the sort just described – are relatively permanent, independent entities. Process philosophy, by contrast, says that there are no bare substances underlying immanent natural processes, and that the typical constituents of reality are sets of constantly changing, interdependent events[875]. James's worldview, we contend,

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[870] Alfred North Whitehead, *Process and Reality* (New York: The Free Press, 1978), p. xii. For a contemporary discussion of the relation between the philosophies of James and Whitehead see: Craig Eisendrath, *The Unifying Moment* (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 1971)

[871] Johanna Seibt, 'Process Philosophy', *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. by Edward N. Zalta (Winter 2018 Edition) <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2018/entries/process-philosophy/> [accessed: 28/10/2019]

[872] David Ray Griffin, 'Process Philosophy of Religion', *International Journal for Philosophy of Religion*, 50 (2001), pp131-151; Nancy Frankenberry, *Religion and Radical Empiricism*, pp157-188

[873] Donald Viney, 'Process Theism', *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. by Edward N. Zalta (Summer 2018 Edition) <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2018/entries/process-theism/> [accessed: 28/10/2019]

[874] Boone, p9. Boone cites Wesley Cooper as a proponent of the 'extreme process theology' view of James's conception of God. However, despite Cooper's own claims to hold such a view, neither the notion of 'process' nor the traditional concerns of process theology feature prominently in his account. Eugene Fontinell provides what is probably the most thorough exposition to date of a processual account of James's conception of God. His focus, however, is on 'process' as a basic ontological category. He is less interested in the notion that James's God was a God *in process*; i.e. growing and developing in time. See: Eugene Fontinell, *Self, God, and Immortality* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2000)

[875] Contemporary analytic philosophers interested in process-philosophy typically dissociate the latter claim from the former. They concede that there is a 'substance', in the traditional sense, underling the phenomenal world but they hold that that substance is essentially processual; that it is best conceived in terms of sets of interrelated and constantly changing physical events.

is aligned with process-philosophy in both respects. Regarding the former, in PP he inveighed against the notion of spiritual substance, attacking the putative immaterial souls and transcendental egos that were supposed by some thinkers to lie behind the stream of thought. In ERE and *Pragmatism* he extended that critique to material substance, endorsing Berkeley's view that the pragmatic meaning of material substance is only the possibility of sensations, and developing a metaphysics according to which the world consists in pure experience alone, without any transempirical connective support. Regarding the latter, he held that pure experience was to be conceived of after the analogy of human experience, and that human experience is essentially processual; that it is stream-like, continuous, and in a constant state of flux and change. God, for James, is only a larger or more god-like self. As such, he too is essentially processual. He is, as it were, a gigantic stream of cosmic-divine consciousness; a series of unique, gestalt, phenomenal states, in constant flux, yet sensibly continuous with one another[876].

ii)   God as 'The Ideal'

Now, a key question in process-theology concerns the eventual outcome of the world process. Although this does not constitute a very prominent theme in James's theistic naturalism, it is certainly present, and in our estimation has significant philosophical/theological consequences. The key, we contend, to approaching this theme in James's work, is understanding his notion of God as 'the Ideal'. James invokes this formulation at several points in VRE, saying that God is a personification of "the Ideal", that human beings are continuous with "an ideal power", and that the phenomenal world is subject to causal influences from "the ideal world"[877]. The question is, in precisely what sense does James intend the term 'ideal' in this case? Four distinct but overlapping uses of this term may be said to be relatively typical in the history of philosophy. Firstly, one may use the term as a byword for 'mental', 'psychical', 'experiential', etc. Secondly, one may speak of 'the ideal' or 'ideality' as contrasted with 'the real' or 'reality'; i.e. as denoting something wholly mind-dependent that does not exist in the 'real' world. Thirdly, one may speak of 'the ideal X' or 'the ideal *of* Y' in a quasi-Platonic sense, as denoting the archetypal or superlative version of something. And fourthly, one may speak of '*an* ideal/ideals', denoting specific preferences, values, or goals adopted by human beings.

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[876] It is regarding this issue, of God's processual *as opposed to substantial* character, that Eugene Fontinell is strongest. He invokes James's 'field' metaphor to argue for a conception of the universe as "a processive-relational continuum or field embodying and bringing forth a plurality of sub-fields, each with a unique focus but dependent upon, overlapping with, and shading into other fields." See: Fontinell, p202.
[877] James, *The Varieties*, pp272-273; p521; p524

On the face of it, it seems impossible that James could have intended his application of the term

to God in any of the latter three senses. James's God is not ideal in the sense of being unreal;

neither is he an archetypal version of something, or a value adopted by human beings. This

leaves the first sense of the term, according to which the ideal is synonymous with the mental.

This usage, however, would be highly uncharacteristic for James, and would seem to contradict

certain of his statements in VRE and elsewhere. Consider the following for instance. In the

concluding lecture of VRE James tells us that 'the unseen region' (a.k.a. God) "is not merely ideal,

for it produces effects in this world"[878]. This is an ambiguous statement. On the one hand James

says that God "is not *merely* ideal" (our emphasis), implying therefore that he *is partially* ideal,

but on the other hand he seems to be contrasting the ideal with the real, as per the second of the

senses of the term discussed above. This would seem to be tantamount to saying that God is

partially real and partially unreal, which on the face of it makes little sense. Fortunately, another

of James's statements, this time from a letter to Charles Strong, helps to clear up this ambiguity.

Strong had written to James after the publication of *Pragmatism* to warn against his superstitious

tendencies, and to advise his adoption of "an ideal God", or "God of things as they should be",

rather than "an existent God", or "God of things as they are". An ideal God, in Strong's view,

serves as a regulative principle promoting social/moral progress, but strictly speaking, "does not

exist"[879]. James's reply is as follows:

> Your warnings against my superstitious tendencies … touch me, but not in the
> prophetic way, for they don't weaken my trust in the healthiness of my own attitude,
> which in part (I fancy) is less remote from your own than you suppose. For instance,
> my "God of things as they are," being part of a pluralistic system, is responsible for
> only such of them as he knows enough and has enough power to have accomplished.
> For the rest he is identical with your "ideal" God. … What harm does the little
> residuum or germ of actuality that I leave in God do? If ideal, why (except on
> epiphenomenist principles) may he not have got himself at least partly real by this
> time?[880]

James's God, it seems, really is partially unreal. He is partially unreal (and partially real) in the

sense that he is undergoing a process of progressive self-realization, and is only part of the way

through that process. A more intuitive way of understanding this, perhaps, would be in terms of

the concept of potentiality. Just as a seed is potentially a tree, so the "germ of actuality" that

presently constitutes God's being is potentially a more perfect and complete version of God. This

makes perfect sense on our interpretation, for we hold that the contents and structure of the

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[878] James, *The Varieties*, p516
[879] *The Correspondence of William James*, ed. by Skrupskelis & Berkeley, XI, pp334-335
[880] *The Correspondence of William James*, ed. by Skrupskelis & Berkeley, XI, p342

universe, which are themselves constantly evolving, inform the contents and structure of God's consciousness. Just what the final end of this process is supposed to be James does not venture to say in his letter to Strong. We do however get some idea of what he had in mind from certain passages in *Pragmatism*.

iii)   The Notion of 'The Ultimate'

In section 2.6 we described how James applied the pragmatic method to the concepts of substance and truth. Another key concept to which he applies the method is that of 'unity'. In lecture IV, on 'The One and the Many', he bemoans the absolute idealists' clumsy attributions of 'unity' or 'oneness' to the universe as a whole. There are, he insists, a number of pragmatically distinct senses of the concept of unity, and it makes a great difference which sense we intend when we attribute unity to the universe. Thus, he distinguishes the unity of a universe of discourse, unity by way of physical or sensible continuity, causal unity, generic unity, unity of purpose, aesthetic unity, and noetic unity[881]. Pluralists, he says, may help themselves to *any* of these senses of unity *except* for the last one. To attribute noetic unity, or unity of knowledge, to the universe, implies that all things, past, present, and future, are gathered up into "one instantaneous or eternal knower"[882]. This sense of unity entails what contemporary philosophers call 'thing-monism', or 'existence monism'; i.e. the doctrine that the universe as a whole is the only genuine entity. It is therefore incompatible with James's thing-pluralism, as articulated in PU.

Now, it is in the context of his discussion of noetic unity that James makes some illuminating statements regarding the possible final end of the process of God's self-realization. After telling us that noetic unity, in the absolutists' scheme, is incompatible with pluralism, he goes on to suggest that there may be a different scheme in which no such incompatibility arises. He explains as follows:

> With the whole of past eternity open for our conjectures to range in, it may be lawful
> to wonder whether the various kinds of union now realized in the universe that we
> inhabit may not possibly have been successively evolved after the fashion in which
> we now see human systems evolving in consequence of human needs. If such an
> hypothesis were legitimate, total oneness would appear at the end of things rather
> than at their origin. In other words the notion of the 'Absolute' would have to be
> replaced by that of the 'Ultimate.' The two notions would have the same content –

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[881] James, *Pragmatism*, pp133-148
[882] James, *Pragmatism*, p147

the maximally unified content of fact, namely – but their time-relations would be positively reversed.[883]

Further light is shed on this notion of 'the Ultimate' in a reply James wrote to Henry Adams concerning the latter's 'Letter to American Teachers of History'. Adams had made much in his letter of the importance of the theory of entropy, according to which the universe is inevitably tending towards a state of 'thermodynamic equilibrium'. Adams worried that this theory, which was (and still is) counted as unassailable by physicists, fundamentally undermined the project of history and the humanities[884]. James begins his reply by doubting the finality of the theory of entropy, and ends by suggesting that, even if is true, it need not have the dire consequences Adams fears:

> Though the *ultimate* state of the universe may be its vital and psychical extinction, there is nothing in physics to interfere with the hypothesis that the penultimate state might be the millennium – in other words a state in which a minimum of difference of energy-level might have its exchanges so skilfully *canalisés* that a maximum of happy and virtuous consciousness would be the only result. In short, the last expiring pulsation of the universe's life might be, "I am so happy and perfect that I can stand it no longer."[885]

This then, is the final end of the process of God's self-realization as James envisioned it. He thought that God, and the contents of God's consciousness, was becoming more and more unified, and that consciousness in general was becoming more and more happy and virtuous. Crucially, human beings were to be important participants in this process. It would culminate, given sufficient effort on our part, in a state of maximal unity, virtue, and happiness.

3.3.1.2. God's Personality

The last feature of James's God that we wish to examine in his personality. In WB James asserts that there are two key features which, by his reckoning, God must be supposed to possess: "First, it is 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."[886] Elaborating on this notion of personality, James says that "God's personality is to be regarded, like any other personality, as something lying outside my own and other than me, and whose existence I simply come upon and find."[887] We suggest that personality, in this case, is being conceived in essentially the same terms

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[883] James, *Pragmatism*, pp158-159
[884] Henry Adams, *A Letter to American Teachers of History* (Washington: J. H. Furst Co., 1910), pp203-206
[885] *The Correspondence of William James*, ed. by Ignas K. Skrupskelis & Elizabeth M. Berkeley, 12 vols (London: University Press of Virginia, 2004) XII, p556
[886] James, *The Will to Believe*, p122
[887] James, *The Will to Believe*, p122

that James prescribed in PP. There, recall, he counted it as an essential characteristic of thought that it "tends to be part of a personal consciousness"[888]. He cashed this out in terms of a thought's belonging in a series of thoughts which is ejective to, or completely cut-off from, other such series of thoughts (other personal consciousnesses)[889]. He told us that each thought "belongs" with the other thoughts in its series by virtue of their all being invested with a special feeling of "warmth" or "intimacy" which "runs through them all like a thread through a chaplet and makes them into a whole"[890]. Each thought in the series feels the warmth in itself to resemble the warmth invested in other thoughts in its series, and "appropriates" them – accepts ownership of them – accordingly[891]. Thus, to say that "every thought tends to be a part of personal consciousness" is to say that every thought belongs in a series of other thoughts with which it feels a common warmth and intimacy, and which is ejective to, or completely cut-off from, other such series of thoughts. James insisted that personal consciousness, in this sense, is "the very 'original' of the notion of personality"[892].

We think that James's notion of God's personality in WB is consistent with PP in this respect. God's personality entails, first and foremost, his possessing, or rather *being*, a series of thoughts or states of phenomenal consciousness that belong together in the relevant way and that are ejective to other such series. As to the *content* of God's consciousness, James ventures to say the following:

> In whatever other respects the divine personality may differ from ours or may resemble it, the two are consanguineous at least in this, – that both have purposes for which they care, and each can hear the other's call.[893]

We know from MPML that James goes slightly further than this, and attributes demands or ideals to God as well. Indeed, he believes that God's possessing a personality is a necessary condition of his grounding moral obligations. On the interpretation we have been developing in this chapter, God's consciousness is the intrinsic nature of a large portion of the physical universe. Its contents, such as his purposes and demands, must themselves, therefore, be the intrinsic natures of certain physical systems *within* that portion of the physical universe[894]. In this respect the contents of God's consciousness should be understood analogously to the contents of human

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[888] James, *The Principles*, I, p225
[889] James, *The Principles*, I, pp225-229
[890] James, *The Principles*, I, p334
[891] James, *The Principles*, I, p334
[892] James, *The Principles*, I, p227
[893] James, *The Will to Believe*, p122
[894] At any rate, the phenomenal properties that constitute God's demands must be intrinsic properties of physical systems within that portion of the physical universe.

consciousness. Just as we suppose that human demands are correlated with some set of entities/events in the human body, so we must suppose that God's demands are correlated with some set of entities/events in God's body. This kind of analogical reasoning is entirely consistent with James's approach. In PU James addressed an objection according to which the earth cannot have an integral consciousness because it has no nervous system. He answered this objection by insisting that a nervous system does not require "literal brain-fibres" and by pointing out that the earth has plenty of other kinds of fibres that could serve the same function[895]. We may say something similar about divine demands. God may not possess the kinds of neural mechanisms that are correlated with human demands, but he might possess some functionally equivalent mechanisms. God's demands, moreover, may be very different, phenomenologically speaking, from human demands. Human demands are felt over relatively short timescales, they tend to incorporate a linguistic component, certain emotional content, etc. None of this need be true of God's demands.

Another aspect of James's concept of God that might reasonably be subsumed under the category of 'personality' is his possession of macro-causal power. God, for James, as we saw in VRE, plays a causal role in bringing about and/or participating in religious and mystical experiences. In addition, he enters into 'wider cosmic relations' the nature of which James left unspecified. In light of what we have discovered so far in this chapter, we think we are now able to say what such 'wider cosmic relations' consist in. As per the suggestion of James's essay on 'The Experience of Activity', God may be supposed to exert an overriding causal influence not only upon human beings, but upon the other infrahuman and superhuman entities that are his parts. Thus, God will be able to exert a causal influence on galaxies, planets, molecules, particles, etc. In doing so he will 'yoke them' in service of his higher purposes, which purposes, we may suppose, are essentially aligned with our own. As James says:

> I believe … that we stand in much the same relation to the whole of the universe as our canine and feline pets do to the whole of human life. They inhabit our drawing rooms and libraries. They take part in scenes of whose significance they have no inkling. They are merely tangent to curves of history the beginnings and ends and forms of which pass wholly beyond their ken. So we are tangent to the wider life of things. But, just as many of the dog's and cat's ideals coincide with our ideals, and the dogs and cats have daily living proof of the fact, so we may well believe, on the proofs that religious experience affords, that higher powers exist and are at work to save the world on ideal lines similar to our own. [896]

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[895] James, *A Pluralistic Universe*, pp161-162
[896] James, *Pragmatism*, p300

God's causal activity, of course, must be realized in accordance with the model we set out in the previous section; i.e. though action upon the space of possibilities left open by indeterminism and/or through emergent configurational forces/laws. In this respect James's notion of divine action will be similar to that of Arthur Peacocke and Philip Clayton, which we discussed in chapter 1.

3.3.2. Theological Voluntarism

We now have a much better understanding of James's mature concept of God, and of the basic metaphysical picture that underlies his theistic naturalism. In the present section we wish to investigate how that picture intersects with James's ethical views. Recall that in section 2.3, on WB, we reviewed the ethics of 'The Moral Philosopher and the Moral Life' (MPML). We located in that essay a humanistic ethics, consisting in a doctrine of evolutionary intuitionism, a social theory of moral obligation, a desire-satisfaction theory, and a doctrine of preference utilitarianism; and a religious ethics, consisting in a doctrine of metaethical theological voluntarism. We noted at the time Michael Slater's assertion that the religious part of James's ethics entails a commitment to supernaturalism, and therefore undermines any naturalistic aspirations of the humanistic part. We also noted his and Richard Gale's contention that James's preference utilitarianism is incompatible with his deontological intuitions. In what follows we will attempt to overcome these tensions, and to integrate James's humanistic and religious ethics into his theistic naturalism.

3.3.2.1. Overcoming the Tensions in James's Account

In section 2.3 we noted certain tensions in James's ethical philosophy. Of particular interest was the tension between what Richard Gale termed his 'deontological intuitions' and his 'utilitarian casuistic rule'[897]. Closely related to this is a tension between his defence of a quasi-realistic 'evolutionary intuitionism' earlier on in the essay, with his wholly subjectivist approach in the later sections. Let us revisit both of these tensions very briefly. In the first case we have James expressing on the one hand his intuition that the lonely torture of one lost soul is not justified by the permanent happiness of millions, and on the other, insisting upon the general casuistic rule that we ought always to maximise demand satisfaction. Clearly, say commentators like Gale, the deontological intuition and the utilitarian casuistic rule are in conflict. If we follow the latter indiscriminately, then we ought to conclude that the lonely torture of one lost soul *is* justified by the permanent happiness (or perpetual demand satisfaction) of millions. In the second case we have James in the earlier sections of the essay defending an 'evolutionary intuitionism' according

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[897] See: footnote 417 to section 2.3.2.4.

to which certain of our moral ideals have their source in an evolved faculty of 'moral perception', but insisting in the later sections that moral perceptions/intuitions have no legitimate normative force. As Graham Bird has pointed out, James's evolutionary intuitionism has the flavour of certain contemporary dispositional models of value experience, and seems to evince a leaning towards moral realism, whereas his demand satisfaction theory pulls him in the direction of subjectivism and antirealism[898]. In the remainder of the present subsection we will address the first of these tensions. The following section will be devoted to the second.

There are, broadly speaking, three options for resolving the tension between James's deontological intuitions and his utilitarian casuistic rule:

i)   Accept that the deontological intuitions are mistaken.

ii)   Abandon the utilitarian casuistic rule.

iii)   Amend the utilitarian casuistic rule.

The first option cannot be the right one for James. Although the demand satisfaction theory and the utilitarian casuistic rule (together with his theological voluntarism) form the basis of James's metaethics, his *normative* ethics consists almost entirely in deontological intuitions and pronouncements[899]. They simply cannot be dispensed with without eviscerating the real ethical content of much of his philosophy[900]. Option (ii) is surely preferable to option (i). It is the option taken John Wild, who claims that the religious ethics of the later sections of MPML supersedes the earlier utilitarian ethics[901]. Against option (ii) we have claims like that of Richard Gale to the effect that, seeing as James never explicitly recanted the ethical theory of MPML, it should be taken to be consistent with his mature views[902]. Certainly option (iii) is the most parsimonious provided a viable version of it can be formulated. Let us therefore explore this possibility in what follows.

There are, we suggest, two basic ways of amending James's utilitarian casuistic rule so as to accommodate his deontological intuitions. The first is that favoured by Richard Gale, of

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[898] Bird, 'Moral Philosophy and the Development of Morality', in *The Cambridge Companion to William James*, ed. by R. A. Putnam, pp260-281

[899] Gale has suggested that 'becoming a morally responsible agent' is the most important of such ethical intuitions for James. See: Gale, *The Divided Self of William James*, p49. John Roth thinks James's ethical intuitions can be summed up by the principle: 'act so as to maximise freedom and unity'. See: John K. Roth, *Freedom and the Moral Life* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1969), p122

[900] In this sense James may be said to lack any systematic normative or applied ethics. Sarin Marchetti has described this in terms of the essentially "hortatory" nature of James's ethics. See: Sarin Marchetti, *Ethics and Philosophical Critique in William James* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015)

[901] John Wild, *The Radical Empiricism of William James* (New York: Doubleday, 1969), p282

[902] Gale, *The Divided Self of William James*, p40

expanding James's definition of 'the good' to include more than just demand satisfaction, and of reformulating his casuistic rule to be 'good-maximizing'[903]. On this view demand satisfaction becomes just one good among others. Other important goods might include 'becoming a morally responsible agent' and 'treating people as ends in themselves'. Where these other goods compete with demand satisfaction, the latter may well lose out. Thus, torturing lost souls, though it might maximize demand satisfaction, will not maximize the treatment of people as ends in themselves, and so, on balance, may not be good-maximizing. The second way of amending James's casuistic rule is by admitting of qualitatively different demands, and by reformulating the rule so as to give precedence to certain *kinds* of demand. Thus, it might be said that humanitarian demands or religious demands have more weight than hedonistic demands. This is the strategy adopted by Ellen Suckiel in *Heaven's Champion*; she argues that James's treatment of saintly values in VRE implies a judgement of the relatively high value of religious demands[904]. This second way of amending the casuistic rule looks at first glance to preserve more of James's account. It seems for instance to allow us to preserve his claim that the essence of good is to satisfy demand. However, this impression is in many ways misleading. In assigning more weight to certain kinds of demands than to others, this second way of amending the casuistic rule implicitly appeals to some independent standard of goodness; independent that is, of demand satisfaction. It implicitly holds that religious demands or humanitarian demands are *intrinsically better* than hedonistic demands. Thus, the second way of amending the casuistic rule becomes almost indistinguishable from the first. In either case we must expand James's definition of the good to allow for a hierarchy of goods or values, with some assigned greater weight than others. This of course invites the question of what the values of different kinds of demands *are*? The obvious answer to this question, for James, is that their values correspond with God's preferences. James invoked God's preferences as a way of settling how qualitatively homogeneous demands ought to be subordinated to one another; it seems only natural that he should invoke God's preferences to settle how *different kinds* of demands ought to be subordinated to one another. As such, the role of God remains much the same as it was in MPML: his overarching demands secure moral objectivity, and his way of valuing different kinds of demands constitutes the finally valid casuistic scale.

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[903] Gale, *The Divided Self of William James*, p49
[904] Ellen Suckiel, *Heaven's Champion*, pp106-112

3.3.2.2. A Dispositional Model of Value Experience

We said in section 2.3.1 that James's theological voluntarism in MPML was purely metaethical. He explicitly stated that human beings do not have access to God's demands, and that belief in God served only as a regulative ideal to let loose in us the strenuous mood. In this case the question arises as to what *normative* principles we should adopt in ethics. James has an answer to this question in MPML: we must follow the utilitarian casuistic rule, and satisfy as many demands as possible. This answer however, as we saw in the last section, contradicts his strongly held deontological intuitions. The only way to make his ethical philosophy consistent is by admitting of qualitatively different demands, and by amending his casuistic rule so as to give precedence to more valuable demands. Note however that this renders the casuistic rule impotent as a normative principle. We can no longer simply satisfy as many demands as possible – a reasonably intuitive endeavour – now we must satisfy as many and as *highly valuable* demands as possible. Absent some independent standard for evaluating demands, such a project looks to be a non-starter. How are we to determine which demands are the most valuable? We suggest that a closer examination of the second of the two tensions we raised in the previous section will yield a plausible answer to this question.

Recall that the first of the three questions James addressed in MPML was the 'psychological question': 'What is the historical origin of our moral ideas and judgements?'. In answer to the question James attempted to find a middle way between the two extant alternatives of 'intuitionism' and 'evolutionism'. According to intuitionism, our moral ideas have their source in an apriori faculty of moral intuition; according to evolutionism they are developed through the experience of pleasures and pains and through subsequent rational analysis. James's position, which we called 'evolutionary intuitionism', held that moral ideas result primarily from an *evolved*, '*brain-born'* faculty of moral intuition. Through this faculty, James explained, we experience "moral perceptions" of the "fitnesses between things"[905]. It could only be from such a faculty, he surmised, that intuitions like the lost soul intuition could arise. However, having developed this account of 'evolutionary intuitionism' James seems to put it to one side, and refrains from mentioning it for the rest of the essay. Later, when he addresses the question of how we should decide between conflicting demands, he explicitly rejects ethical intuitions (brain-born or not), as legitimate carriers of normative force. That such intuitions *did* carry normative force for James is shown by his earnest expression of the lost soul intuition, and of countless similar intuitions throughout his works; and yet he was forced to concede in MPML that they

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[905] James, *The Will to Believe*, p187

were not *legitimate* carriers of such force. This, we suggest, was a mistake. And there is some reason to believe that James recognized that it was a mistake later on in his career. In what follows we will attempt to spell out just what we mean by this claim.

We begin with a few observations. Firstly, James repeatedly uses the language of perception in describing our evolved faculty of moral intuition. This faculty yields "moral *perceptions*"; it deals with "directly felt fitnesses *between things*"; through it we detect a "repugnancy *in things*" and an "inward dignity" in others, etc. (our emphasis in all of the above). This language suggests an element of objectivity. We are not dealing with mere *feelings* that we have *about* things, but with *properties* that we perceive *in* things. Secondly, despite his calling them *moral* perceptions, there is reason to believe that they are not, strictly speaking, moral. Such perceptions, he says, do not tell us what is "wicked" (i.e. morally wrong), but rather what is "mean and vulgar" (also what is 'repugnant', 'hideous', 'noble', and 'dignified'). And thirdly, such perceptions do not constitute demands, and so do not in themselves produce obligations. Rather, they *inform* demands. We perceive that it would be hideous to torture the lost soul, and so we demand that the lost soul not be tortured. These observations, we contend, strongly suggest a certain interpretation of James's evolutionary intuitionism; namely that it is concerned primarily with *value* rather than morality. It describes a faculty which yields *evaluative* perceptions; which deals with the *evaluative* properties of things. Moreover, we suggest, it presents value experience as something quasi-objective. This, of course, is highly significant. For if value experience is objective, then it might provide us with the standard we require for evaluating demands.

On the basis of an interpretation not dissimilar to the one above Graham Bird has suggested that James's evolutionary intuitionism resembles certain contemporary 'dispositional models' of value experience. In his essay 'Moral Philosophy and the Development of Morality' Bird compares James's account with the dispositional models of Jonathan Bennett and Mark Johnston[906]. We note that John McDowell's secondary quality model of value experience, which we mentioned in chapter one, is also an account of this kind. The upshot of these accounts, to put it succinctly, is that evaluative properties are not wholly subjective. Rather, they are dispositional properties of objects/states of affairs, to merit, in conjunction with human cognitive capacities, certain evaluative judgements. Thus, for such models, the torture of lost souls for the sake of the happiness of the majority is 'hideous' in the sense that this state of affairs possesses a dispositional property to merit, in conjunction with human cognitive capacities, an evaluative

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[906] Bird, 'Moral Philosophy and the Development of Morality', in *The Cambridge Companion to William James*, ed. by R. A. Putnam, pp260-281

judgement of hideousness. Ultimately, Bird does not find sufficient evidence in MPML for claiming that James's evolutionary intuitionism amounts to a dispositional model of value experience, but he does conclude that James's ethical philosophy could make good use of such a model[907]. The remarkable thing about Bird's essay is that he omits any mention of James's desperately relevant account of value experience from ERE[908]. We will attempt to remedy this omission in what follows.

3.3.2.3. The Place of Evaluative Facts in a World of Pure Experience

The account of value experience to which we have just referred is articulated in the fifth essay of ERE, on 'The Place of Affectional Facts in a World of Pure Experience'. In it, we contend, James develops something very close to a dispositional model of evaluative facts, not dissimilar to McDowell's secondary-quality-model which we discussed in chapter one. Like McDowell's, James's model can claim with some justice to be naturalistic, and like McDowell's, it might serve as a decent basis for a relatively robust doctrine of moral realism.

We begin by noting that by 'affectional facts' James means not only "our pleasures and pains, our loves and fears and angers", but also such facts as "the beauty, comicality, importance or preciousness of certain objects and situations"[909]. In other words, he means not just affectional facts, but also evaluative facts. His goal in the essay is to show "[t]hat the popular notion that these experiences are intuitively given as purely inner facts is hasty and erroneous"[910]. In other words, he aims to show that such facts have a quasi-objective status. He begins with a brief discussion of the general character of value experience, for which he refers to George Santayana's *The Sense of Beauty*[911]. He summarises Santayana's account as follows:

> The various pleasures we receive from an object may count as 'feelings' when we take them singly, but when they combine in a total richness, we call the result the 'beauty' of the object, and treat it as an outer attribute which our mind perceives.

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[907] In *William James* Bird holds that James conceives of values as natural properties that are emergent from the demands of sentient beings. This, he thinks, is enough to qualify James, as regards his ethical views, as "clearly a naturalist of some kind". See: Bird, *William James*, p174. Sami Pihlström has noted that a blurring of the fact/value distinction has been a feature of the pragmatic tradition from James through to Putnam. In a recent paper he explores both emergentist and Peircean synechist models for grounding value in a 'pragmatically naturalist metaphysics'. See: Sami Pihlström, 'Toward a Pragmatically Naturalist Metaphysics of the Fact-Value Entanglement', *Journal of Philosophical Research*, 35 (2010), pp323-352.
[908] This probably has to do with his interpreting ERE as a whole in primarily epistemological terms. He briefly alludes to the account in question in *William James*, but appears not to regard it as having any definite ontological implications. See: Bird, *William James*, pp116-120.
[909] James, *Essays in Radical Empiricism*, p138
[910] James, *Essays in Radical Empiricism*, p141
[911] George Santayana, *The Sense of Beauty* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1896)

> We discover beauty just as we discover the physical properties of things. Training is needed to make us expert in either line.[912]

So far as the pure phenomenology goes, value experiences seem to involve facts about the valued objects themselves. They seem to be something like dispositions of the objects, which, given the appropriate "training", can be "discovered" by beings with the right sensory and conceptual capacities.

James notes that in this respect evaluative facts are similar to secondary qualities. For common-sense, such qualities really are *in* their objects: "Sound, as such, goes through the air and can be intercepted. The heat of the fire passes over, as such, into the water which it sets a-boiling."[913] It was only in response to purely intellectual as opposed to practical needs – once such needs had arisen in human inquirers – that people thought to call these qualities subjective. They did so not because of any discernible feature of secondary-quality-experiences themselves, but because of their relations to other objects of experience. Purely physical objects do not affect one another by virtue of their secondary qualities; minds with the appropriate sensory capacities are required to make them efficacious. James thinks that the same is true of affectional/evaluative facts:

> It does not work to assume that physical objects are going to act outwardly by their sympathetic or antipathetic qualities. The beauty of a thing or its value is no force that can be plotted in a polygon of compositions, nor does its 'use' or 'significance' affect in the minutest degree its vicissitudes or destiny at the hands of physical nature.[914]

This, James thinks, is why philosophers tend to consign affectional/evaluative facts to the inner world. It is because purely physical objects do not affect one another by means of them[915]. However, this way of conceiving the matter, according to James, is problematic. For one thing it assumes the very premise that he has laboured in ERE to discredit, namely that 'mental' and 'physical' – 'thought' and 'thing' – are names for two radically different kinds of reality. If the metaphysical thesis of pure experience is correct, then so-called mental entities or minds are every bit as physical, and every bit as real, as material objects. Thus, the claim that purely physical objects do not affect one another by means of affectional/evaluative facts turns out to be

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[912] James, *Essays in Radical Empiricism*, p143

[913] James, *Essays in Radical Empiricism*, p147. This is a point rightly emphasized by Ruth Putnam, who says: "When James says that a specific emotion makes us feel the hideousness of a certain state of affairs, he is saying something entirely analogous to saying, for example, that a specific sensation makes us feel the blueness of the sky." See: Ruth Anna Putnam, 'Perceiving Facts and Values', *Philosophy*, 73 (1998), pp5-19 (p6)

[914] James, *Essays in Radical Empiricism*, p149

[915] James, *Essays in Radical Empiricism*, pp149-150

false. For "although they [affectional/evaluative facts] are inert as regards the rest of physical nature, they are not inert as regards that part of physical nature which our own skin covers"[916]:

> Take a mass of carrion, for example, and the 'disgustingness' which for us is part of the experience. The sun caresses it, and the zephyr wooes it as if it were a bed of roses. So the disgustingness fails to operate within the realm of suns and breezes, – it does not function as a physical quality. But the carrion 'turns our stomach' by what seems a direct operation – it does function physically, therefore, in that limited part of physics.[917]

This is not of course to say that evaluative facts and physical facts are functionally equivalent, or that they have an equivalent ontological status; rather it is to say that the mental/physical distinction cannot serve as the basis for consigning the former to a realm of pure subjectivity. Such facts, although they bear different relations to the rest of experience than 'physical facts', and although they require the appropriate cognitive capacities and the appropriate training in order to be discovered, are no less real, and no less deserving of inclusion within a philosophical system. For James, as for McDowell, evaluative facts are facts about valued objects. They are out there in the world, and they are irreducible to physical facts. But they are nevertheless firmly grounded in the potentialities of natural beings. If therefore McDowell's account can be considered naturalistic, so, we contend, can James's.

So, how do we square this dispositional model of value experience with the ethics of MPML? We suggest that something like the following would be a relatively parsimonious option. To begin with, we must ensure that the dispositional model of value experience is consistent with James's existential condition for ethics (and with MTPE). Everything in James's philosophy is comprised of pure experience, and so evaluative properties will have to be experiential properties, or to be properties of experiential entities. In this sense James's model will differ from the others we have been considering. Whereas they tend to construe evaluative properties as dispositional properties of physical entities to produce particular mental states in experiential entities, James must construe them as dispositional properties of experiential entities to produce particular mental states in *other* experiential entities[918]. Next, we suggest that we keep James's claim that demands are coextensive with obligations. We should say therefore, that value judgements are not yet moral facts, and so do not yet produce obligations. Rather, evaluative facts *inform* demands/obligations; and importantly, demands/obligations themselves *possess* evaluative

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[916] James, *Essays in Radical Empiricism*, p150
[917] James, *Essays in Radical Empiricism*, p153
[918] Perhaps it would be better to say: 'as dispositional properties of psychophysical entities to produce certain mental states in other psychophysical entities'.

properties. It is on the basis of their evaluative properties, as we perceive them, that we must judge individual demands/kinds of demands. And it is on the basis of those judgements that we must attempt to comply with the modified casuistic rule: i.e. to satisfy as many and as highly valuable demands as possible.

3.3.3. Religious Experience

The last part of James's theistic naturalism is his doctrine of religious experience. We already investigated that doctrine as it appeared in VRE. Our aim in what follows is to integrate it into James's theistic naturalism. This integration will revolve around James's notion of 'the mystical perspective', conceived of as a form of consciousness that is present in mystical experiences, and that is contrasted with our ordinary waking consciousness, or 'rationalistic perspective'. We think that this notion of the mystical perspective helps to bring out the basically naturalistic character of James's doctrine of religious experience. This is because the mystical perspective, according to James, does not contradict "the ordinary outward data of consciousness", but "merely add[s] a supersensuous meaning" to it[919]. As such, it cannot possibly entail any conflict with naturalism. Mystical experiences, on the interpretation we will develop, are not revelations of a supernatural reality enabled by some unique 'sensus divinitatis'; they are enhanced perceptions of the natural world, enabled by familiar human faculties that are grounded in the physiology of the human body.

3.3.3.1. The Mystical Perspective and the Rationalistic Perspective

In chapter 2 recall, we considered James's treatment of the epistemic status of mystical experience. There we gave the first two parts of his conclusion on this matter: 1) that mystical experiences are authoritative for those who have them, and 2) that they need not be authoritative for those who do not have them. The time has now come for us to consider the third part of James's conclusion, which goes as follows:

> (3) They [mystical experiences] break down the authority of the non-mystical or rationalistic consciousness, based upon the understanding and the senses alone. They show it to be only one kind of consciousness. They open out the possibility of other orders of truth, in which, so far as anything in us vitally responds to them, we may freely continue to have faith.[920]

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[919] James, *The Varieties*, p428
[920] James, *The Varieties*, p423

James had already introduced this idea earlier on in the lecture on 'Mysticism'. Following his own experiences with nitrous oxide, he said, the following idea was forced upon him:

> [O]ur normal waking consciousness, rational consciousness as we call it, is but one special type of consciousness, whilst all about it, parted from it by the filmiest of screens, there lie potential forms of consciousness entirely different. We may go through life without suspecting their existence; but apply the requisite stimulus, and at a touch they are there in all their completeness, definite types of mentality which probably somewhere have their field of application and adaptation.[921]

During mystical experiences our normal waking consciousness breaks down, and is replaced by an entirely different form of consciousness. This new form of consciousness, James says, does not contradict "the ordinary outward data of consciousness", but "merely add[s] a supersensuous meaning" to it. It carries with it a kind of "excitement", he says, "like the emotions of love or ambition, … by means of which facts already objectively before us fall into new expressiveness and make a new connection with our active life."[922] This mystical consciousness seems to those who experience it to constitute "a more enveloping point of view"; "a window through which the mind looks out upon a more extensive and inclusive world"[923].

This, unfortunately, is more or less all that James has to say on this topic in VRE. We can however begin to reconstruct his position in more detail on the basis of certain insights drawn from one of the last essays he ever published; namely, 'A Suggestion About Mysticism'. In this essay James proposes that mystical experiences involve a so-called 'lowering of the threshold' or 'extension of the field' of consciousness so as to let in certain contents from the subliminal region[924]. He had already advanced a similar hypothesis in *Human Immortality*, in connection with the transmission theory of consciousness and the notion of a mother-sea of consciousness[925]. Indeed, even in VRE itself James had advanced a hypothesis essentially similar to this one. There, however, his emphasis was on the phenomena of automatism, and the notion that mystical experiences involve *incursions* from the subconscious region. Here, his suggestion is rather that they involve *extensions* of ordinary consciousness *into* the subconscious region. The difference is subtle but important. The former suggests the appearance of extraordinary content within one's normal waking consciousness; the latter suggests a much more drastic shift of one's total perspective.

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[921] James, *The Varieties*, p388
[922] James, *The Varieties*, p427
[923] James, *The Varieties*, p428
[924] William James, 'A Suggestion About Mysticism', *The Journal of Philosophy, Psychology and Scientific Methods*, 7 (1910), pp85-92 (p85). Reprinted in: *The Works of William James: Essays in Philosophy*, ed. by Burkhardt, pp157-165
[925] James, *Human Immortality*, pp48-50

James draws an analogy between the extensions and contractions of consciousness involved in mystical experience and those involved in psychopathological phenomena such as cases of alternating personality. Recall Janet's patient Lucie, each of whose personalities had variously contracted fields of consciousness. When, after treatment, Lucie's personalities became integrated, those fields of consciousness underwent a corresponding integration. From the perspective of her primary consciousness, a drastic extension of the field had taken place. Mystical experiences are essentially similar, except that the field extends from normal to supernormal rather than from subnormal to normal. Just how far the field extends in mystical experiences James does not venture to say. The obvious assumption as regards monistic mystical experiences is that the field extends all the way out to the boundary of God's consciousness, but James's hypothesis does not require this. Indeed, he seems to think that most experiences of this kind involve extensions that are more or less confined to the subject's brain, taking in only the subject's own "subconscious memories, conceptions, emotional feelings, and perceptions of relation, etc."[926] Almost *any* transient extension of the field of consciousness, according to James, is bound to be mystical to some degree:

> It will be transient, if the change of threshold is transient. It will be of reality, enlargement, and illumination, possibly rapturously so. It will be of unification, for the present coalesces in it with ranges of the remote quite out of its reach under ordinary circumstances; and the sense of *relation* will be greatly enhanced. Its form will be intuitive or perceptual, not conceptual, for the remembered or conceived objects in the enlarged field are supposed not to attract the attention singly, but only to give the sense of a tremendous *muchness* suddenly revealed.[927]

Extensions of the field of consciousness are bound to produce certain characteristics of mystical experience; for instance, their noetic and unitive quality[928]. They are noetic because they bring new facts into view; facts which were previously hidden in the subliminal region of consciousness. They are unitive because the brain naturally tries to integrate those facts into the primary consciousness, leading to a sense of relation and enlargement. We have attempted to illustrate this notion of the expansion and contraction of the field of consciousness in the following series of diagrams (the dark blue representing the human field of consciousness and the light blue representing God's field of consciousness, as per figs. 17-21 in section 2.4.4.1):

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[926] James, 'A Suggestion About Mysticism', p86

[927] James, 'A Suggestion About Mysticism', p87

[928] 'Unitive quality' is not of course one of the core characteristics identified by James in his INTP schema. He does however speak extensively about feelings of unity in VRE. See: James, *The Varieties*, p388; p394; p395; p401; p419; p420. Most subsequent typologies of mystical experience that are based on James's INTP schema include 'unitive quality' or 'unifying quality' as a core characteristic. See: Stace, pp131-132; Hood, pp31-32.

Fig. 24
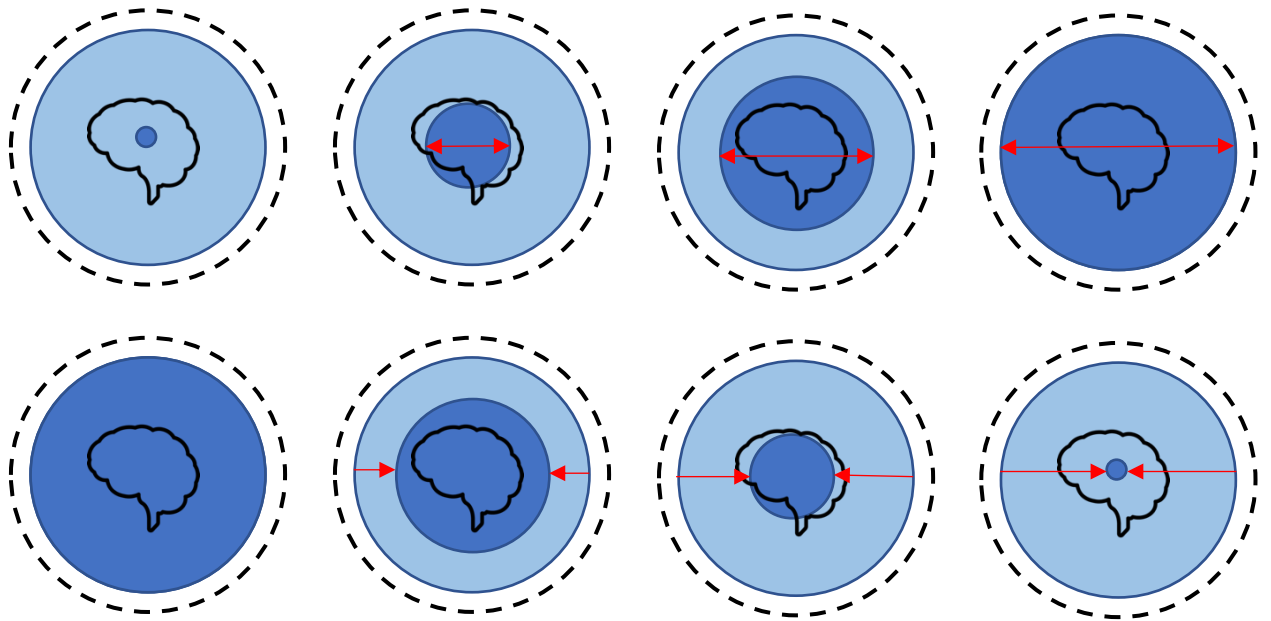
In this way, one may view mystical experiences in terms of expansions and contractions of the field of human consciousness[929]. Viewed as such, they will not involve any new sensory content that could contradict the ordinary outward data of consciousness. When the threshold falls, James says, "what comes into view is not the next mass of *sensation*; for sensation requires new physical stimulations to produce it, and no alteration of a purely mental threshold can create these"[930]. Rather, they add a "supersensuous meaning" to the data of consciousness. Now this, presumably, means that James's likening of mystical experience to sensory experience in VRE is meant to be taken purely analogically. Mystical experiences may be "absolutely sensational in their *epistemological* quality", but they cannot be absolutely sensational in their *phenomenal*

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[929] James's analogy with psychopathological conditions also suggests an intriguing alternative conception; one that sheds further light on his understanding of the relation between human beings and God. As well as conceiving of mystical consciousness as an expansion of human consciousness, we may conceive of human consciousness as a kind of contraction or fragmentation of God's consciousness. In other words, we may conceive of human selves as alternate or dissociative personalities of God. God, in this case, would be like Janet's Leonie 3, who knew the contents of the minds of Leonie 1 and 2, even while Leonie 1 and 2 had no knowledge of her existence. Mystical experiences, if the analogy holds, may be conceived of as temporary integrations of God's primary consciousness with the consciousness of one of his dissociative selves. This hypothesis was in fact suggested quite frankly by Schiller and later discussed by James in his essay 'The Mad Absolute'. James takes the hypothesis seriously, and suggests that "Fechner's successors" would have much to gain from exploring it more fully. See: William James, 'The Mad Absolute', *The Journal of Philosophy, Psychology and Scientific Methods*, 3 (1906), pp656-657. Reprinted in: *The Works of William James: Essays in Philosophy*, ed. by Frederick Burkhardt, pp149-150. For Schiller's essay see: Ferdinand Canning Scott Schiller, 'Idealism and the Dissociation of Personality', *The Journal of Philosophy, Psychology and Scientific Methods*, 3 (1906), pp477-482.

[930] James, 'A Suggestion About Mysticism', p86

quality. But if this is so, then why do mystics consistently claim that their experiences are similar to perceptions? If not sensory content, in what does their perceptual quality consist? The answer, we suggest, is that the mystical perspective *enhances* our ordinary perceptions. In the next two sub-sections we will develop this notion in greater detail

3.3.3.2. The Mystical Perspective on Nature

One can, we contend, make sense of James's mature doctrine of religious experience by supposing that the mystical perspective involves enhanced perceptions. The question is, what precisely do these enhanced perceptions consist in? James's treatment of the intellectual content of mystical experience may be said to give us a broad answer. The mystical perspective enhances our perceptions in such a way that we seem to feel God's presence, and to feel our unity with him/her. This answer however, although reassuring, is rather vague. We will get a more concrete sense of this notion of 'enhanced perceptions' by examining certain key differences between the mystical and rationalistic perspectives.

James's first mention of the rationalistic perspective/consciousness does not of course occur in VRE; it is a consistent theme throughout his work. In WB and *Pragmatism*, he contrasted rationalism with empiricism, saying that the former gravitated towards theoretic rather than factual rationality, and towards logic and a priori principles rather than experience. Also in WB, he referred to the so-called 'mechanical view of life' (according to which nature is to be described without recourse to the category of personality) as 'mechanical *rationalism*'. In VRE James suggested that rationalism gives epistemic primacy to "abstract principles", and identified "physical science" as a fruit of the rationalistic consciousness[931]. And in PU and SPP James finds rationalists to be the chief perpetrators of the misapplication of conceptual logic to the inner nature of reality. This last point is of special interest to us in the present discussion. We think it plausible, given the foregoing, to suppose that the rationalistic perspective has a natural propensity for conceptual logic, and for the abstract, physicalist explanations that it favours. In the aforementioned discussions from PU and SPP, James contrasts conceptual logic, which deals only with the outer surfaces of reality, with the faculty of "sympathetic intuition", which penetrates into the inner nature of reality[932]. Our account in the present section builds on the suggestion that, just as the rationalistic perspective has a propensity for conceptual logic, so the mystical perspective has a propensity for sympathetic intuition. Following an essentially similar line of reasoning, Richard Gale has argued that mystical experiences, on James's account, involve

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[931] James, *The Varieties*, p73
[932] James, *A Pluralistic Universe*, pp250-251

heightened activity in this faculty of sympathetic intuition[933]. He thinks that they allow us to intuit the inner life of the cosmos, thus changing "the dead blank *it* of the world into a living *thou*, with whom the whole man may have dealings"[934]. We find this suggestion highly compelling. It is the key, we think, to understanding a part of the way in which the mystical perspective enhances our perceptions.

James's first detailed discussion of the faculty of sympathetic intuition occurs in his *Talks to Teachers*. In the penultimate talk, on 'What Makes a Life Significant', we find the following remarkable passage:

> Every Jack sees in his own particular Jill charms and perfections to the enchantment of which we stolid onlookers are stone-cold. And which has the superior view of the Absolute truth, he or we? Which has the more vital insight into the nature of Jill's existence, as a fact? Is he in excess, being in this matter a maniac? or are we in defect, being victims of a pathological anaesthesia as regards Jill's magical importance? Surely the latter; surely to Jack are the profounder truths revealed; surely poor Jill's palpitating little life-throbs are among the wonders of creation, are worthy of this sympathetic interest; and it is to our shame that the rest of us cannot feel like Jack. For Jack realizes Jill concretely and we do not. He struggles toward a union with her inner life, divining her feelings, anticipating her desires, understanding her limits as manfully as he can … We ought, all of us, to realize each other in this intense, pathetic, and important way.[935]

Jack approaches "union" with Jill's "inner life" through acts of sympathetic intuition. All of us, James says, ought to aim for the same thing in our relations with *every* human being. We take it that sympathetic intuition, so described, is a familiar component of social perception. But this familiar faculty, according to James, is not only the key to understanding the inner natures of other *human beings*. As he argues in PU, it is the key to understanding the inner nature of *all reality*. When we turn this faculty upon the wider universe we find not the abstract outer surfaces of mechanical rationalism, but the "collectivism of personal lives" of radical empiricism. The rationalistic consciousness, we may say, is relatively inept in the exercise of sympathetic intuition. It is stone-cold to the inner life of the universe, and anaesthetic to its magical importance. The mystical consciousness, meanwhile, greatly enhances our faculty of sympathetic intuition. Now, God, for James, is a finite person existing within the natural world. As such, we may, in principle, intuit his inner life just as we would any other natural being. What we are suggesting is that the mystical perspective makes this much easier. It allows us to passively feel

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[933] Gale, *The Divided Self of William James*, pp246-272
[934] James, *The Will to Believe*, p127
[935] William James, *Talks to Teachers on Psychology: and to Students on Some of Life's Ideals* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1899), pp266-267

God's presence in the world, just as we passively feel the presence of other human minds when
we encounter them. This is the sense in which mystics feel the presence of God; not as a
supernatural entity outside of nature, but as the mind indwelling within it. In what follows, we
will consider another way in which the mystical perspective may be said to enhance our
perceptions.

3.3.3.3. The Mystical Perspective on Value

James says in VRE that mystical experiences are quasi-sensory experiences. He also says,
however, that they are indefinite and ineffable, like "states of feeling". Some commentators
insist that the analogy with sensory experience should only be read as implying an epistemological
similarity with sensory experience, and not any phenomenological similarity. Mystical
experiences, they insist, as construed by James, do not necessarily involve any sensory qualities at
all. This, indeed, was a popular conception of James's account of mysticism among some of his
contemporaries. They thought that he had made mystical experiences into wholly inner,
subjective phenomena, and on this basis charged him with inconsistency for attributing cognitive
value to them[936]. In recent decades, modern commentators have appealed, on James's behalf, to
the doctrine of TPAF, as a way of avoiding this 'charge of subjectivity'. Thus, they have argued
that James's defence of affectional facts as quasi-objective and as possessors of cognitive value
applies to religious experiences. Henry Levinson and Nancy Frankenberry go so far as to *identify*
religious facts with affectional facts[937]. Their analysis, we think, is intriguing, but ultimately
incomplete. In examining why, we shall succeed in developing a more nuanced account of the
evaluative component in religious and mystical experience.

To begin with, we should note that the quasi-objective/cognitive status of affectional facts in
TPAF, is intimately bound up with their reference to outer realities. Thus, James tells us that the
landscape is beautiful, the *situation* tragic, the *carrion* disgusting, etc. We intuitively feel that
without these outer realities, such affectional facts would lose their objective/cognitive status. If
this is correct, then religious experiences cannot be *purely* affectional facts, but must point or
refer to some outer reality. We note that this accords with James's contention early on in VRE
that religious experiences are essentially intentional; that is, that they are always directed
towards a religious object or objects[938]. It is on this basis that Ellen Suckiel offers a more nuanced

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[936] James Leuba, 'Professor William James's Interpretation of Religious Experience', *International Journal of
Ethics*, 14 (1904), pp322-339
[937] Levinson, *The Religious Investigations of William James*, pp171-189; Frankenberry, *Religion and Radical
Empiricism*, pp98-106
[938] James, *The Varieties*, pp27-28

account according to which religious experiences, rather than being *identical* with affectional facts, have an affectional/evaluative *component*. She thinks that they reveal the religious value, or holiness, of certain objects/states of affairs. She even suggests that this is part of the supersensuous meaning which the mystical perspective adds to the ordinary outwards data of consciousness[939].

Michael Slater, building directly upon Suckiel's account, attempts to integrate this notion of an evaluative component in religious experience with James's wider ethical philosophy. He begins by suggesting, along similar lines to Suckiel, that religious experiences involve "evaluatively enriched perceptions"[940]. We see this, for instance, in the following experience, quoted from VRE:

> It was like entering another world, a new state of existence. Natural objects were glorified, my spiritual vision was so clarified that I saw beauty in every material object in the universe, the woods were vocal with heavenly music; my soul exulted in the love of God, and I wanted everybody to share in my joy.[941]

Such evaluatively enriched perceptions, Slater suggests, play a part in bringing about the dramatic moral transformations James describes in the lectures on 'Conversion' and 'Saintliness'. They instil those who have them with new values and ideals, which, when realized, manifest in the characteristic fruits of religion. This, Slater suggests, amounts to a reversal of James contention from MPML, according to which human beings have no access to God's demands:

> Religious faith now serves not only to awaken and sustain moral strenuousness in human beings, but also provides an objective ground for our moral ideals as well as the means by which we come to acquire knowledge of those ideals. This represents a decisive change in James's ethics in general and his moral theory in particular.[942]

On all of these points, we are in almost complete agreement with Suckiel and Slater. We note, furthermore, that their accounts – particularly Slater's with its notion of 'evaluatively enriched perceptions' – map perfectly onto the account of value experience which we located in TPAF in the previous section. According to that account, recall, evaluative facts are facts that are out there in the world waiting to be discovered. The more fully educated our cognitive capacities, the greater the range of evaluative facts we can perceive, and the more accurately we can perceive them. We may supplement this account with Slater's by supposing that the mystical perspective involves heightened activity in our faculty of evaluative perception. It awakens us to the existence of religious/holy values we had hitherto not perceived, or at any rate, that we had not

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[939] Suckiel, *Heaven's Champion*, pp19-24
[940] Slater, *William James on Ethics and Faith*, p149
[941] James, *The Varieties*, p250
[942] Slater, *William James on Ethics and Faith*, pp153-154

found compelling. It causes us to recognize, correctly in James's view, the relatively high value of certain religious demands/obligations[943]. In doing so, we note, it is only enhancing our ordinary, natural faculty of evaluative perception.

3.3.3.4. The Mystical Perspective on Truth

The last question that we wish to consider is that of the truth status of the mystical perspective. Specifically, we want to consider Richard Gale's claim that the mystical perspective, with its sympathetic intuitions of the inner life of the cosmos, gives us more than merely pragmatic truth about reality. We think that this claim, in spite of its prima facie conflict with the pragmatic theory of truth, is somewhat compelling. Gale's view, of course, is that this conflict is to be explained in terms of the conflict between James's divided selves. The promethean pragmatist says all truth is pragmatic; the anti-promethean mystic says that mystical truth is absolute. We, for our part, would want to frame this claim somewhat differently. We would want to say something more like the following. That while the rationalistic perspective is a highly developed/evolved form of consciousness, which therefore yields only adaptive heuristics, the mystical perspective is a raw or default form of consciousness, and is therefore able to access real truth. This formulation chimes well with a view of Frederic Myers that James quoted approvingly in his notes for the Lowell Lectures on *Exceptional Mental States*:

> The arrangement with which we habitually identify ourselves – what we call the normal or primary self – consists, in my view, of elements selected for us in the struggle for existence with special reference to the maintenance of ordinary physical needs, and is not necessarily superior in any other respect to the latent personalities which lie alongside it…[944]

The implication of this statement would seem to be that while the primary self (characterised by the rationalistic perspective) consists of "elements selected for us in the struggle for existence", other latent personalities (i.e. the mystical perspective) might not. The mystical perspective may

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[943] In this connection it is worth considering James's comments on the "widening of vision" he experienced upon realizing the deep significance of the lives of peasant women in Vienna: "Old hags many of them were, dried and brown and wrinkled, kerchiefed and short-petticoated, with thick wool stockings on their bony shanks, stumping through the glittering thoroughfares, looking neither to the right nor the left, bent on duty, envying nothing, humble-hearted, remote; – and yet at bottom, when you came to think of it, bearing the whole fabric of the splendors and corruptions of that city on their laborious backs. For where would any of it been without their unremitting, unrewarded labor in the fields? And so with us: not to our generals and poets, I thought, but to the Italian and Hungarian laborers in the Subway, rather, ought the monuments of gratitude and reverence of a city like Boston to be reared." This experience, James said, felt like a "widening of vision" that brought "an increase of religious insight into life". See: James, *Talks to Teachers*, pp275-277.

[944] Frederic Myers, 'French Experiments on the Strata of Personality', *Proceedings of the English Society for Psychical Research*, 5 (1888-1889), p387

have lingered dormant in the subliminal region of consciousness, not subject to the evolutionary pressures that have forced our other cognitive capacities in the direction of maximal adaptivity.

This, we concede, is a tempting possibility. In the end, however, it is not one we can accept. It threatens too great a rupture with James's overall worldview. To admit of ideas that are more than pragmatically true would undermine James's epistemology to too great a degree. This, in turn, would undermine James's critique of scientificism, and much of the distinctiveness of his naturalism. As James says in VRE, mystical forms of consciousness "probably somewhere have their field of application and adaptation". It is just that their field of adaptation is different from that of the rationalistic perspective. Whereas the rationalistic perspective is adapted to "the maintenance of ordinary physical needs", and to manipulating and controlling the environment, the mystical perspective is adapted to the maintenance of *spiritual* needs, and to *understanding and harmonizing* with the environment. The pragmatic theory dictates that, both perspectives being adaptive, both must be true. And yet there are points at which they evidently conflict. As such, the question arises as to which will prove *more* adaptive 'in the long run and on the whole'. James, of course, has his hunches. In VRE he said that saints – paradigmatic occupiers of the mystical perspective – are maladapted to the present; they are liable to be taken advantage of by the crueller elements in society. They may however, with their excess of virtue, be prophetic. They may be a torchbearers for a future millennial society:

> To such a millennial society the saint would be entirely adapted. His peaceful modes of appeal would be efficacious over his companions, and there would be no one extant to take advantage of his non-resistance.[945]

The saint, James concludes, is therefore "abstractly a higher type of man" than the strong man. Likewise, we may suppose, the mystical perspective is abstractly a higher type of perspective than the rationalistic perspective. But the millennial society has not yet arrived. If truth is adaptivity therefore, we must concede that the mystical perspective is not yet true. Truth however, for pragmatists, is in the making. And reality too is in the making. We, together with God, are its co-creators. Thus, we can *make* the mystical perspective true by bringing that millennial society about. Salvation, therefore, is not guaranteed. It is not already granted in the Absolute; nor is it in the power of a supernatural God to grant. Rather it is a natural process, wholly in the hands of natural beings, taking place within the space-time-causal system we call nature.

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[945] James, *The Varieties*, p375

Conclusion

As commentators like Gale have rightly pointed out, James's philosophy cannot be consistently interpreted as a form of scientific naturalism[946]. In this thesis we have tried to show that it can, however, be interpreted as a form of liberal naturalism; specifically, as form of radical religious naturalism. Our argument for this conclusion, and our exposition of the relevant interpretation, proceeded as follows.

We began in chapter 1 by surveying the varieties of naturalism. We saw that the term 'naturalism', since its inception, has been used to denote a variety of philosophical positions, and we argued that no one usage of the term – no one form of naturalism – enjoys a prima facie privilege (section 1.1). We then outlined the commitments of the form of naturalism that is most popular among contemporary philosophers, namely scientific naturalism. We saw that scientific naturalism is typically committed to the causal closure of nature, the causal closure of the physical, the principle of epistemological reducibility, the principle of ontological reducibility, scientism, and the methodological thesis of naturalism (section 1.2). Following this we examined the doctrine of liberal naturalism, as represented by the contributors to De Caro and Macarthur's anthology. We summarised the liberal naturalist critique of scientific naturalism; its arguments against scientism, hyperscientific realism, and the unity of science thesis. We saw that liberal naturalism is typically committed to weak and/or strong emergentism, and to the disunity of science thesis (section 1.3). Next, we investigated the possibility of a form of naturalism that endorses not only strong emergentism, but also macro-causation, and which therefore rejects the causal closure of the physical. To this end, we diffused Jaegwon Kim's famous causal exclusion argument, and reviewed two of the most plausible contemporary approaches to macro-causation; namely the British Emergentist and quantum approaches. We argued that such a doctrine is indeed coherent, and we proposed to call it 'radical liberal naturalism' (section 1.4). Finally, we considered the relationship between naturalism and religious naturalism. We found that all the forms of naturalism we discussed have viable religious counterparts, which are distinguished by their commitment to the existential thesis of religious naturalism; that nature or something within nature merits a religious response. On this basis we developed a tabulated schema for categorising the varieties of naturalism (fig. 13), and provisionally situated James in that schema. We suggested that James was a radical religious naturalist, committed to the causal closure of

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[946] Gale, 'John Dewey's Naturalization of William James', in *The Cambridge Companion to William James*, ed. by R. A. Putnam, pp49-68

nature, strong emergentism and macro-causation, and the existential thesis of religious
naturalism (section 1.5).

In chapter 2 our broad aim was to establish the textual evidence for this provisional assessment.
We sought to do so through a chronological treatment of James's core published works that
focused on the development of certain naturalistic themes in his philosophy. We began with the
Principles of Psychology, highlighting James's commitment to the methodological thesis of
naturalism, unearthing his doctrine of the strong emergence of mental phenomena, and
examining his account of mental causation (section 2.2). Next, we turned to *The Will to Believe*,
drawing together James's various statements on science into a coherent critique of scientificism
(which, we found, significantly foreshadowed the liberal naturalist critique of scientific
naturalism), and providing a systematic account of his ethical philosophy as presented in 'The
Moral Philosopher and the Moral Life' (section 2.3). Following this we investigated *The Varieties
of Religious Experience*, noting James's continued commitment to the methodological thesis of
naturalism, bringing out the naturalistic elements in his account of religious experience, and
demonstrating the superficiality of his endorsement of 'piecemeal supernaturalism' (section 2.4).
From here we proceeded to an examination of the *Essays in Radical Empiricism*, arguing for the
superiority of a panpsychist reading of James's doctrine of pure experience (section 2.5). Then we
looked at *Pragmatism*, demonstrating its methodological alignment with naturalism, refuting
purportedly non-naturalistic idealist readings of the pragmatic theory of truth, and presenting a
novel interpretation of that theory as an evolutionary theory of cognition (section 2.6). Finally,
we investigated *A Pluralistic Universe*, arguing for James's transition from 'piecemeal
supernaturalism' to 'pluralistic pantheism' (or finite theism), and considering how that doctrine
intersected with the panpsychism James had adopted from Fechner (section 2.7). We concluded
chapter 2 by arguing that our various findings therein had confirmed us in our provisional
assessment of James as a radical religious naturalist. He was committed to the causal closure of
nature (as evidenced by his exposition of finite theism in PU), to a weak version of the
methodological thesis of naturalism (as evidenced by his methodologies in PP, VRE, and
Pragmatism), to strong emergentism and macro-causation (as evidenced by his defence of those
doctrines as they apply to mental phenomena in PP), and to the existential thesis of religious
naturalism (as evidenced by his endorsement of religious realism in VRE and PU). However, we
conceded that there were some loose ends that remained to be tied up. We had not yet
established the precise nature of James's panpsychism, and demonstrated its consistency with
naturalism. Nor had we reconstructed James's doctrines of strong emergentism and macro-
causation so as to apply to the infra/superhuman consciousnesses of PU. Finally, we had not yet

settled how James's finite theism intersected with his broader metaphysical and ethical views (section 2.8). All of this would be the task of chapter 3.

In chapter 3 we proposed to complete the arch of James's naturalism by reconstructing his doctrines of panpsychism, emergentism, and theistic naturalism. We began with panpsychism, analysing James's arguments for the theory, locating an 'intrinsic nature argument for panpsychism' in his work, and positioning his doctrine in relation to contemporary versions of the theory as a form of 'emergent layered russellian panpsychism'. This form of panpsychism, we argued, is inherently compatible with science and naturalism (section 3.1). Next, we turned to emergentism, establishing a mandate for a thoroughgoing emergentist reading of James, clarifying the nature of a Jamesian doctrine of emergentism, and extending James's doctrine of mental causation from PP to apply to the infra/superhuman consciousnesses of PU (section 3.2). Finally, we carried out a restoration of James's 'theistic naturalism'. Using his reconstructed doctrines of panpsychism and emergentism, we demonstrated that the finite God of PU is a psychophysical whole, emergent – like other infra/superhuman consciousnesses – from a portion of the universe; and endowed with macro-causal power that is realized by emergent forces and/or by a capacity to influence the outcomes of indeterministic events. Next, we sought to integrate James's finite theism with his ethical views. We did so by first conceding the need for him to allow the existence of qualitatively different demands; then, by recovering his nascent dispositional model of value experience according to which human beings are able to discover the relative value of different kinds of demands; and lastly, by arguing that religious experiences involve enriched perceptions that reveal the relatively high value of religious demands, thereby bringing our demands into closer conformity with God's (as per James's theological voluntarism). Finally, we resituated James's doctrine of religious experience in the context of his restored theistic naturalism. We drew on his notion of the mystical perspective in order to argue that religious experiences are not revelations of a supernatural reality enabled by some unique 'sensus divinitatis', but enhanced perceptions of the natural world, enabled by familiar human cognitive capacities (section 3.3).

With this, our reconstruction of James's arch is complete, and our conclusion is thoroughly established. It is possible, and indeed desirable, to interpret James as a radical religious naturalist. In doing so, this thesis has shed new light on several aspects of James's philosophy. We have consolidated and systematized James's once-disparate and disconnected critique of scientificism, and demonstrated its relationship to contemporary debates. We have presented a novel narrative, and novel arguments, that demonstrate the superficiality of James's commitment to piecemeal supernaturalism, and provide a mandate for the recovery of his theistic naturalism.

We have developed a novel reading of the pragmatic theory of truth as an evolutionary theory of cognition, that helps to clarify many of the ambiguities therein. We have provided a new analysis of James's panpsychism in the light of contemporary studies, that has for the first time enabled a detailed classification of his version of the theory (as a form of emergent layered russellian panpsychism). We have reconstructed the doctrine of emergentism which – as Sprigge, Bird, and McLaughlin have noted – was nascent in James's work, and in doing so have opened up a revolutionary new understanding of his basic metaphysical commitments. And finally, we have accomplished the restoration of James's theistic naturalism, demonstrating the final unity and coherence of his metaphysical, ethical, and religious views, and articulating a Jamesian dispositional model of value experience in the process.

As well as providing these concrete contributions to James studies, this thesis has furnished much material that is ripe for further development in the fields of philosophy and theology. It has provided a corrective to the widespread view that James is essentially anti-naturalistic. That view, as we have shown, depends on a particular, relatively austere concept of naturalism. In the light of contemporary debates – in particular, in light of the emergence of liberal naturalism – it was necessary to provide an updated view of James's relationship to naturalism. This thesis, we contend, has definitely succeeded in this respect. In doing so, it has exorcised some of the 'spookiness' from James's philosophy, retrieving it as a resource for contemporary naturalism, and reinstating James as a friend and forebear of the movement. Additionally, it represents a contribution to debates in the field of analytic philosophy of religion. There is significant overlap, for instance, between what is presented here and much of the research coordinated under the auspices of Andrei Buckareff and Yujin Nagasawa's 'Alternative Concepts of God' and 'Pantheism and Panentheism' projects[947]. James's theistic naturalism (or pluralistic pantheism) constitutes just the sort of alternative concept of God which, according to Buckareff, contemporary philosophers of religion will benefit from exploring. For one thing, it attempts to mediate

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[947] Both projects, completed in 2013 and 2019 respectively, were sponsored by the John Templeton Foundation and jointly coordinated by Andrei Buckareff and Yujin Nagasawa. The former culminated in the publication of *Alternative Concepts of God: Essays on the Metaphysics of the Divine*, featuring a number of essays highly relevant to the present project, including Peter Forrest's 'The Personal Pantheist Conception of God', Karl Pfeifer's 'Pantheism as Panpsychism', Brian Leftow's 'Naturalistic Pantheism', Andrei Buckareff's 'Theological Realism, Divine Action, and Divine Location', Emily Thomas's 'Samuel Alexander's Space-Time God: A Naturalist Rival to Current Emergentist Theologies', and Eric Steinhart's 'On Religious Naturalism'. The latter project has also led to a number of relevant publications including Andrei Buckareff's 'Unity, Ontology, and the Divine Mind', Yujin Nagasawa's 'Panpsychism versus Pantheism, Polytheism, and Cosmopsychism' (in *The Routledge Handbook of Panpsychism*, ed. by William Seager), Joanna Leidenhag's 'Unity Between God and Mind? A Study on the Relationship Between Panpsychism and Pantheism', Philip Goff's 'Did the Universe Design Itself?', and Sam Coleman's 'Personhood, Consciousness, and God: How to be a Proper Pantheist'. Full references in the bibliography.

between crude naturalism and crude supernaturalism, thereby fulfilling the project's mandate to break the stalemate between traditional theism and new atheism. For another, it is genuinely novel, making God not just finite in power and knowledge, as per the process theisms of Whitehead, Hartshorne, and David Ray Griffin, but also finite in space. James's God is probably best described as a being a 'proper part' of the universe; a view that appears to be relatively unique in mainstream theology, and that, if James is correct, offers new possibilities for the solution of traditional theological problems.

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