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THE SUBCONSCIOUS IN JAMES' EXPLANATION  
OF RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCE

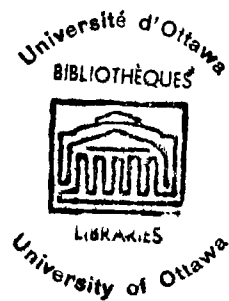
by

Edward J. Capestany

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STANDARD ABBREVIATIONS

Principles of Psychology.....	Psychology
Psychology, Briefer Course.....	P.B.C.
The Will to Believe, and Other Essays in Popular Philosophy.....	W.B.
Human Immortality: Two Supposed Objections to the Doctrine.....	H.I.
Talks to Teachers on Psychology: and to Students on Some of Life's Ideals.....	T.T.
The Varieties of Religious Experience: A Study in Human Nature.....	V.R.E.
Pragmatism: A New Name for Some Old Ways of Thinking.....	Pragm.
The Meaning of Truth, A Sequel to "Pragmatism".. <sup>?</sup>	M.T.
A Pluralistic Universe: Hibbert Lectures on the Present Situation in Philosophy.....	P.U.
Some Problems of Philosophy: A Beginning of an Introduction to Philosophy.....	S.P.P.
Memories and Studies.....	M.S.
Essays in Radical Empiricism.....	E.R.E.
Collected Essays and Reviews.....	C.E.R.

## INTRODUCTION

The Place of the "Subconscious" in the Philosophy of William James.

In Lecture XVIII of his Varieties of Religious Experience, James makes his "critique" of the scholastic theodicy. Having destroyed theodicy in his own fashion and the transcendent God, James seeks out an immanent way of explaining religious experience. This is presented in Lecture XX or "Conclusions." In his theory of the subliminal self acting as an alien power and control over conscious life, James insists that he is not introducing elements other than those verifiable by experience. Thus he considers it legitimate to attribute "psychological antecedents" to a series of consequents of superior character.<sup>1</sup> This naturalistic explanation of the religious act could occur simultaneously with the divine reality. Since the testimony of the subconscious is ambiguous,<sup>2</sup> there is here implied a necessary complement of the "pragmatic method" for, even though the neurotic temperament<sup>3</sup> be the necessary condition, James is not interested in the origins but in the results: "by their fruits you shall know them."<sup>4</sup> Thus the pragmatic criterion becomes the exclusive one so that we may be sure of the divine testimony of the subconscious.

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<sup>1</sup>William James, The Varieties of Religious Experience: A Study in Human Nature, Modern Library edition authorized by Longmans, Green and Company, 1902, pp. 232-233. Further referred to as V.R.E.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 417

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 26

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 21

Within his Radical Empiricism, the religious "experience" is considered by James as something strictly personal<sup>5</sup> but which can be described to fit into a science.<sup>6</sup> Considering the religious act as "a higher kind of emotion"<sup>7</sup> and a feeling of presence,<sup>8</sup> James works on the basis of a polarity with a developed tension between a higher power and the individual. There is a release through the subconscious<sup>9</sup> and as a result, the development of a "center of energy" with the consequences of a new vitality.<sup>10</sup> Thus James goes one step beyond Kant inasmuch as James has found out an empirical way to God. (After noting that the mystical experience, although of full authority for the individual experimenting it, might not be so for others,<sup>11</sup> James establishes it, however, over against the exclusivism of rationalism based upon the understanding and the senses alone.<sup>12</sup>)

The position of James regarding the subconscious, in spite of his variation, is expressed in terms of attention,<sup>13</sup> (with all the implication that this term has in the psychological system of James), and compared to the retinal field

<sup>5</sup> V.R.E., p. 30

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., p. 445

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., p. 46

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., p. 58

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., p. 503

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., p. 498

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., p. 417

<sup>12</sup> Ibid., p. 419

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., p. 226

of vision. Those matters to which we are directly and exclusively reacting (he might have said) occupy the center of attention. Thus, the distinction between the different fields (conscious and subconscious) is almost always a matter of degree of attention. I do not deny that other texts of James suggest something other-wordly, as we shall see, but he never denies the continuity. James accepted as probable Fechner's doctrine of a superhuman consciousness, compounded of the experiences of human and infrahuman minds. For James, this hypothesis acquires plausibility from the "abnormal and supernormal phenomena" of multiple personality, automatic writing and mediumship, but above all from the "religious experience" with its conviction "that we inhabit an invisible spiritual environment from which help comes, our soul being mysteriously one with a larger soul whose instruments we are." (V.R.E., Lecture XX.) The mystical intuition would then be "only very sudden and great extensions of the ordinary field of consciousness," "an immense spreading of the margin of the field." (Collected Essays and Reviews, 500)

There are two issues involved in this conception: the psychophysiological one, centered around the necessary elements for the production or genesis of the center of activity or attention; and, the metaphysical one, centered around the problem of the one and the many. In relation to the first one James considers the "transmissive function of the brain." Originally delivered as a lecture by James at Harvard in 1898, his Human Immortality: Two Supposed

Objections to the Doctrine was published as a small book.<sup>14</sup> Its second edition contains a preface with further elaborations. The body-mind relationship was one of those tragic problems which continued to fascinate James throughout his life. He returned to it after his Principles of Psychology in other, more philosophical writings where his views seem less "materialistic" than even the qualified epiphenomenalism expounded in his Principles. The gap is bridged in his own fashion in this lecture. James argues that, though there is overwhelming evidence for the functional dependence of mind and brain, such dependence does not necessarily imply that the brain "generates" consciousness--it may merely "transmit" it. Behind the material world there may be a "continuum of cosmic consciousness" which is transmitted through material brains in a sense analogous to that in which light is transmitted through colored glass. The concluding chapters of the Varieties can be fully understood only in the light of this hypothesis. James is also aware that differences in individuals will depend on differences in the transmitting media. Thus, the release of the spiritual energy is determined by the psychophysiological ideosyncrasy of the individual or by the proper stimulus.<sup>15</sup> This is the "conditio sine qua" or psychological antecedent "quoad se" of the religious act. This type of development goes along with the description of the "back-door effects" done by James in the last

<sup>14</sup>James, Human Immortality: Two Supposed Objections to the Doctrine, (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin and Co., 1898). Further referred to as H.I.

<sup>15</sup>V.R.E., p. 237

chapter of his Principles. There describes the "psycho-genesis" or the genesis of ideas through an internal force, as opposed to natural selection. The focus of the logical and historical opposition between the Jamesian pragmatism and Spencerian evolutionism was in their approach to the relationship between organism and environment. For James the data of experience are not injected into the mind but the mind manipulates the environment. The activity of consciousness is selective, interested, teleological. It attends to this or to that within a "theatre of simultaneous possibilities" and thus "carves out" its own world from the "jointless continuity of space and moving clouds of swarming atoms."<sup>16</sup> When James talks of reality he rather refers to the sense of reality. "To be real," says James, "an object must not only appear but it must appear both interesting and important."<sup>17</sup> Also, "as bare logical thinkers we give reality to whatever objects we think of," but "as thinkers with emotional reaction, we give what seems to us a still higher degree of reality to whatever things we select and emphasize and turn with a will."<sup>18</sup> The major themes of reality, belief, and will are for James bound up in a unity. "In its inner nature, belief, or the sense of reality, is a sort of feeling more allied to the emotions than to anything else."<sup>19</sup> "Reality means simply, relation to our emotional and

<sup>16</sup> James, Principles of Psychology, (1890), Vol. I, pp. 288-289. Further referred to as Psychology.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., p. 295

<sup>18</sup> Ibid., p. 297

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., p. 283

active life."<sup>20</sup> "In this sense, whatever excites and stimulates our interest is real,"<sup>21</sup> "the fons et origo of all reality, whether from the absolute or the practical point of view, is thus subjective, is thus ourselves," and "our own reality, that sense of our own life which we at every moment possess, is the ultimate of ultimates for our belief."<sup>22</sup> James gives primacy to objects of sensation inasmuch as their "vividness" and "pungency" excite belief and this ties up with the "bodily" explanation of emotions given by him: "the bodily changes follow directly the perception of the exciting fact, and that our feeling of the same changes as they occur is the emotion."<sup>23</sup> The subjective trend is especially true of the Jamesian concept of will which dwells upon one idea to the exclusion of others causing it to fill the mind and thus to express itself in outward action.<sup>24</sup>

His psychological view on the role of ideas in human behavior, as expressed in his essay "Reflex Action and Theism" is a perfect triad: "The sensory impression exists only for the sake of awaking the central process of reflection, and the central process of reflections exist only for the sake of calling forth the final act."<sup>25</sup> Herein lies the

<sup>20</sup> Psychology, p. 295

<sup>21</sup> Loc. cit.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid., p. 297

<sup>23</sup> Psychology, Vol. I, p. 449

<sup>24</sup> Ibid., p. 522

<sup>25</sup> James, The Will to Believe, and Other Essays in Popular Philosophy, (1897), pp. 113-114. Further referred to as W.B.

practical approach of his pragmatism: "what sensation we are to expect, what reactions we must prepare" stressing always the action component inasmuch as "the willing (acting) department and the feeling department; or in plainer English, perception and thinking are only there for behavior's sake."<sup>26</sup>

The metaphysical issue involved in his "Cosmic Conception," in which "the world of our present consciousness is only one out of many worlds of consciousness that exist,"<sup>27</sup> is expressed as the final synthesis of his philosophical conception in his Pluralistic Universe.<sup>28</sup>

William James shows the bankruptcy of absolutism in its augmentation.<sup>29</sup> But the rejection of absolutism does not imply the rejection of the hypothesis of a "superhuman consciousness," for instead of a superhuman consciousness that is "all embracing" James proposes one that is limited as the human consciousness,<sup>30</sup> and different in degree but not in kind. As evidenced by his "Diary"<sup>31</sup> James went through a tremendous intellectual crisis in order to solve the logical difficulties involved, for how can the identity of the individual conscience be saved in view of the superior

<sup>26</sup> Loc. cit.

<sup>27</sup> V.R.E., p. 294

<sup>28</sup> James, A Pluralistic Universe, Hibbert Lectures, (New York: Longmans, Green and Co., 1909). Further referred to as P.U.

<sup>29</sup> P.U., p. 81-204

<sup>30</sup> Ibid., p. 134

<sup>31</sup> Perry, Ralph Barton, The Thought and Character of William James. (2 vol. Boston: Little, Brown, and Co., 1935) (II. Appendices X - 750-765)

unity?<sup>32</sup> While struggling with the problem James received sufficient encouragement from the reading of Bergson to break for good with the traditional logic and accept as probable Fechner's hypotheses of a compounding consciousness. James, in his chapter of the "Stream of Consciousness," had played up the continuity of living experience. The several units of experience, however, have both their difference and their sameness and they may be considered in either aspect. "Every smallest bit of experience is a 'multum in parvo' plurally related."<sup>33</sup> There is an interpenetration of relations but not interdependence, as the one and very point can be at the intersection of so many different lines<sup>34</sup> while it doesn't belong to the essence of that point to keep forever those relations. Then, James concludes, there are two ways of considering reality: the "all form" of universal co-implication and the "each form" or distributive theory of reality without that co-implication.<sup>35</sup> Coming back to the theory of the stream of consciousness, James considers that the "neutral" elements of experience, while they can form different groupings of patterns, can also intersect as when two different minds contain the same element, like the crossing of two lines at the same point. By the same token, there is no reason why the human mind should not be

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<sup>32</sup> The problem of the one and the many is, in James' terms, that of logic which preaches of reality an identity which is only valid of the concepts. (P.U., p. 286)

<sup>33</sup> P.U., p. 322-323

<sup>34</sup> V.R.E., p. 123

<sup>35</sup> P.U., p. 34-325

"confluent in a higher consciousness."<sup>36</sup> At the end of his Varieties James speaks of "many worlds of consciousness that exist of which the present consciousness is one." But as he says in the chapter on mysticism: "apply the requisite stimulus and at a touch they are there,"<sup>37</sup> or to say it in Fechner's terminology: we just need to lower the threshold or open the valve. In order to do that James admits the efficiency of nitrous oxide intoxication or of alcohol. After all, "from the point of view," he says, "of psychological mechanism, the classic mysticism and these lower mysticisms spring from the same mental level, from the great subliminal."<sup>38</sup> Thus the proper stimulus is "quod requiritur et sufficit" for the production of mysticism. This 'opening of our eyes to see the light' seems to be an outstanding Jamesian formula according to Pratt in his book The Religious Consciousness<sup>39</sup> and Ducasse sums it up by saying that we can assume the existence of an environment different from that given to us by the senses, and that by provoking certain abnormal states, such as the mystic trance, we hit with the act that renders the mind capable of reaching that environment.<sup>40</sup> This conception of provoked mysticism really

<sup>36</sup> V.R.E., p. 123

<sup>37</sup> Ibid., p. 379

<sup>38</sup> Ibid., p. 417

<sup>39</sup> Pratt, The Religious Consciousness, (New York: MacMillan, 1943), p. 442-445

<sup>40</sup> Ducasse, A Philosophical Scrutiny of Religion, (Columbia University Press, 1947), p. 316

endangers the supernatural order and one wonders whether the action of God becomes one with the action of the creature as the first cause with its secondary.

James offers the subconscious as an hypothesis which might serve as the common nucleus of the most diverse forms of mystic experiences, and, at the same time includes these latter within the realm of experimental psychology while preserving their possible touch with ulterior reality.<sup>41</sup>

"Man identifies his real being with the germinal higher part of himself" and thus "he becomes conscious that this higher part is conterminous and continuous with a More of the same quality, which is operative in the universe outside of him."<sup>42</sup> Thus, our conscious self is in continuity with a subconscious self which is also continuous with a vaster world.

Using this "uncertain" zone for a meeting point, such hypothesis is very adaptable to whatever you might want to put in it, but at the same time it hardly satisfies the conditions of a scientific hypothesis.

The attacks of James against the monistic absolutism are centered around the lack of logical coerciveness in that system.<sup>43</sup> But his main interest is to find a compromising formula out of the extremes of the absolutist position.<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>41</sup>  
V.R.E., p. 501

<sup>42</sup>  
Ibid., p. 498

<sup>43</sup>  
F.U., p. 81

<sup>44</sup>  
Loc. cit.

James, of his own choice, includes himself among the more intimate pantheistic philosophies.<sup>45</sup> James admits an identity of material content between his pluralism and his absolutism, a spiritual substance.<sup>46</sup> Then he introduces a distinction between the form and the content of that universal substance.<sup>47</sup> This universal substance is not a creation of God since God is a part of this substance if the system is conceived pluralistically.<sup>48</sup>

Then it follows that if the system were conceived absolutistically we are a part. A Creator God would imply an absolute. Then the only alternative would be to deprive Him of His creative function, for James wants to have the intimacy of pantheism without destroying his pluralism.

"We are indeed internal parts of God and not external creations."<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>45</sup> P.U., p. 23-25

<sup>46</sup> Ibid., p. 34

<sup>47</sup> Ibid., p. 319

<sup>48</sup> Ibid., p. 318

<sup>49</sup> Loc. cit.

## CHAPTER I

## THE FIELD OF CONSCIOUSNESS AND ATTENTION

## Outline and Introduction:

Since the position of James regarding the subconscious is expressed in terms of degrees of attention, we start by investigating the ultimate conditions of attention: Native realism, affective order. Then we investigate the psychological and physiological nature of attention, making emphasis upon James' mechanical conception of the act and his lack of development of the concept of interest on which he so much strives. Now since for James, physiologically, the activity of the hemispheres tends to be a "consolidated and unified affair" and psychologically, interest is the controlling factor, we proceed to analyze (1) the phenomenon of selectivity of the mind and the unity of attention; (2) the unity of sense experience and (3) the transcendental unity of apperception.

In number one, we stress the concept of selectivity versus the passivity of English empiricism as the basis of James' pragmatism. This indeed has a historical relevance as it is portrayed in the antagonism of James and Spencer.

In number two, or the "unity of sense-experience", we underline or play up the psychological theory of James about the Ego or his "stream of thought" in which he is extremely original but very antimetaphysical. His conception of Radical Empiricism is an effort to transpose a psychological theory into a metaphysical one. We study here his relational concept

of conscience and the particular problem of compenetration. We agree with Lowe in giving a metaphysical reading (rather than epistemological) to James' theory of "pure experience." While we analyze James' radical empiricism we have dared to correlate his conception to the contemporary phenomenological movement and Gestalt Psychology, stressing James' elements of originality and foresight.

In number three, we go deeper into the investigation of pre-perception, making emphasis upon the concept of "intention" in James, investigating also his nativistic tendencies and arriving to the crowning point of his subjectivism in his notion of "equilibrium".

Finally, we present James' description of the field of consciousness and the mechanism of the center of interest (in which mechanism the subconscious plays a relevant part). Then, we present James' description of the subconscious.

#### 1. ULTIMATE CONDITIONS OF ATTENTION - ITS NATURE AND ACTIVITY

We already said in the introduction that the position of James regarding the subconscious is expressed in terms of degrees of attention and compared with the retinal field of vision. We also interrelated the philosophy of will, attention, emotion and belief in the conception of James. As a matter of fact, James<sup>1</sup> identifies will and attention; belief and attention:

"Will consists in nothing but a manner of attending to certain objects or consenting to their stable presence before the mind."<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>

Psychology II, p. 320

"Our belief and attention are the same fact."<sup>2</sup>

## II

For him, belief, on the other hand, is a fulfilling idea with its natural consequences:

"What characterizes both consent and belief is the cessation of theoretic agitation, through the advent of an idea which is inwardly stable and fills the mind solidly to the exclusion of contradictory ideas. When this is the case, motor effects are apt to follow."<sup>3</sup>

## III

James also identifies will and belief:

"Will and belief, in short, meaning a certain relation between objects and the self, are names for one and the same psychological phenomenon."<sup>4</sup>

## IV

He also identifies belief with native realism, which native realism, if rooted in emotions:

"In its inner nature, belief or the sense of reality, is a sort of feeling more allied to the emotions than to anything else."<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Psychology II, p. 322

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., p. 283

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., p. 321

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., pp. 318-319. Belief is thus assimilated by James to the judgment of reality. Thus belief seems to be for James the determining factor to establish the difference between a direct sensation and an imaginative representation. This is nothing but the "affirmation" of Brentano: "Every object touches consciousness in two ways: as a simple representation, and as affected by affirmation or negation." (Psychologie vom epirischen Standpunkte" I Leipzig 1874, p. 266.)

It is very easy to observe in the preceding texts that there is a bond between belief and emotion as if the reality of an object were measured by its personal resonance or echo. Also, there is a relationship between the notions of presence and of immediately perceived reality. As a matter of fact, the judgment of existence for James is itself necessarily based on the direct perception of an object and not a conclusion.

"There is hardly a common man who (if consulted) would not say that things come to us in the first instance as ideas; and that if we take them for realities, it is because we add something to them, namely, the predicate of having also 'real existence outside of our thought.' This notion that a higher faculty than the mere having of a conscious content is needed to make us know anything real by its means has pervaded psychology from the earliest times, and is the tradition of Scholasticism, Kantism, and Common-sense. Just as sensations must come as inward affections and then be 'extradited;' as objects of memory must appear at first as presently unrealities, and subsequently be 'projected' backwards as past realities; so conceptions must be entia rationis till a higher faculty uses them as windows to look beyond the ego, into the real extra-mental world;--so runs the orthodox and popular account.

"And there is no question that this is a true account of the way in which many of our later beliefs come to pass. The logical distinction between the bare thought of an object and belief in the object's reality is often a chronological distinction as well. The having and the crediting of an idea do not always coalesce; for often we first suppose and then believe; first play with the notion, frame the hypothesis, and then affirm the existence, of an object of thought. And we are quite conscious of the succession of the two mental acts. But these cases are none of them primitive cases. They only occur in minds long schooled to doubt by the contradictions of experience. The primitive impulse is to affirm immediately the reality of all that is conceived.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>6</sup>  
Psychology II, p. 313-319. (The underlining is that of the author.)

For James the primitive movement of the mind is to affirm being.

"So far is it from being true that our first way of feeling things is the feeling of them as subjective or mental, that the exact opposite seems rather to be the truth. Our earliest, most instinctive, least developed kind of consciousness is the objective kind; and only as reflection becomes developed do we become aware of an inner world at all."<sup>7</sup>

The judgment of reality has also, as we mentioned before, affective connections for James, who came to the point of saying that "to conceive with passion is 'eo ipso' to affirm,"<sup>8</sup> or that "the 'fons et origo' of all reality...is thus subjective, is ourselves."<sup>9</sup> Crystal clear subjectivism!

"That certain relation between the object and the self", of which James speaks, clarifies perhaps the phenomenon of attention inasmuch as attention implies not only a conscious representation in itself but a personal attitude which controls or polarizes it. It goes without saying then that we agree to a certain active reaction at the origin of the phenomenon of attention. The emotional elements have indeed an outstanding preparatory role in soliciting our attentions. But first of all, at the very roots of human intelligence is the fact that just as long as an object is uncontradicted is "ipso facto believed and posited as absolute reality."<sup>10</sup>

This may be understood subjectively in a Cartesian

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<sup>7</sup>Psychology II, p. 32

<sup>8</sup>Ibid., p. 308

<sup>9</sup>Ibid., p. 297

<sup>10</sup>Ibid., p. 289

sense, as we clarify later, but from the strictly psychological point of view of James only means that it is doubt and not affirmation which requires to be justified. In other words, doubt is secondary and it results from the impossibility of the mind of accommodating itself to a logical contradiction. This is implied in that famous rule of James:

"The whole distinction of real and unreal, the whole psychology of belief, disbelief, and doubt, is thus grounded on two mental facts--first, that we are liable to think differently of the same; and second, that when we have done so, we can choose which way of thinking to adhere to and which to disregard."<sup>11</sup>

This we could call the necessary condition.

In his conception of the "ideo-motor action" while discussing will, James says that "the determining condition of the unhesitating and resistless sequence of the act seems to be the absence of any conflicting notion in the mind,"<sup>12</sup> for "we do not have a sensation or a thought and then have to add something dynamic to it to get a movement."<sup>13</sup> And this is rooted upon the fact that "consciousness is in its very nature impulsive,"<sup>14</sup> which James qualifies as "the feeling of effort."

James, of course, realizes that "we reach the heart of our inquiry into volition when we ask by what process it is that the thought of any given object comes to prevail stably in the mind" and he answers with the formula of "attention with effort: the essential achievement of the will is to attend to a difficult object and hold it fast

<sup>11</sup>Psychology II, p. 290

<sup>12</sup>Ibid., p. 523

<sup>13</sup>Ibid., p. 526

<sup>14</sup>Loc. cit. UNIVERSITY OF OTTAWA - SCHOOL OF GRADUATE STUDIES

before the mind."<sup>15</sup> The so doing is the Fiat.

After granting that "the terminus of the psychological process in volition...is always an idea," James qualifies what he means by "filling the mind with an idea" by introducing "the effort to consent" to "the reality of what is attended to."<sup>16</sup> For James, consent seems to be "a subjective experience sui generis, which we can designate but not define. We stand here exactly where we did in the case of belief. When an idea stings us in a certain way, makes as it were a certain electric connection with ourself, we believe that it is a reality.....The quality of reality which these moods attach to thing is not like other qualities. It is a relation to our life."<sup>17</sup> Thus James goes back time and again to the sphere of our tendencies, to our personal echo.

Now is the moment to wonder whether the native realism of the mind accepted by James has also for him its ultimate root in the affective order. At least the emphasis of James seems to take for granted an evident proportion which evidently is not so evident. Let us not confuse the logical and affectional order, always remembering Pascal's words - "The heart has its reasons which the reason does not know", and let us keep in mind that James himself established as a basis for his realism that affinity between the non-

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<sup>15</sup> Psychology II, p. 561

<sup>16</sup> Ibid., p. 568

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., pp. 568-569

contradiction and the real. Then, proportion is rather on the level of attention and consent with our emotional tendencies. Here it is more likable that our focus of attention be conditioned by our psychological tendencies. Here is the ultimate root of the psychological subjectivism of James inasmuch as that when he comes to the ultimate determinant of the judgment of reality he has to go back to the will and emotions. Actually he identifies "belief in reality" with "value in action" as he expressed it in his famous pragmatic rule: "We harness perceptual reality in concepts in order to drive it better to our ends."<sup>18</sup> It does happen also that our perception of the real has always a subjective condition that coincides with the one we have in the phenomenon of perception: The filling of the mind to the "exclusion of other contradictory ideas." For James "the whole distinction of real and unreal, the whole psychology of belief, disbelief and doubt is thus grounded on two mental facts: First, that we are liable to think differently of the same object; and second, that when we have done so, we can choose which way of thinking to adhere to and which to disregard."<sup>19</sup> This ability is the basic condition of free choice - of freedom - of morality, according to Thomism. This is an instance of James' disagreement with English empiricists. James is stressing the natural bend of the mind to stick to the uncontradicted as a natural process

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<sup>18</sup>

Some Problems of Philosophy: A Beginning of an Introduction to Philosophy, 1911 (S.P.P.), p. 65

<sup>19</sup>

Psychology II, p. 290

of elimination based upon past deceptions. There is, then, a natural dynamism of the mind (James calls it impulsive) to affirm, which can be obstructed by contradiction.

William James talks also of the "feeling of presence" in his Varieties and he had already referred to it in his Principles.<sup>20</sup> In "Principles" he was astonished by the case presented of a feeling of presence totally free from sense-impressions. When we discuss later on the sense of presence of God described by James in the phenomenon of mysticism, we will have occasion to verify the consistency of the principles established here by James: the primary impulses of the mind to affirm, the subjective or affective factors involved in this operation, the fulfillment of the mind achieved by the same. Let us for now establish with him the fact of "the existence in our mental machinery of a sense of present reality more diffused and general than that which our special senses yield."<sup>21</sup> In the chapter of the "Perception of Reality," James establishes the relations of belief and will,<sup>22</sup> and after noting that as far as the object goes there is a difference inasmuch as the objects of belief are unchangeable, but not so those of the will, he considers that difference immaterial, for the activity of the mind is entirely identical in both cases. "Its roots, however, do

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<sup>20</sup> Psychology II, p. 322

<sup>21</sup> V.R.E., p. 62

<sup>22</sup> Psychology II, pp. 320-321

not lie in psychology, but in physiology."<sup>23</sup> From this point of view they are identical or as James says, "belief and attention are the same fact," for "attention is a motor reaction and we are so made that sensations force attention from us."<sup>24</sup> We should investigate the implications of this statement.

A fundamental conception of James' psychology is that "there is no sort of consciousness whatever, be it sensation, feeling or idea, which does not directly and of itself tend to discharge into some Motor effect."<sup>25</sup> James himself asks the question which is of our concern at this moment:

"What is the attentive process, psychologically considered? Attention to an object is what takes place whenever that object most completely occupies the mind. For simplicity's sake, suppose the object be an object of sensation--a figure approaching us at a distance on the road. It is far off, barely perceptible, and hardly moving: we do not know with certainty whether it is a man or not. Such an object as this, if carelessly looked at, may hardly catch our attention at all. The optical impression may affect solely the marginal consciousness, while the mental focus keeps engaged with rival things. We may indeed not "see" it until someone points it out. But, if so, how does one point it out? By pointing his finger and describing its appearance; by creating a premonitory image of where to look and of what to expect to see. This premonitory image is already an excitement of the same nerve-centers that are to be concerned with the impression. The impression comes, and excites them still further; and now the object enters the focus of the field, consciousness being sustained both by impression and by preliminary idea. But the maximum of attention to it is not yet reached. Although we see it, we may not care for it; it may suggest nothing important to us and a rival stream of objects or of thoughts may quickly take our mind away. If, however, our companion defines it in a significant way, arouses in the mind a set of

<sup>23</sup>Psychology II, pp. 320-321

<sup>24</sup>Ibid., p. 322

<sup>25</sup>William James, Talks to Teachers on Psychology: and to Students on Some of Life's Ideals, (1899), p. 170. (T.F.)

experiences to be apprehended from it, names it an enemy or as a messenger of important tidings, the residual and marginal ideas now aroused, far from being its rivals, become its associates and allies. They shoot together into one system with it; they converge upon it; they keep it steadily in focus; the mind attends to it with maximum power.

"The attentive process, therefore, at its maximum may be physiologically symbolized by a brain cell played on in two ways: from without and from within. Incoming currents from the periphery arouse it, and collateral from the centers of memory and imagination re-enforce these.

"In this process the incoming impression is the newer element; the ideas which re-enforce and sustain it are among the older possessions of the mind. The maximum of attention may then be said to be found whenever we have a systematic harmony or unification between the novel and the old. It is an odd circumstance that neither the old nor the new, by itself, is interesting: the absolutely old is insipid; the absolutely new makes no appeal at all. The old in the new is what claims the attention-- the old with a slightly new turn. No one wants to hear a lecture on a subject completely disconnected with his previous knowledge, but we all like lectures on subjects of which we know a little already."<sup>26</sup>

In order to understand this interesting quotation we have to bear in mind that in the functions of the brain James notes that "the lower centers act from present sensational stimuli alone; the hemispheres act from perceptions and considerations, the sensation which they may receive serving only as suggestions of these."<sup>27</sup> The hemispheres are considered by James as "the seat of memory."<sup>28</sup> It is there where we group our sensation together into perceptions, where we construct images out of our past experiences and make expectations of future ones. James considers them

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<sup>26</sup>T.T., pp. 106-108

<sup>27</sup>Psychology I, p. 20

<sup>28</sup>Loc. cit.

"reproductions of what I have felt or witnessed," or in short, "remote sensations."<sup>29</sup> James talks then of a short circuit below the hemispheres, from sense organ to muscle; and of a long circuit wherein the current may pass through the hemisphere "when for any reason the direct line is not used."<sup>30</sup> It is along this line that James distinguishes between primary and secondary functions of our organism when discussing the psychology of the will:

"The movements we have studied hitherto have been automatic and reflex, and (on the first occasion of their performance, at any rate) unforeseen by the agent. The movements to the study of which we now address ourselves, being desired and intended beforehand, are, of course, done with full prevision of what they are to be. It follows from this that voluntary movements must be secondary, not primary functions of the organism. This is the first point to understand in the psychology of volition. Reflex, instinctive and emotional are so organized that certain stimuli pull the trigger of certain explosive parts and a creature going through one of these explosions for the first time undergoes an entirely novel experience."<sup>31</sup>

But if, in voluntary action properly so called, the act must be foreseen, it follows that no creature not endowed with divinatorial power can perform an act voluntarily for the first time.<sup>32</sup>

A supply of ideas of the various movements that are possible left in the memory by experiences of their involuntary performances is thus the first prerequisite of the voluntary life.<sup>33</sup>

These remote effects would, then, rigorously speaking, suffice to furnish the mind with the supply of ideas required.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> Psychology I, p. 20

<sup>30</sup> Loc. cit.

<sup>31</sup> Psychology II, p. 486-487

<sup>32</sup> Ibid., p. 488

<sup>33</sup> Ibid., p. 488

<sup>34</sup> Loc. cit.

James mentions that in addition to these impressions upon remote organs of sense we also, whenever we perform a movement, keep a distinctive impression of their performances. These are called by James (following Dr. Bastian) Kinaesthetic impressions.<sup>35</sup> We might as well keep in mind that in the psychology of James there is the general law that "no mental modification ever occurs which is not accompanied or followed by a bodily change."<sup>36</sup>

According to James, "in perfectly simply voluntary acts there is nothing else in the mind but the kinaesthetic idea, thus defined, of what the act is to be."<sup>37</sup> James also insists that "there is a certain a priori reason why the kinaesthetic images ought to be the last psychic antecedents of the outgoing currents,"<sup>38</sup> and that is the law of parsimony or of the least complications or simplest possible arrangement. Thus, "if we call the immediate psychic antecedent of a movement the latter's mental cue, all that is needed for invariability of sequence on the movement's part is a fixed connection between each several mental cue, and one particular movement."<sup>39</sup> It is, then, (according to James) implied that the motor discharge itself must not be felt for "we cannot possibly have any idea of our ears' motion until our ears have moved."<sup>40</sup> James concludes that:

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<sup>35</sup> Psychology II, p. 486-487

<sup>36</sup> Ibid., p. 5

<sup>37</sup> Ibid., p. 493

<sup>38</sup> Ibid., p. 496

<sup>39</sup> Ibid., p. 497

<sup>40</sup> Ibid., p. 499

"An anticipatory image, then, of the sensorial consequences of a movement, plus (on certain occasions) the fiat that these consequences shall become actual, is the only psychic state which introspection lets us discern as the forerunner of our voluntary acts."<sup>41</sup>

The sequence of movement upon the mere thought of it is what James has called the "ideo-motor action"<sup>42\*</sup> and has as its only determining condition "the absence of any conflicting notion in the mind."<sup>43</sup> We should analyze carefully his conception of inhibition. For James:

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<sup>41</sup>

Psychology II, p. 493

<sup>42\*</sup>

Ibid., p. 522. The relations of automatism and the "reflex arc" theory were masterly expressed by Perry: "It will be noted that although James somewhat hesitatingly rejected the automatist theory, he did not question the conception of the so-called 'reflex-arc', which was in his day so closely associated with automatism. According to James the reflex arc may be given either an automatist or an interactionist interpretation. It is the function of a 'central' process to mediate between the incoming sensory message that traverses the so-called 'afferent' nerves, and the outgoing response that takes effect through the 'efferent' nerves. Both are considered all lay within this general framework. He denied only that this central process merely repeats or transmits the message from without: It takes initiatives and makes important contributions of its own. And he denied (though less unqualifiedly) that the central process can be construed wholly in cerebral terms to the exclusion of consciousness. But in either case the central process was a phase of action and its intellectual functions (or their cerebral equivalents) were subordinated to their motor functions. This was the nub of his 'Reflex Action and Theism' written in 1881; "The willing department of our nature..dominates both the conceiving department and the feeling department; or, in plainer English, perception and thinking are only there for behavior's sake. I am sure I am not wrong in stating this result as one of the fundamental conclusions to which the entire drift of modern physiological investigation sweeps us. If asked what great contribution physiology has made to psychology of late years, I am sure every competent authority will reply that her influence has in no way been so weighty as in the copious illustration verification and consolidation of this broad general point of view." (S.B. 114) Perry: "The Thought and Character" II,

<sup>43</sup>

Psychology II, p. 523

"Where this is no blocking, there is naturally no hiatus between the thought process and the motor discharge. Movement is the natural immediate effect of feeling...it is so in reflex action, it is so in emotional expression, it is so in the voluntary life. Ideo-motor action is thus no paradox, to be softened or explained away."<sup>44</sup>

We should investigate what produces the "blocking," either from the part of the idea or from the part of the person. Let us first investigate its physiological ground. James investigates what happens to a nervous system ideally reduced to the fewest possible terms: stimulus influences the sense-organ--this sensory cell, the motor cell--which makes the muscle contract. Contraction arouses the kinaesthetic image and this again the motor cell.

"If this were the entire nervous mechanism, the movement, once begun, would be self-maintaining, and would stop only when the parts were exhausted. And this, according to M. Pierre Janet, is what actually happens in catalepsy."<sup>45</sup>

"We should all be cataleptics and never stop a muscular contraction once begun, were it not that other processes simultaneously going on inhibit the contraction. Inhibition is therefore not an occasional accident; it is an essential and unremitting element of our cerebral life."<sup>46</sup>

Following the directions of James, we should take the moment of muscular contraction discharging its kinaesthetic image into the motor cell. At that moment there is a new path open from the stimulus to the kinaesthetic image, through which the discharge is received faster than it would be from the contraction of the muscle. Thus James concludes "when a sensation has once produced a movement in

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<sup>42\*</sup> (cont.) p. 32-33. No matter what Perry says, I still persist in interpreting James' theory of habit as a mechanical vision of the human act, as we shall see later.

<sup>44</sup> Psychology II, p. 527

<sup>45</sup> UNIVERSITY OF OTTAWA - SCHOOL OF GRADUATE STUDIES

<sup>46</sup> Ibid., p. 582

<sup>46</sup> Ibid., p. 583

us, the next time we have the sensation, it tends to suggest the idea of the movement, even before the movement occurs."<sup>47</sup> Then the discharge is transferred from the kinaesthetic image to the motor cell and the "idea of the movement...will have to become an immediately antecedent condition to the production of the movement itself."<sup>48</sup> Thus the sensory process which was once the effect of a movement becomes later the cause of the movement.

In general, the principle which James is applying is that "each discharge from a sensory cell in the forward direction (that is, the direction towards the motor cells) tends to drain the cells lying behind the discharging one of whatever tension they may possess."<sup>49</sup>

Now we have to keep in mind that for James:

"....the entire nervous system is nothing but a system of paths between a sensory terminus a quo and a muscular, glandular, or other terminus ad quem. A path once transversed by a nerve-current might be expected to follow the law of most of the paths we know, and to be scooped out and made more permeable than before; and this ought to be repeated with each new passage of the current. Whatever obstructions may have kept it at first from being a path should then little by little, and more and more be swept out of the way, until at last it might become a natural drainage-channel."<sup>50</sup>

This is the essence of James' theory of habit. He

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<sup>47</sup>

Psychology II, p. 585

<sup>48</sup>

Ibid., p. 585

<sup>49</sup>

Ibid., p. 584

<sup>50</sup>

Ibid., p. 106

puts it even more forcefully by saying "that the phenomena of habit in living beings are due to the plasticity of the organic materials of which their bodies are composed."<sup>51</sup> This gross conception of material plasticity to which we can give "structural modification"<sup>52</sup> serves as basis to a theory of conditioned-reflex which evidently just plays up the mechanical aspect of the human act. The repetition is part of the habit forming, but not its whole, inasmuch as a human action has its mainspring in the end. Over and over again James introduces the concept of interest, but fails to develop it fully. James lacks a developed theory of motivation which his use of the concept of interest seems to require. The emphasis of James is on the principle that "habit diminishes the conscious attention with which our acts are performed,"<sup>53</sup> inasmuch as:

"....in action grown habitual, what instigated each new muscular contraction to take place in its appointed order is not a thought or a perception, but the sensation occasioned by the muscular contraction just finished."<sup>54</sup>

It all goes back to the kinaesthetic image. But the point of our interest is rather in the diminishing of attention, for, after all, we are making its analysis. We are never to forget that fundamental notion of the

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<sup>51</sup>  
Psychology II, p. 105

<sup>52</sup>  
Psychology II, p. 109

<sup>53</sup>  
Psychology I, p. 114

<sup>54</sup>  
Ibid., p. 115

functions of the brain according to James:

"....the lower centres act from present sensational stimuli alone; the hemispheres act from perceptions and considerations, the sensations which they may receive serving only as suggestors of these."<sup>55</sup>

Let us keep in mind his conception of the long and short circuit of the direct and indirect line.

"Our consciousness certainly is narrow, when contrasted with the breadth of our sensory surface, and the mass of incoming currents which are at all time pouring in. Evidently no current can be recorded in conscious experience unless it succeeds in penetrating to the hemispheres and filling their pathways by the processes set up. When an incoming current thus occupies the hemispheres with its consequences, other currents are for the time kept out. They may show their faces at the door, but are turned back until the actual possessors of the place are tired. Physiologically, then, the narrowness of consciousness seems to depend on the fact that the activity of the hemispheres tends at all times to be consolidated and unified affair, determinable. Now by this current and now by that, but determinable only as a whole. The ideas correlative to the reigning system of processes are those which are said to 'interest' us at the time; and thus that selective character of our attention appears to find a physiological ground. At all times, however, there is a liability to disintegration of the reigning system. The consolidation is seldom quite complete, the excluded currents are not wholly abortive, their presence affects the 'fringe' and margin of our thought."<sup>56</sup>

That the activity of the hemispheres tends at all time to be a "consolidated and unified affair" is particularly stressed by James as he analyzes: I. The phenomenon of the selectivity of the mind and the unity of attention; II. The unity of sense-experience, and, III. The transcendental unity of apperception. Let us give consideration to this

<sup>55</sup> Psychology I, p. 20

<sup>56</sup> Psychology, Briefer Course, 1892 (P.B.C.), p. 217-218. The underlining is ours.

phenomenon of unity.

## 2. THE PHENOMENON OF SELECTIVITY

As James analyzes the "automation theory and the reasons against this theory, he plays up with significant emphasis the fact that "consciousness is at all times primarily a selecting agency."<sup>57</sup>

"All the facts of the natural history of consciousness lend color to this view. Consciousness, for example, is only intense when nerve-processes are hesitant. In rapid, automatic, habitual action it sinks to a minimum. Nothing could be more fitting than this, if consciousness has the teleological function we suppose; nothing more meaningless if not."<sup>58</sup>

The teleological function of the mind is perhaps the most powerful idea around which are hinged both the psychology and the philosophy of James. This is his reform of the passivity (We noticed earlier that James attributed to man the basic ability "to think differently of the same object" and that we "can choose which way of thinking to adhere to and which to disregard.") of English empiricism and his reaction against the pervasive influence of Spencer and his conception of environment.

In the words of Perry, "There could be no stronger evidence of the essentially original quality of James' mind than its resistance to the Spencerian influence at a time when discipleship was so natural and easy for any philosopher favorably disposed to science."<sup>59</sup>

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<sup>57</sup>P.B.C., p. 139

<sup>58</sup>Ibid., p. 142

<sup>59</sup>The Thought and Character I, p. 474

Richard Hofstadter in his "Social Darwinism in American Thought" sums up remarkably well this situation of resistance to Spencer:

"Spencer's outlook had been the congenial expression of a period that looked to automatic progress and laissez faire for its salvation; pragmatism was absorbed into the national culture when men were thinking of manipulation and control. Spencerianism had been the philosophy of inevitability; pragmatism became the philosophy of possibility.

"The focus of the logical and historical opposition between pragmatism and Spencerian evolutionism was in their approach to the relationship between organism and environment. Spencer had been content to assume the environment as a fixed norm--a suitable enough position for one who had no basic grievance against the existing order. Pragmatism, entertaining a more positive view of the activities of the organism, looked upon the environment as something that could be manipulated. It was by way of the pragmatists' theory of mind in relation to environment that the old outlook was controverted."<sup>60</sup>

"In 1878 the Journal of Speculative Philosophy published an article by James entitled 'Remarks on Spencer's Definition of Mind as Correspondence,' in which the lines of his later thought are clearly foreshadowed. The article shows also how much more dynamic than Spencer's was James's understanding of the implications of Darwinism for psychology. Spencer, in defining the mind in terms of adjustment, leaves out the greater part of what is usually considered the mental life. Spencer defines life as the adjustment of inner to outer relations and looks upon mind and cognition as aspects of that adjustment. He forgets, according to James, all non cognitive elements in mind, all sentiment and emotion. He plays down or ignores entirely the element of interest in the organism which is essential to the whole process of cognition. He

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Hofstadter, Richard  
 'Social Darwinism in American Thought', The Beacon Press, Boston, 1960, p. 123-124. (The underlining is ours.)

defines intelligent mental reactions as those that minister to survival by arranging internal relations to suit the environment, but the critical factor in the cognitive situation, the desire for survival or welfare, is a subjective element which he leaves out. The idea of correspondence between inner and outer relations, to be made meaningful as the criterion of mental acts, must be qualified by some subjective or teleologic reference. Furthermore, the idea that mind ministers to survival alone cannot explain the full range of higher cultural activities which have no survival value. The knower, James concluded, '...is not simply a mirror floating with no foothold anywhere, and passively reflecting an order that he comes upon and finds simply existing. The knower is an actor, and coefficient of the truth on one side, whilst on the other he registers the truth which he helps to create. Mental interests, hypotheses, postulates, so far as they are bases for human action--action which to a great extent transforms the world--help to make the truth which they declare. In other words, there belongs to mind, from its birth upward, a spontaneity, a vote. It is in the game, and not a mere looker-on; and its judgments of the should-be, its ideals, cannot be peeled off from the body of the cogitandum as if they were excrescences, or meant, at most, survival.' (Collected Essays and Reviews, p. 67)

"In his Principles of Psychology, which appeared in 1890, James continued this line of thought. There he made a sharp break with the traditional view of mind as a quiet cognitive organ, and criticized post-Darwinian psychology for its neglect of the active role of the mind. (See, for example, chap. xi on "Attention.") It had become habitual, he complained, to speak as if the mere body that owns the brain has interests, to treat the body's survival as an absolute end without reference to any commanding intelligence. In this bare physical view, the reactions of an organism cannot be considered useful or harmful; it can only be said of them that if they occur in certain ways survival will incidentally be their consequence:

"'But the moment you bring a consciousness into the midst, survival ceases to be a mere hypothesis. No longer is it "if survival is to occur, then so and so must brain and other organs work." It has now become an imperative decree: "Survival shall occur, and therefore organs must so work!" Real ends appear for the first time upon the world's stage...Every actually existing consciousness seems to itself at any rate to be a fighter for ends, of which many, but for its presence, would not be ends at all. Its powers of cognition are mainly subservient to these ends.

discerning which facts further them and which do not.' (Principles of Psychology, I, 140-41.)

"The doctrine--or method--of pragmatism, taken with acknowledgment from Peirce, was a projection of this approach to the test of knowledge. A world in which theories are experimental instruments rather than answers, and in which truth 'happens to an idea' (Pragmatism, p. 201) and can be made by the knower, was alone coherent with the unfinished universe James chose to believe in.

"In 1880 James made one of his rare ventures into social theory when he published in the Atlantic Monthly an article on 'Great Men, Great Thoughts, and the Environment.' (Atlantic Monthly, XLVI (1880), 441-59; reprinted in The Will to Believe, pp. 216-54. See also the companion piece, 'The Importance of Individuals,' Open Court, IV (1890), 2437-40, reprinted in The Will to Believe, pp. 255-62, and the answers to James by John Fiske and Grant Allen in the Atlantic Monthly, XLVII (1881), 75-84, 371-81). Using Spencer and his disciples as a foil, James raised the question: What causes communities to change from generation to generation? With Walter Bagehot, whose Physics and Politics he greatly admired, James believed the changes were the result of innovations by unusual or outstanding individuals, playing the same role in social change as variations in Darwin's theory of evolution; such persons are selected by society and elevated into positions of influence because of their adaptability to the social situation into which they happen to be born. The Spencerians had attributed social changes to geography, environment, external circumstances--in brief, to everything except human control."<sup>61</sup>

"In this essay James seems to be out-individualizing the individualists, but in the larger context of his thought it appears that his main concern was to redeem spontaneity and indeterminacy from the oppressive causal network of Spencerian social evolution. Without spontaneity, without some possibility that the individual may in a measure alter the course of history, there is no chance for betterment of any kind, and the whole romance of struggle with its attendant alternatives of triumph or failure is banished. As James declared in a subsequent article, 'there is a zone of insecurity in human affairs in which all the dramatic interest lies.

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<sup>61</sup>

Social Darwinism in American Thought, p. 130-132

The rest belongs to the dead machinery of the stage.' That life should be deprived of its dramatic interest by a scheme of universal causality was an intolerable thought, 'the most pernicious and immoral of fatalisms.' (The Will to Believe, pp. 257-58, 262. Cf. John Dewey in The Quest for Certainty, p. 244; 'If existence were either completely necessary or completely contingent, there would be neither comedy nor tragedy in life, nor need of the will to live.')

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The activity of consciousness is selective, interested, teleological. It attends to this or that within a "theatre of simultaneous possibilities" and thus "carves out" its own world from "the jointless continuity of space and moving clouds of swarming atoms."<sup>63</sup> This process of attention is one of "selective emphasis."<sup>64</sup> Even more, "we actually ignore most of the things before us."<sup>65</sup> Thus, there is "the selection of some and the suppression of the rest."<sup>66</sup> James sums it up with a vivid image: "the mind, in short, works on the data it receives, very much as sculptor works on his block of stone."<sup>67</sup>

An idea as a way of actively questioning the objective world is marked by Perry as distinguishing James' position from traditional empiricism:

"Experience is authoritative in both cases, but whereas according to the traditional view experience has spoken, according to James's view experience has yet to speak, and its response will

<sup>62</sup>Social Darwinism in American Thought, p. 133-134

<sup>63</sup>Psychology I, pp. 288-289

<sup>64</sup>Ibid., p. 284

<sup>65</sup>Loc. cit.

<sup>66</sup>Ibid., p. 288

<sup>67</sup>Loc. cit.

be proportional to the boldness and happy inspiration with which it is interrogated. The truly empirical mind is not the mind which yields to habit or passively accepts its own history as a revelation of existence, but the mind which imagines curious possibilities and gives nature every chance to reveal itself in unfamiliar ways."<sup>68</sup>

I also believe that the ultimate root of pragmatism is in the questioning of the ultimate grounds of rationality. What makes rationality rational? James answered that in the last chapter of his *Psychology* and in the essay, "The Sentiment of Rationality."

I cannot help but see in the contrast of James and Spencer the compromise between radical empiricism and the teleological function of the mind. Herein is rooted James' pragmatism.

The question that perhaps James could not answer is: How come does he speak of teleology without accepting causality? In his *Radical Empiricism* he tries to reduce causality to a description but he finds an unsurmountable handicap when he comes to analyze the subject of activity.

When we examine the real of "activity," one additional point must be noted. According to the doctrine of radical empiricism "either the word 'activity' must have no meaning at all, or else the original type and model of what it means must lie in some concrete kind of experience that can be definitely pointed out."<sup>69</sup> In developing this position James finds it necessary to distinguish between "bare

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<sup>68</sup>

The Thought and Character I, p. 553

<sup>69</sup>

Essays in Radical Empiricism, 1912 (E.R.E.), p. 160

activity" and "directed activity." "Bare activity" would be predicable of experience even though "there were no definite direction, no actor, no aim." Mere restless zigzag movement, or a wild Ideenflucht, or Rhapsodie der Wahrnehmungen, as Kant would say, would constitute an active as distinguished from an inactive world."<sup>70</sup> But in the actual world in which we live, "a part at least of the activity comes with definite direction." "It comes with desire and sense of goal; it comes complicated with resistances which it overcomes or succumbs to, and with the efforts which the feeling of resistance so often provokes; and it is in complex experiences like these that the notions of distinct agents and of passivity as opposed to activity arise. Here also the notion of causal efficacy comes to birth."<sup>71</sup> And it is now evident that "mere descriptive analysis of any one of our activity-experiences is not the whole story."<sup>72</sup> What do we know about the agent who produces these experiences? What makes the "trains of experience" go at all? "What propels experience ueberhaupt into being? There is the activity which operates; the activity felt is only its superficial sign."<sup>73</sup>

We are here face to face with "the metaphysical question."<sup>74</sup> But, remembering the pragmatic method, James

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<sup>70</sup> E.R.E., p. 162-163

<sup>71</sup> Ibid., p. 163

<sup>72</sup> Ibid., p. 169

<sup>73</sup> Ibid., p. 171-172

<sup>74</sup> Ibid., p. 171

finds that the question, "Whose is the real activity? is tantamount to the question, "What will be the actual results of any hypothesis concerning the ultimate nature of reality?"<sup>75</sup> "How will things work out? If the agents are of one sort, one way; if of another sort, they may work out very differently. The pragmatic meaning of the various alternatives...is great;"<sup>76</sup> for it is the difference between "materialism and teleology," between "elementary short-span actions summing themselves 'blindly,'" and "far foreseen ideals coming with effort into act."<sup>77</sup> Pure experience, according to James, fully confirms the second alternative rather than the first. "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."<sup>78</sup> "Real effectual causation as an ultimate nature, as a 'category'...of reality, is just what we feel it to be, just that kind of conjunction which our own activity-series reveal. We have the whole butt and being of it in our hands; and the healthy thing for philosophy is to leave off grubbing

<sup>75</sup> E.R.E., p. 178

<sup>76</sup> Ibid., p. 179

<sup>77</sup> Ibid., p. 179

<sup>78</sup> Ibid., p. 183-184

underground for what effects effectuation, or what makes action act, and to try to solve the concrete questions of where effectuation in this world is located, of which things are the true causal agents there, and of what the more remote effects consist."<sup>79</sup>

The intimate nature of the attentive process is centered around "the two processes of sensorial adjustment and ideational preparation."<sup>80</sup> Let us recall that other vivid image already mentioned of the phenomenon of "pointing out" with its two parts: where to look and what to expect to see. The object enters the focus of consciousness from the incoming currents of the periphery, but it gains in significance from the centers of memory and imagination. This is the new and the old recombining into harmony; this is the reason why "bis repetita placent."

In relation to the first part, James notes that:

"Any object, if immediately exciting, causes a reflex accommodation of the sense-organ, and this has two results--first, the object's increase in clearness; and second, the feeling of activity in question. Both are sensations of an "afferent" sort."<sup>81</sup>

James notes that "when we look or listen we accommodate our eyes and ears involuntarily."<sup>82</sup>

Then James notices that:

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79 E.R.E., p. 185-186

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Psychology I, p. 434

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Ibid., p. 435

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Ibid., p. 435

"We may attend to an object on the periphery of the visual field and yet not accommodate the eye for it. Teachers thus notice the acts of children in the school room at whom they appear not to be looking."<sup>83</sup>

This case offers an occasion to James to clarify the meaning of the "ideational preparation" inasmuch as "the effort to attend to the marginal region of the picture consists in nothing more nor less than the effort to form as clear an idea as is possible of what is there portrayed."<sup>84</sup> James calls this process "anticipatory thinking," "inward reproduction," or "re-enforcing imagination,"<sup>85</sup> and he feels that:

"The preparation of the ideational centres exists whenever our interest in the object--be it sensible or ideal--is derived from or in any way connected with, other interests or the presence of other objects in the mind. It exists as well when the attention thus derived is classed as passive as when it is classed as voluntary. So that on the whole we may confidently conclude--since in mature life we never attend to anything without our interest in it being in some degree derived from its connection with other objects--that the two processes of sensorial adjustment and ideational preparation probably coexist in all our concrete attentive acts."<sup>86</sup>

We shall see later the whole importance given by James to the re-enforcement of ideas and impressions by the pre-existing contents of the mind. This shall be discussed when we investigate the transcendental unity of apperception. Now let us continue with the selectivity of the mind and its unity.

<sup>83</sup> Psychology I, p. 437

<sup>84</sup> Ibid., p. 438

<sup>85</sup> Ibid., p. 439

<sup>86</sup> Ibid., p. 433

Dealing with the phenomenon of association, James qualifies the extension of the mental spontaneity limiting it to its selecting power "amongst those which the associative machinery has already introduced or tends to introduce."<sup>87</sup> The reason is that "even though there be a mental spontaneity, it can certainly not create ideas or summon them 'ex abrupto.'"<sup>88</sup> However, it can decide upon the "direction of the next associations" by making them hinge upon the emphasized term; and determining in this wise the course of the man's thinking, it also determines his act."<sup>89</sup> Once more, we see the identity established by James between interest attention and volition. The emphasis of James cannot be overlooked:

"This is the point, he says, at which an anti-mechanical psychology must, if anywhere, make its stand in dealing with association. Everything else is pretty certainly due to cerebral laws."<sup>90</sup>

The selective activity of the mind is also captured by James in the "peculiar mixture of forgetting with our remembering," for,

"If we remembered everything, we should on most occasions be as ill of as if we remembered nothing. It would take as long for us to recall a space of time as it took the original time to elapse, and we should never get ahead with our thinking. All recollected times undergo, accordingly, what H. Ribot called foreshortening; and this foreshortening is due to the omission of an enormous number of the facts which filled them."<sup>91</sup>

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<sup>87</sup> Psychology I, p. 504

<sup>88</sup> Ibid., p. 504

<sup>89</sup> Ibid., p. 594

<sup>90</sup> Ibid., p. 504

<sup>91</sup> Ibid., p. 680

Memory, then, has its ultimate root in the selectivity of the mind. No wonder James says that "selection is the very keel on which our mental ship is built."<sup>92</sup>

Selection is also the key word in our choice of the visual reality as analyzed by James in the chapter of "The Perception of Space". As he says,

"We have native and fixed optical space-sensations; but experience leads us to select certain ones from among them to be the exclusive bearers of reality; the rest become mere signs and suggestors of these."<sup>93</sup>

How true it is that in our dealings with objects we always do pick out one of the visual images they yield to constitute the real form or size.<sup>94</sup>

This picking is done in the form of "continuous graduations"<sup>95</sup> from the seeming appearances into the real ones, abandoning the former for the latter as in the "psychologically a parallel phenomenon to the habit of thinking in words, and has a like use. Both are substitutions of terms few and fixed for terms manifold and vague." This process of selection is called, by James, "sensations which we ignore,"<sup>97</sup> and it is portrayed in the advice of the art teacher to his pupil: "Don't draw the thing as it is, but as it looks."<sup>98</sup>

Selection sums up his chapter on "Reasoning" as it did the chapter on "The Stream of Thought." James, with this habitual ability to enforce his thinking with vivid images and examples, compares reasoning to the art of reading. "As

<sup>92</sup>Psychology I, p. 680

<sup>93</sup>Psychology II, p. 237

<sup>94</sup>Ibid., p. 238

<sup>95</sup>Ibid., p. 239

<sup>96</sup>Ibid., p. 240

<sup>97</sup>Ibid., p. 241

<sup>98</sup>Ibid., p. 243

the art of reading (after certain stage in one's education) is the art of skipping, so the art of being wise is the art of knowing what to overlook."<sup>99</sup> There is a process of progressive condensation from the multiple to the single in the mind that it is achieving higher flights. This is evidenced in the "admirable investigators who are notoriously bad lecturers."<sup>100</sup> This is also evidenced in social intercourse for "with old friends a word stands for a whole story...while with newcomers everything must be gone over in detail."<sup>101</sup> Thus James concludes:

"The upshot of what I say simply is that selection implies rejection as well as choice and that the function of ignoring, or inattention, is as vital a factor in mental progress as the function of attention itself."<sup>102</sup>

This progressive simplicity ties up with the law of parsimony, which James applies to his theory of the ideomotor action in his chapter of "The Will." As we learn an art, we are extremely conscious of the minor details, "but little by little" we succeed "in dropping all this super-numerary consciousness."<sup>103</sup>

Finally, in his final and closing chapter, as he discusses the genesis of the natural sciences, he confesses that "the order of scientific thought is quite incongruent either with the way in which reality exists or with the way in which it comes before us."<sup>104</sup> What is the reason offered

<sup>99</sup> Psychology II, p. 369

<sup>100</sup> Loc. cit.

<sup>101</sup> Ibid., p. 370

<sup>102</sup> Ibid., p. 371

<sup>103</sup> Ibid., p. 497

<sup>104</sup> Ibid., p. 534

by James? No other than selection because "scientific thought goes by selection and emphasis exclusively."<sup>105</sup>

"We break the solid plentitude of fact into separate essences, conceive generally what only exists particularly, and by our classifications leave nothing in its natural neighborhood, but separate the contiguous and join what the poles divorce."<sup>106</sup>

James concludes:

"What comes before us, is a chaos of fragmentary impressions interrupting each other; what we think is an abstract system of hypothetical data and laws."<sup>107</sup>

This allows us to understand James' idea of reality.

### 3. THE UNITY OF SENSE EXPERIENCE

James was an associationist who nevertheless affirmed the "indecomposable unity of every pulse of thought,"<sup>108</sup> and a substantialist or transcendentalist, who nevertheless affirmed that all the necessary identities and syntheses could be supplied by the same pulses of thought without resort to any real being or above the stream of conscious experience. On the contrary, he described the self as a "phenomenal event in time," a "directly verifiable existent," real simply in virtue of being so much of the stream of experience as now lives."<sup>109</sup> It did, of course, function as a knower of objects mental and physical; but it was not invented and superposed on experience for that purpose. Nor

<sup>105</sup> Psychology II, p. 634

<sup>106</sup> Loc. cit.

<sup>107</sup> Loc. cit.

<sup>108</sup> Psychology I, p. 371

<sup>109</sup> Ibid., p. 401, p. 369 and Chapters VI-X passim

was its existence inferred from any epistemological necessity. Its merit was that it was already at hand and so made unnecessary the discovery of a new entity in order to give an account of cognitions. James proposed his "stream of consciousness"<sup>110</sup> to account for the consciousness of personal identity, but he rejects the associationism of Hume and Mill on the grounds that "a bundle of separate ideas would never form one thought at all."<sup>111</sup> As a matter of fact, "whatever things are thought in relation are thought from the outset in a unity, in a single pulse of subjectivity, a single psychosis, feeling or state of mind."<sup>112</sup> The personal identity is accounted for by the fact that the "present thought is the thinker" and appropriates all that has gone before in that stream of consciousness.

The metaphorical presentation of James in this case is as clever as ever: "We can imagine a long succession of herdsmen coming rapidly into possession of the same cattle by transmission of an original title by bequest. May not the "title" of a collective self be passed from one thought to another in some analogous way?"<sup>113</sup>

In spite of the fact that he characterized the discussion of Mill on the subject of the ego as "the definitive bankruptcy of the associationist description of the consciousness of self,"<sup>114</sup> James proposes a similar doctrine although

<sup>110</sup> "James' Doctrine of the stream of thought was essentially his own" Perry--The Thought and Character II

<sup>111</sup> Psychology I, p. 277

<sup>112</sup> Ibid., p. 278

<sup>113</sup> Ibid., p. 339

<sup>114</sup> Ibid., p. 359

a modified one. The account given by the associationist for personal identity is qualified by James as a "gumming" of successive thoughts. His suggested emendments can be centered around the concept of 'stream' and around the concept of "appropriation."<sup>115</sup> The concept of 'stream' will play up the continuity while the 'appropriation' will provide the method to substitute that of association. The fact of our periods of unconsciousness has been always a very forceful objection to the continuity of the stream, while the "present Thought" as the thinker who recognizes the identity between the present state of consciousness and its 'immediate' but gone predecessor is also exposed to all the difficulties that Hume and Mill could not answer properly. It is impossible to do away with the apprehension of 'one' indivisible agent who remaining the same recognizes 'pulsations' as like or alike. James is so much aware of it that he admits the necessity of memory.<sup>116</sup> However, a theory that claims to be self-sufficient account of the facts should not be demanding outside help!

The analogy to explain the 'appropriation' or the 'ownership' of a herd of cattle fails on the ground that the objects or the cattle are separable and self-sufficient entities from their owners. Besides, who is going to compare the "ownership" of a legal title to that by which we assimilate our past experience?

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Psychology I, p. 343-341-401

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Ibid., p. 339

The doctrine of the stream of thought should be understood as a corrective medicine against the current "associationism" of that age. No doubt that James made a clean-cut break with the tradition. Associationism in the accepted sense meant the association of ideas. The same idea could retain its identity in different combinations. James rejects this with vigor. James thought that this implied a confusion of the objects of thoughts with the thoughts themselves. On the other hand, James thought that this implied a rejection of the feelings of relations. Relations are "felt" for James.

While James was rejecting the fundamental atomism of associationism he was presenting himself with the strongest objection to the thought of his latter days, for how can the identity of the individual conscience be saved in view of a superior unity of a superhuman consciousness? At the time he was writing his "Principles," James did not have the formula for the solution of his problem. The question could be proposed in this fashion: Is James' doctrine of the continuity of experience antithetic to his pluralism? This question was asked and answered squarely by Victor Lowe in his outstanding essay: "William James' Pluralistic Metaphysics of Experience".<sup>117</sup> Lowe says: "One of James' definition of psychology reads: 'The science of finite individual minds.' But as you know in his treatise he

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In Commemoration of William James--Columbia University Press, New York, 1942, p. 157-177

depicted each mind as succession of 'perishing pulses of thought.' Each of these is a 'distinct entity;' thus James thought he was not thinking of a pluralistic philosophy did begin his work with a pluralism—he used that word in describing the doctrine of his Psychology.<sup>118</sup> He also stressed the 'continuity' between these entities. Since both the continuity and the unitary pulse of experience are carried through subsequent writings we seem to have at hand here the natural bricks and mortar for the Jamesian pluralistic universe."<sup>119</sup> In relation to the self, Lowe remarks: "Yet I do not think the self is the primary individual in James' pluralism: for nowhere in his purely metaphysical and epistemological writings does it appear as an ultimate principle. We find that he always begins with a multitude of pulses of experience and interprets all other things as either extracts cut from these or wholes composed of a number of them knit together by felt transitions. It is 'the moment of experience' that is pluralism's champion in James' battle with the Absolute. And when he heads toward panpsychism--for example, when he writes that what exists beyond our present experience, 'if not a future experience of our own or a present one of our neighbor... must be an experience of our own or must be an experience for itself.'<sup>120</sup>

<sup>118</sup> P.U., p. 210

<sup>119</sup> Ibid., p. 159

<sup>120</sup> E.R.E., p. 88. (Cf. James; reference to "Pluralistic Panpsychism" in his "Syllabus of Philosophy, 3" Perry--The Thought and Character II, p. 755)

When he writes this it is not personalism but a minute panpsychism, like that of Strong or that since developed by Whitehead that he has in mind."<sup>121</sup>

It is quite interesting that Lowe quotes from the "syllabus of Philosophy 3" of James for James prepared and circulated the syllabus in the very year of publication of "The Varieties of Religious Experience."<sup>122</sup> Indeed, it is interesting for while 'when we turn to the concluding chapter of the Varieties we find that the self, or person, dominates the discussion; indeed, the pluralistic universe which James describes when he suggests his "sort of polytheism" is spoken of as "a collection of selves",<sup>123</sup> in the Syllabus "there is no mention of self but we do find this heading: 'Description of the world as a multitude of moments of experiences connected by relations (also experienced) which constitute so many grades of "unity."' (as quoted by Lowe, p. 163)

While James was interested in the rejection of associationism "in the heat of the argument he went farther than he needed" (Lowe) or perhaps because as I think he did not find as yet the formula to combine distinction and unity into the superhuman consciousness of the last stage of his

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<sup>121</sup>

Lowe, p. 162

<sup>122</sup>

V.R.E., p. 63

<sup>123</sup>

Ibid., p. 525

philosophical universe. Between this final stage and the preliminary one of the Principles, Lowe describes "the second stage in the evolution of his pluralism," which is not other than the "theory of pure experience." "The pure experience-theory was invented expressly to resolve the dualism provisionally accepted in the Psychology, between thought and the common-sense world of objects".<sup>124</sup> This moment of transition in James' thought was perspicaciously dissected by Lowe in a broadening of the concept of experience by bringing into it the concept of "function" by the distinction between perception and what is perceived and by the consideration of activity a parte rei. Lowe elaborates largely on the document or notebook of James' thinking before he arrived at his final doctrine of immanence of the bits of experience. Selections of this document have been printed by Perry in an Appendix to The Thought and Character of James. "The Notebook is the record of James' effort to reconcile his theory of pure experience with the pluralism of his psychology. Let me recapitulate the difficulty. The theory of pure experience requires that one and the same datum or presentation become part of diverse experiences; whereas a cardinal doctrine of his Psychology is that each experience must be considered an absolute unity."<sup>125</sup>

With the broadening of the concept of experience "thus did William James arrive at his final position; his meta-

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<sup>124</sup>

Lowe, p. 164

<sup>125</sup>

Ibid., p. 163

physics in a pluralism which emphasizes both the freedom of separate centers of experience and their power to fuse."<sup>126</sup>

In spite of the fact that James contrasted his philosophical thoughts in *A Pluralistic Universe* with those of the *Psychology*, "however we must remember that in the *Psychology* he had not denied 'but rather' affirmed that each passing thought qualifies and is qualified by others and is a phase of process that involves 'some' kind of complexity in unity,"<sup>127</sup> "What he had not allowed himself to see was that this qualification is an immanence of part of one thought in the constitution of another."<sup>128</sup> Lowe has played up the fact that there is only an apparent contradiction between the position of James in his *Psychology* and the pluralism of his latter thought.

I am in full agreement with Lowe in having given a metaphysical rather than an epistemological reading to the "Theory of Pure Experience" of James. I think that James is talking of a neutral element when he refers to the presentations. This neutrality is controlled by a system of internal or external relations as James explains in his *Radical Empiricism*.

It is a pity that Lowe did not elaborate the final stage of James' metaphysics or the concept of interpretation:

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<sup>126</sup>

Lowe, p. 173

<sup>127</sup>

*Ibid.*, p. 173

<sup>128</sup>

*Ibid.*, p. 173

The several units of experience have both their difference and their sameness, and they may be conceived under either aspect. They are different, taken as wholes, but they overlay and interpenetrate. This James described as an "endosmosis of adjacent parts of living experience,"<sup>129</sup> "Conflux of the Same with the Different,"<sup>130</sup> Union of things is given in the immediate flux, "the concrete pulses of experience appear pent in by no such definite limits as our conceptual substitutes for them are confined by. They run into one another continuously and seem to interpenetrate."<sup>131</sup>

I regret also with Lowe (and this could explain his lack of elaboration of the theme) that "his last illness (of James) forced him to stop work on "Some Problems of Philosophy" just at the point when as it seems, he was about to plunge into the delineation of that exciting comprehensive universe toward which he had been working his way. The book stops with James digging freshly into the key problem of causation."

And, of course, I entirely agree with Lowe's hunch: "I am one of those who incline to believe that his metaphysics, if completed, would have been a form of panpsychism."<sup>132</sup> As a matter of fact, as Lowe recalls, the last paragraph of S.P.P. remarks that his analysis of causation would require

<sup>129</sup>  
Mind IX, 1834

<sup>130</sup>  
P.U., p. 257

<sup>131</sup>  
Ibid., p. 282

<sup>132</sup>  
Ibid., p. 175

him "to espouse a so-called 'panpsychic philosophy'."

While we leave for James the trouble of explaining how the present thought appropriates the preceding one, let's keep in mind that the enemy at hand is the "transcendental Ego" of Kant or the traditional concept of soul. When James analyzes the Transcendentalist theory as over against his theory of the present thought as a section of the Stream of Consciousness, which is for him, "the ultimate fact for psychology,"<sup>133</sup> he notes that Kant does not believe in the external reality as a verifiable phenomenal thing nor as something manifold.

"The 'Manifold' which the intellectual functions combine is a mental manifold altogether, which thus 'stands between' the Ego of Apperception and the outer Reality, but still stands inside the mind. In the function of knowing there is a multiplicity to be connect, and Kant brings this multiplicity inside the mind. The Reality becomes a mere empty 'locus' or unknowable, the so-called Noumenon; the manifold phenomenon is in the mind. We, on the contrary, put the Multiplicity with the Reality outside, and leave the mind simple. Both of us deal with the same elements--thought and object--the only question is in which of them the multiplicity shall be lodged. Wherever it is lodged it must be 'synthetized' when it comes to be thought. And that particular way of lodging it will be the better, which, in addition to describing the facts naturally, makes the 'mystery of synthesis' least hard to understand.

"Well, Kant's way of describing the facts is mythological. The notion of our thought being this sort of an elaborate internal machine-shop stands condemned by all we said in favor of its simplicity on previous text. Our thought is not composed of parts, however, so composed its objects may be. There is no originally chaotic manifold in it to be reduced to order."<sup>134</sup>

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Psychology I, p. 350

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Ibid., p. 363

Later on, James will come by and say: "It is needless to repeat that the connection of things in our knowledge is in no wise explained by making it the deed of an agent whose essence is self-identity and who is out of time--The agency of phenomenal thought coming and going in time is just as easy to understand."<sup>135</sup> There is no doubt that there is here a reference to the idealist conception of Hegel.

James was right in the middle of the problem of "relations." The important statement of James is that "relations are felt."<sup>136</sup> As James approached the end of his philosophical career he developed more fully a position called "radical empiricism" which is already explicit in the Preface to "The Meaning of Truth":

"Radical empiricism consists first of a postulate, next of a statement of fact, and finally of a generalized conclusion.

"The postulate is that the only things that shall be debatable among philosophers shall be things definable in terms drawn from experience (things of an unexperienceable nature may exist ad libitum, but they form no part of the material for philosophic debate). The statement of fact is that the relations between things, conjunctive as well as disjunctive, are just as much matters of particular experience, neither more so nor less so, than the things themselves.

"The generalized conclusion is that therefore the parts of experience hold together from next to next by relations that are themselves part of experience. The directly apprehended universe needs, in short, no extraneous trans-empirical connective support, but possesses in its own right a concatenated or continuous structure."<sup>137</sup>

<sup>135</sup> Psychology I, p. 368

<sup>136</sup> E.R.E., p. 42

<sup>137</sup> Preface to "The Meaning of Truth", p. 310-311, incorporated to "Pragmatism" in the edition of 1943 edited by Ralph Barton Perry - Longmans, Green and Co., New York, London, Toronto.

In developing in more detail the doctrine of radical empiricism, James contends, to begin with, that the term "consciousness" does not stand for an "entity" but for a "function."<sup>138</sup> There is no "aboriginal stuff or quality of being" out of which our thoughts are made; but "there is a function in experience which thoughts perform, and for the performance of which this quality of being is invoked."<sup>139</sup> The function in question is that of knowing. It is what is meant by "consciousness".<sup>140</sup> For James, therefore, the term "consciousness" connotes "a kind of external relation" in which our experiences stand to one another;<sup>141</sup> and the relations which "connect experiences" must themselves be "experienced relations,"<sup>142</sup> so that the term "consciousness" can never refer to anything which transcends experience.

Now the conjunctive relation which, admittedly, has given most trouble to philosophy is the "co-conscious transition" by which "one experience passes into another when both belong to the same self."<sup>143</sup> "Within each of our personal histories, subject, object, interest and purpose are continuous or may be continuous. Personal histories are processes of change in them, and the change itself is one of the things immediately experienced."<sup>144</sup> This

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138

E.R.E., p. 3

139

Ibid., p. 3-4

140

Ibid., p. 4

141

Ibid., p. 25

142 Ibid., p. 42

143 Ibid., p. 47

144 Ibid., p. 48

"conjunctive relation" of continuous change is the fundamental fact in experience to which radical empiricism must remain securely anchored. Any abandonment of it, James maintains, leads to the introduction into philosophy of "all the corruptions of dialectics and all the metaphysical fictions."<sup>145</sup> But the "holding fast" to the fundamental relation means "taking it at its face value," "just as we feel it," and "not to confuse ourselves with abstract talk about it."<sup>146</sup>

According to James, what I do feel "when a later moment of my experiences succeeds an earlier one" is simply the continuous transition from the one to the other.<sup>147</sup>

"Continuity here is a definite sort of experience."<sup>148</sup>

"There is no other nature, no other whatness than this absence of break and this sense of continuity in that most intimate of all conjunctive relations, the passing of one experience into another when they belong to the same self. And this whatness is real empirical 'content,' just as the whatness of separation and discontinuity is real content in the contrasted case. Practically to experience one's personal continuum in this living way is to know the originals of the ideas of continuity and of sameness, to know what the words stand for concretely, to own all they can ever mean."<sup>149</sup>

<sup>145</sup>E.R.E., p. 48

<sup>146</sup>Ibid., p. 48

<sup>147</sup>Ibid., p. 49

<sup>148</sup>Ibid., p. 49

<sup>149</sup>Ibid., p. 50

The first difficulty which this interpretation of our basic experience eliminates, so James contends, is the "artificial conception of the relations between knower and known;"<sup>150</sup> for wherever such transitions from an earlier to a later experience are felt, there "the first experience knows the last one." Where such transitions do not, or cannot, "intervene," "there can be no pretense of knowing."<sup>151</sup> "Whenever certain intermediaries are given, such that, as they develop towards their terminus, there is experience from point to point of one direction followed, and finally of one process fulfilled; the result is that their starting-point thereby becomes a knower and their terminus an object meant or known. That is all that knowing...can be known-as, that is the whole of its nature, put into experiential terms."<sup>152</sup> We may then "freely say that we had the terminal object 'in mind' from the outset, even although at the outset nothing was there in us but a flat piece of substantive experience like any other, with no self-transcendence about it, and no mystery save the mystery of coming into existence and of being gradually followed by other pieces of substantive experience, with conjunctively transitional experiences between. That is what we mean here by the object's being 'in mind.' Of any deeper, more real way of being in mind we have no positive conception, and we have no right to discredit our actual experience by talking of such a way at all."<sup>153</sup>

<sup>150</sup> E.R.E., p. 52-56

<sup>151</sup> Ibid., p. 56

<sup>152</sup> Ibid., p. 57

In his "Theories of Knowledge," Leslie J. Walker makes a remarkable and critical presentation on the "sense of continuity," on the importance of the theory of "felt relations" and on the metaphysical content of James'

Radical Empiricism:

"But in Professor James' account of conception, one is struck, not only by the absence of any adequate appreciation of 'meaning,' but also of 'synthesis.' Concepts are merely parallel with the experiences for which they are substituted, and to these experiences they correspond point for point. Their function is not to synthesise the many in the one, but to act as a substitute for sense-experiences when the latter are unavailable, and ultimately to lead us back by continuous felt-transitions to those same experiences. This 'principle of substitution' is important in Professor James' theory of conception, and has led to a curious result. There must always be some sense-termini, the place of which is provisionally taken by the concept or image. Consequently, Professor James has had to invent felt-relations, for otherwise thought-relations would have had no sense-experiences to which to lead. Now I must confess that these felt-relations seem to me to be purely creatures of the imagination and to have not the slightest foundation in experience. I have never been able to feel a relation yet. I can apprehend relations, I can conceive them and think of them, but I cannot feel them. For me, what is signified by preposition, copula and conjunction is not a feeling, but a thought. When I see two objects together, I do not feel their co-existence, I perceive it and think of it or apprehend it. When I observe that by the combination of hydrogen and oxygen and the introduction of a little electricity, water is produced, I do not feel the causal connection: rather it is the object of my thoughts."<sup>154</sup>

"Of course, if felt-relations really mean relations apprehended by thought, there is an end of the matter; but I do not think Professor James can be using terms

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Theories of Knowledge, Leslie J. Walker, p. 169-170  
Stonyhurst Philosophical Series, Longmans, Green and  
Co., London, 1911, 2nd edition.

in so loose a sense, and, besides, he would then have a conceptual experience to which no sense-experiences would be exactly parallel.

"The doctrine of felt-relations is applied by Professor James to the cognitive relation itself. In a couple of articles bearing the significant title "A World of Pure Experience" (Journal of Phil. Psy. and Sc. Methods, 1904, partly reprinted in The Meaning of Truth, pp. 102, et. seq.) he sets forth a new theory which he calls Radical Empiricism, the chief theses of which are that reality is experience, or better, perhaps, experiences, and that 'the only function that one experience can perform is to lead to another experience.' (Journ. of Phil. Psy. and Sc. Methods, p. 111) The relation of the knower to the known in this theory is but a particular case of a felt-relation. Knowledge is a process of leading; and 'either the knower and the known are:

- "(1) the self-same piece of experience taken twice over in different contexts; or they are
- "(2) two pieces of actual experience belonging to the same subject with definite tracts of conjunctive transitional experience between them; or
- "(3) the known is a possible experience, either of that subject or of another, to which the said conjunctive transitions would lead, if sufficiently prolonged.' (Journ. of Phil. Psy. and Sc. Methods, p. 108)"<sup>155</sup>

"I must confess that when I first read these two articles I could not help a doubt crossing my mind in regard to authenticity. Could the writer who, in language so far removed from that of psychological description, attempts to portray the characteristics of human cognition, be the same as the author of the justly famous Principles of Psychology? What is said is said vigorously as before, but not it bears the impress of what, if I mistake not, we must describe as metaphysical prejudice. On looking back, however, I remember, even in the Principles, a certain empirical tendency which manifested itself, especially in that curious theory of the soul as the stream of its own

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Theories of Knowledge, p. 170-171

thoughts, thoughts which become, as it were, little souls themselves for the moment, but only to be absorbed in the thought which succeeds. And then against my will I am forced to believe that the author of the Principles of Psychology and the author of the "World of Pure Experience" and similar articles are one and the same.

"But is this 'Radical Empiricism' and this 'mosaic philosophy' of Pure Experience intended to be a metaphysic, or is it merely a descriptive psychology of cognition? The existence of 'felt-transitions' and 'felt-relations' is hard to recognise, and it is still harder to believe that in these alone does knowledge consist. Its transitions may be 'functional,' and the concepts from which they start may sometimes lead to sense-experiences and so serve as useful instruments for the manipulation of our future experience. But concepts, at any rate, seem to be more than mere instruments, and knowledge to be more than a mere tool. Yet in a 'World of Pure Experience' knowledge is stripped of significance and meaning which is essential note and universal characteristic. 'Objective reference' is explained as 'a mere incident of the fact that so much of our experience comes as insufficient, and is of process and transition.' (The Meaning of Truth, p. 117) The things which we perceive and the objects about which we think are stolen away: experience is once more confused with the experienced: and the latter being relegated to a world of possibility, experience is left behind dangling in the air. This being so, Radical Empiricism can hardly be regarded as a psychological theory. Rather it would seem to be the forerunner of that metaphysic which Professor James has long promised to the philosophic world."<sup>156</sup>

The alternatives that were presented by the philosophy of his time were these: The sensationalists had reduced experience to atomic facts without connection; the Rationalists had created a special machinery for relating the otherwise isolated and chaotic material. A simple, and original solution of James was to accept the relations as given.

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<sup>156</sup>

Theories of Knowledge, p. 172-174

James' doctrine of "radical empiricism" is closely related to the phenomenism of Renouvier. It means not only that reality in order to be "debatable" at all shall be definable in terms drawn from experience, but that experience is coherent, and self-sufficient in its own terms. It does not mean that knowledge is to be limited to the boundaries of actual experience, but that it shall not employ any categories save those that are exemplified in experience. There is no need of invoking any non-empirical type of unity, such as a transcendent substance, or a pure activity, or an "apriori" synthetic consciousness, since experience contains its own bonds in the shape of "conjective relations" which are "just as much matters of direct particular experience, neither more so nor less so, than the things themselves."<sup>157</sup> The most remarkable application of this thesis is to consciousness itself, which is not an entity outside its own experiences, but only one type of conjunctive relation among these experiences."<sup>158</sup> The same

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Meaning of Truth, p. 11-13

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In giving up consciousness as an entity outside its own experience, James took a step away from cartesian dualism and this step made necessary a new theory of knowledge and a new theory of the relation between the body and the mind. As to the former, James said: "Let us suppose that the primary reality is neutral in nature--For my part, I like to speak of it in the plural, and give it the name pure experiences. (E.R.E., p. 226) This view gets rid of the difficulty of how a mental thing can know a physical thing by reducing each of them to a single substance--pure experience. This eliminates the difference in kind between mind and matter and gives us an epistemological monism as well as a metaphysical monism. "The central point of the pure-experience theory is that outer and inner are names for two groups into which we sort experiences according to the way in which they act upon their

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 158 (cf)

neighbors." (E.R.B., p. 139) I persist with Lowe in interpreting James' theory of pure experience as a metaphysical doctrine geared toward "compensation"--

As induced by his "Diary" (Perry - The Thought and Character, II, Appendix X, p. 750-765, James suffered an intellectual crisis in order to accept as probable Fechner's hypothesis of a compounding consciousness. Indeed, how could the identity of the individual conscience be saved in view of the superior unity? The solution of the problem, according to James, lies in a return to the original concreteness of experience for we must take reality to be just what it seems to be, even with those features which ordinary logic rejects immersed as it is in abstraction: "How can what is manifold be one? How can things get out of themselves? How be their own others? How be both distinct and connected? How can they act on one another? How be for others and yet for themselves? How be absent and present at once?" (P.U., p. 260)

James wonders: "May not the flux of sensible experience itself contain a rationality that has been overlooked" (P.U., p. 73) "May not the remedy lie rather in revising the intellectualist criticism." (P.U., p. 73) Thus James, "looking to the more primitive flux of the sensational life for reality's true shape" (P.U., p. 282) discovers that the union of things is given in this immediate flux, not in any conceptual reason that overcomes the flux's aboriginal incoherence: "The concrete pulses of experience appear pent in by no such definite limits as our conceptual substitutes for them are confined by. They run into one another continuously and seem to interpenetrate." (P.U., p. 282) Now, in this world as it is given in experience, the connections among things are "de facto," rather than necessary, inasmuch as there is still a "free play" of the parts without being necessarily co-implicated in the whole. They exist together, but without loss of their identity.

Actually James is fighting the idea of a totally involving absolute: "The difference I try to describe amounts, you see, to nothing more than the difference between what I formerly called the each form and the all form of reality." (P.U., p. 324) James refers to what he expressed formerly as the problem of the one and the many: "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 things are the each-forms of experience, the many things are the each-forms of experience in you and me."

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153 (cf) P.U., p. 231

Now, James feels that "Pluralism lets things really exist in the each form or distributively-monism thinks that the all-form or collective unit form is the only form that is rational. The all-form allows of no taking up and dropping of connections, for in the all the parts are essentially and externally co-implicated. In the each-form, on the contrary, a thing may be connected by intermediary things, with a thing with which it has no immediate or essential connection."

158 (cf.) (P.U., p. 324)

There is thus an interpenetration of relations but not interdependence, as the one and very point can be at the intersection of so many different lines while it does not belong to the essence of that point to keep forever those relations. James then asks: "Why, if two or more lines can run through one and the same geometrical point, or if two or more distinct processes of activity can run through one and the same physical thing so that it simultaneously plays a role in each and every process, might not two or more streams of personal consciousness include one and the same unit of experience so that it would simultaneously be a part of the experience of all the different minds?" (E.R.E., p. 126)

In order to work out this "compenetration" or "in M. Bergson's phrase, an endosmosis, or conflux of the same with the different," (P.U., p. 257) what is needed, in James' mind, is to be able to say of a certain conscious state that it both is and is not the same as another, and he feels this is possible, provided that the experience is distinguished from its conception. (Your experience is the same as mind objectively, but not subjectively). We have underlined the analysis made by Lowe of the broadening of the concept of function, by the distinction between perception and what is perceived and by the consideration of activity a parte rei.

Now since James identified reality with experience, I think, with Lowe, that we should give a metaphysical reading (rather than epistemological) to the theory of "pure experience" or his rational theory of mind: The conception of mind as a relation between neutral entities (i.e. neither mental nor physical) which was foreshadowed by Hume and developed by British and American New Realism and has its roots in James' essay: "Does Consciousness Exist" which appeared in 1904 in the "Journal of Philosophy" and was later incorporated in his Essays of Radical Empiricism. This theory is qualitatively monistic in its admission of only one kind of ultimate reality viz neutral or subsistent entities but is numerically pluralistic in acknowledging a multiplicity of independent reals.

For an extremely sharp analysis of the tremendous fallacies involved in James' analysis we invite the readers to enjoy the essay of Lovejoy, "James's Does Consciousness Exist" in Chapter V of his book, "The Thirteen Pragmatisms."\*(Note), pages 113-132, The John Hopkins Press, Baltimore, 1963.

identical terms of "pure experience" taken in one (the causal or energetic) type of relationship constitute "the system of external realities" while taken in another type of relationship they constitute "the stream of our internal thinking."<sup>159</sup>

What is now called the phenomenological movement, began at the turn of the century with two thinkers, Brentano and Husserl, who shared James' acute dissatisfaction with traditional philosophy as too abstract and remote from the given evidence. As they tried to work out a style of thinking closer to our lived experience, they made a critical study of British Empiricism only to discover its inaccuracies and distortions. As a result, it was not possible any longer to refer to those alleged elementary sense-qualities of empiricism but as an abstraction or construction of the mind. That which first presents itself to me is not a color nor a rough surface, taken separately, but a colored or rough object. As Merleau-Ponty says<sup>160</sup>

"It is impossible to describe the color of a tapestry completely without saying that there is a tapestry, a tapestry made, say, of wool, and without implying in that color a certain tactile quality, a certain weight, a certain opaqueness to sound."

<sup>158</sup> (cf.) \*Note--The main concepts of Lovejoy are that Epistemological monism has a dualistic metaphysical premise inasmuch as it speaks of "contents" that James tacitly admits consciousness under the name of experience, and that most of his arguments are not directed to the main point of the essay or are rather irrelevant to it

<sup>159</sup> Essays in Radical Empiricism, p. 22

<sup>160</sup> James considers that the "neutral" elements of *Phénoménologie de la Perception*, p. 373, (Bibliothèque des Idées), Paris, Librairie Gallimard, 1945

That which we call a "rough surface" is not an abstract geometrical space, nor an immanent content of consciousness but a real aspect of a real object. In a certain sense, this object manifests itself only by concealing itself. This is why it presents multiple "aspects," but in a sense it is present whole and entire in each of these aspects, according to the notion of "Abschattung" of Husserl; real things then are presented in different profiles or "Abschattungs-wise."

In working out what he called "radical empiricism", James also criticized the above-mentioned bad points of empirical philosophy and stressed its reduction of experience to isolated, atomic units, called ideas or impressions and its failure to do justice to the relational structures that belong to our lived experience.<sup>161</sup>

In his Principles, he played a vital role in this important discovery of Phenomenology as he points out that the objects of experience are not insular impressions sharply separated from one another according to the regular interpre-

159 (cf.)

experience, while they can form different groupings of patterns, can also intersect as when two different minds contain the same element, like the crossing of two lines at the same point. By the same token, there is no reason why the human mind should not be "confluent in a higher consciousness." (E.R.E., p. 123)

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"The World of Pure Experience" in E.R.E.

tation of the British Empiricists. In our actual perception of objects, they are always surrounded by a field of meanings which refer them to other objects. These references are easily taken for granted or forgotten as we concentrate on the central objects of our attention. However, they play an important role in all perception. James refers to them as "fringes"<sup>162</sup> and they led Husserl to his notion of the "Lebenswelt" as was proved by Aron Gurwitsch.<sup>163</sup> This conception of the world horizon is seen in Sartre, Merleau-Ponty and in Heideggers Sein and Zeit.<sup>164</sup>

We have discussed already the Unity of Attention as based upon the consolidated and unified activity of the hemispheres "determinable only as a whole," and centered around an interesting idea. This process of selectivity in attention based upon a system of totality and continuity is captured by James in the phenomenon of "Discrimination and Comparison," Chapter XIII of his Principles. "Experience, from the very first, presents us with concreted objects vaguely continuous with the rest of the world which envelopes them in space and time, and potentially divisible into inward elements and parts. These objects we break assunder and reunite."<sup>165</sup> James calls the act of discrimination "the

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<sup>162</sup>

Psychology I, p. 258

<sup>163</sup>

"Les fringes selon James" in Theorie du champs de la conscience" Paris, Desclee De Brower, 1956, p. 246

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For further information concerning the relations of James and Husserl, see Herbert Spiegelberg "The Phenomenological Movement" I The Hague 1960, p. 111-117

<sup>165</sup>

Psychology I, p. 487

noticing of any part whatever of our objects,"<sup>166</sup> however, he establishes as an "undeniable fact" "that any number of impressions, from any number of sensory sources, falling simultaneously on a mind WHICH HAS NOT YET EXPERIENCED THEM SEPARATELY, will fuse into a single undivided object for that mind." Thus James establishes the law "that all things fuse that can fuse and nothing separates except what must."<sup>167</sup> James insists that there are no gaps in that unbroken unit of a thought which is within itself a continuum, a plenum.<sup>168</sup> Could this had been a more direct prophecy of the Gestalt psychology? Doesn't this keep in line with the Aristotelian doctrine of perception from confused wholes to distinct unities and details? The phenomenon of the Unity of sense experience is stressed on Chapter XVII of Sensation of the second volume of the Principles. There James struggles against the view that sensations are immutable psychic things which co-exist with higher mental functions. "Both sensationalists and intellectualists agree that such sensations exist. They 'fuse,' say the pure sensationalists, and make the higher mental function; they 'are combined' by activity of the Thinking Principle, say the intellectualists. I myself have contended that they 'do not exist' in or alongside of the higher mental function when that exists."<sup>169</sup> James elaborates on the phenomenon of contrasting sensations

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166

Psychology I, p. 487

167

Ibid., p. 488

168

Ibid., p. 489

169

Psychology II, p. 27

in order to prove that "when two objects act together on us the sensation which either would give alone becomes a different sensation."<sup>170</sup> Thus he concludes that "you cannot build up one thought or one sensation out of many."<sup>171</sup>

The phenomenon of the unity of sense experience is further analyzed by James as he compares perception and sensation.

Unfortunately, James never explains the unity of sense experience with the notion of a faculty responsible for the synthesis of sense perceptions coming from different senses. Even more that would perhaps contradict his Radical Empiricism with its fundamental thesis that "relations are felt". Besides James was radically opposed to super-imposing faculties as we should remember of his criticism of Kant.

"I hear a sound, and say 'a horse car'; but the sound is not the horse-car."

Thus James enters into those "sensational and reproductive brainprocesses combined" that "give us the content of our perceptions."<sup>172</sup> The intrinsic difference of perception and sensation is, according to James, that the former has "the consciousness of farther facts associated with the object of the sensation."<sup>173</sup> James makes reference to his

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170

Psychology II, p. 23

171

Ibid., p. 111

172

Ibid., p. 73

173

Ibid., p. 77

discussion on Space where he has spoken of the perceptions of shape and position in which it "is really difficult to decide how much of our sense of the object is due to reproductions of past experience, and how much to the immediate sensation of the eye."<sup>174</sup> Through a process of integration of the present, with the absent "turn out--the consciousness of that more complex "object," the whole 'thing' instead of being the consciousness of that more simple object, the few qualities or attributes which actually impress our peripheral nerves."<sup>175</sup>

We made reference to James' conception of space. If we call 'nativism' the general tendency to emphasize what is original rather than what is acquired, James then is a nativist inasmuch as he takes the view that all three dimensions of space are directly sensed, and not constructed or inferred. There is no other problem more amply discussed in the Principles owing no doubt to the emphasis which it received among the psychologists who had influenced him in early years. The connecting thread that runs through that extensive chapter of 148 pages is that the conception of space is given dimly at first and then developed and articulated by experience. Thus, for James, sensations are not "originally devoid of all spatial content."<sup>176</sup> The articula-

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174  
Psychology II, p. 79

175  
Ibid., p. 79

176  
Ibid., p. 31

tion of this spatial experience comes from an original chaos, but then "following the great intellectual law of economy, we simply, unify, and identify as much as we possibly can. Whatever sensible data can be attended together we locate together. Their several extents seem one extent. The place at which appears itself to be the same with the place at which the others appear. They become, in short, so many properties of one and the same real thing. This is the first and great commandment, the fundamental 'act' by which our world gets spatially arranged."<sup>177</sup> There seems to be a contradiction between the statement that "all three dimensions...are directly sensed" and "...the original chaos."

#### 4. THE TRANSCENDENTAL UNITY OF APPERCEPTION

We have seen already the selective function of consciousness and the phenomenon of attention as its most natural fruit. We have seen also that the transcendental unity of sensation does not imply in James' conception a transcendental Ego of the Kantian style nor a substantial soul of the scholastics, but we have to investigate deeper in the phenomenon of preperception and apperception and in its transcendental unity. Perhaps, this is done better by going over some of the discussed points, but stressing our angle of view.

As James discusses "The effects of Attention," he links to attention the practical and theoretical life of the whole

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<sup>177</sup>

Psychology II, p. 181-183-184

species as well as of the individual beings. As he puts it "each of us literally chooses, by his ways of attending to things, what sort of a universe he shall appear to himself to inhabit."<sup>178</sup> James talks of many possible worlds that are connected to our sense of reality or belief. He calls them "sub-universes:" The world of sense or physical things, the world of science, the world of ideal relations or abstract truths, the world of "idols of the tribe," illusions or prejudices common to the race, the various supernatural worlds, the various worlds of individual opinions, the worlds of sheer madness.<sup>179</sup> "Each world whilst it is attended to is real after its own fashion; only the reality lapses with the attention."<sup>180</sup>

Among the "various worlds of representations man is compelled practically to elect someone to be for him the world of ultimate realities."<sup>181</sup>

"The mere fact of appearing as an object at all is not enough to constitute reality. That may be metaphysical reality, reality for God: but what we need is practical reality, reality for ourselves; and to have that, an object must not only appear, but it must appear both interesting and important."<sup>182</sup>

"In the relative sense, then, the sense in which we contrast reality with simple unreality...reality means simply relation to our emotional and active life."<sup>183</sup>

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178

Psychology I, p. 424

179

Psychology II, p. 292

180

Ibid., p. 293

181

Ibid., p. 293

182

Ibid., p. 293

183

Ibid., p. 295

When one wonders about the nature of these "worlds" of James in relation to the "objective-subjective" distinction, one also does not have any other alternative but to go back to the psychological subjectivism of James as the determining condition of the more general judgment of reality. Indeed, when it comes to establish the difference between a sensation and a representation James has to go back to the will and emotions, to the identification of "belief in reality" with "value in action" of the mental images. This is "pragmatism."

About the intimate nature of attention, let's mark at this time the words of James. He refers to the "anticipatory preparation,"<sup>184</sup> as "the effort to form as clear an idea as possible,"<sup>185</sup> while he describes the phenomenon of inattention with Helmholtz's law "that we leave all impressions unnoticed which are valueless to us as signs."<sup>186</sup> We discriminate things when we make analysis of them or "separate attention of each of its parts."<sup>187</sup> This is done only if "such an object, has previously been known by us isolatedly,"<sup>188</sup> because as a general rule "any total impression made on the mind must be unanalyzable, whose elements are never experienced art."<sup>189</sup> James insists time and again on the

<sup>184</sup> Psychology I, p. 434

<sup>185</sup> Ibid., p. 438

<sup>186</sup> Ibid., p. 456

<sup>187</sup> Ibid., p. 503

<sup>188</sup> Ibid., p. 503

<sup>189</sup> Psychology I, p. 502

transcendental unity of sensation and apperception. This he has proved by the phenomenon of contrast and many other phenomena inasmuch as "when two objects act together on us the sensation which either would give alone becomes a different sensation."<sup>190</sup> There is never fusing or combining of sensations of James' psychology. He was constantly opposing the British associationism.

If we keep in mind all the general trend of the thought of James as he describes the selectivity of the mind we cannot help but realize his tremendous emphasis upon the subjective features of our thinking. He was repelled by the pretentious claims of the Hegelian system which he bitterly attacks in the Lecture III of his "Pluralistic Universe" and he consecrated all his energies to a description of the subjective phenomena of attention, "Sentiment of Rationality," religious experiences, and Will. This latter he identified basically with the direction of mental attention to a single object of concern.<sup>191</sup>

When he came into the analysis of perception and of reality he was years ahead of his time with the concept of "Apperception" inasmuch as he was actually describing the "noetic-noematic" structure of the intentional behavior. "My child of two," James said, "played for a week with the first orange that was given him, calling it a 'ball.'"

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Psychology II, p. 28

191

Ibid., p. 561

"He called the first whole eggs he saw 'potatoes' having been accustomed to see his 'eggs' broken into a glass, and his potatoes without the skin. A folding pocket-cork-screw he unhesitatingly called 'bad-scissors.' Hardly any of us can make new heads especially when fresh experiences come. Most of us grow more and more enslaved to the stock conceptions with which we have once become familiar, and less and less capable of assimilating impressions in any but the old ways. Old-fogysm, in short, is the inevitable terminus to which life sweeps us on. Objects which violate our established habits of apperception are simply not taken account of at all; or, if on some occasion we are forced by dint of argument to admit their existence, twenty four hours later the admission is as if it were not, and every trace of the unassimilable truth has vanished from our thought, Genius, in truth, means little more than the faculty of perceiving in an unhabitual way.

"On the other hand, nothing is more congenital, from babyhood to the end of life, than to be able to assimilate the new to the old, to meet each threatening violator or burster of our well known series of concepts, as it comes in, see through its unwontedness, and ticket it off as an old friend in disguise. This victorious assimilation of the new is in fact the type of all intellectual pleasure. The lust for it is curiosity. The relation of the new to the old, before the assimilation is performed, is wonder. We feel neither curiosity nor wonder concerning things so far beyond us that we have no concepts to refer them to or standards by which to measure them."<sup>192</sup>

The immediate conclusion of this paragraph is that a thing is intelligible and comprehensible only in a context. I relate the doctrine of this paragraph to the concept of intentionality which has dominated much of philosophy since the time of Husserl. Our knowledge of the real depends on an experience of "presence" which, in turn, is interpreted as

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Psychology II, p. 110

coming together of a buiding intention (noesis) and a given (noema). For James, as for existential phenomenology, knowledge is not creative but human consciousness isn't either pure passivity as explained by the British Empiricism. On the contrary, knowledge is a mixture of passivity and of revealing spontaneity. The "noesis" is the manner in which the subject orients himself intentionally towards the object, the "noema" is the meaning it possesses for consciousness.<sup>193</sup>

Of course, James is not taking this process to its origins or primitive status. James does not deal here with the "antepredicative" exchange with the real which for the phenomenologists is not a relation of knowledge. James elaborates on the assumption of existing knowledge which for him depends on sensations. The "Apperception" for him is only related to association: "the sum-total of the effects of what we have studied as association; and it is obvious that the things which a given experience will suggest to a man depend on what Mr. Lewes calls his entire psychostatical conditions, his nature and stock of ideas, or in other words, his character, habit, memory, education, previous experience and momentary mood."<sup>194</sup> "On the whole, I am inclined to think Mr. Lewes' term of 'assimilation' the most fruitful one yet used."<sup>195</sup>

In the Chapter XIX of the Perception of Things, James

<sup>193</sup> Spiegelberg sees Husserl's concept of intention in the "principle of constancy in the minds meaning" that James talks about in Chapter XII of his Principles (I 459) where we read that "the mind can always INTEND and know when it intends, to think of the same" Spiegelberg--as mentioned above p. 113.

<sup>194</sup> Ibid., p. 107

<sup>195</sup> Ibid., p. 107

made a distinction between the perceptive and the sensational processes based upon some striking facts of experience.<sup>196</sup>

However, for James "between normal perception and illusion-- there is no break, the process being identically the same in both."<sup>197</sup> Thus while we investigate in the nature of perception we should investigate in the "identical process" of illusion and hallucination. Indeed, since "hallucinations are often only extremes of the perception process, in which the secondary cerebral reaction is out of all normal proportion to the peripheral stimulus which occasions the activity."<sup>198</sup>

For James "an hallucination is a strictly sensational form of consciousness, as good and true a sensation as if there were a real object there. The object happens not to be there, that is all."

The neutral process in hallucination "it must, of course, consist of an excitement from within of those centers which are active in normal perception, identical in kind and degree with that which real external objects are usually needed to induce."<sup>199</sup> We have to keep in mind that in the discussion of Imagination, James stresses the conclusion that "the imagination-process differs from the sensation-process by its intensity rather than by its locality."

"A man blind of his eyes merely, sees darkness. A man

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Psychology II, p. 80-81

197

Ibid., p. 114

198

Ibid., p. 115

199

Ibid., p. 123

blind of his visual brain-centres can no more see darkness out of the parts of his retina which are connected with the brain-lesion than he can see it out of the skin of his back."<sup>200</sup>

The reasoning of James is the "what you have no idea of, you cannot miss" and that's evidently the case of the man with hemianopsia.<sup>201</sup>

James plays up then the phenomenon of "intensity" which under normal circumstances currents from other cortical regions are not capable of arousing. Therefore, peripheral currents are required.<sup>202</sup>

Let's keep in mind also that in the physiological process in perception, according to James, "all we find is that the brain reacts by paths which previous experiences have worn, and makes us usually perceive the probable thing, i.e., the thing by which on previous occasions the reaction was most frequently aroused."<sup>203</sup>

"In other words, just in proportion as associations are habitual, will the qualities of the suggested thing tend to substitute themselves in consciousness for those of the thing immediately there; or more briefly, just in proportion as an experience is probable will it tend to be directly felt."<sup>204</sup> If we keep in mind, on the one hand, that James considers

<sup>200</sup> Psychology II, p. 72-73

<sup>201</sup> Ibid., p. 73

<sup>202</sup> "Occupying the same locality, they have an intensity which under normal circumstances currents from other cortical regions and are incapable of arousing and to produce, which currents from the periphery are required." (Psychology II, 72)

<sup>203</sup> Ibid., p. 104

<sup>204</sup> Ibid., p. 104

hallucination as an extreme of the perception process and on the other hand the phenomenon of intensity, which under normal circumstances cannot be attributed to the currents from the cortical region, we should be interested in finding out with James a justification of this process. He does that in completing his theory of the perceptive process by "an analysis of what may most probably be believed to take place in hallucinations strictly so called."<sup>205</sup>

For James, "the free discharge of cells into each other through associative paths is a likely reason why the maximum intensity of function is not reached when the cells are excited by their neighbors in the cortex."<sup>206</sup>

The reason is that "currents from the periphery are (as it seems) the only currents whose energy can vanquish the supereideotional resistance (so to call it) of the cells."<sup>207</sup>

The very same idea had been already expressed by James at the end of his chapter of Imagination: "mechanically, the discontinuity between the ideotional and the sensational kinds of process must mean that when the greatest ideotional intensity has been reached, an order of resistance presents itself, which only a new order of force can break through. The current from the periphery is the new order of force required."<sup>208</sup>

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205

Psychology II, p. 123

206

Ibid., p. 123

207

Ibid., p. 123

208

Ibid., p. 73

The maximum of intensity shall not be reached through the associative paths for "the leakage forward along these paths is too rapid for the inner tension in any centre to accumulate to the maximal explosion point, unless the exciting currents are greater."<sup>209</sup>

But at this moment James notes: "if however, the leakage forward were to stop, the tension inside certain cells might reach the explosion point, even though the influence which excited them only from neighboring cortical parts."<sup>210</sup>

Thus James arrives at the law that "when the normal paths of association between a centre and other centres are thrown out of gear, any activity which may exist in the first centre tends to increase in intensity until finally the point may be reached at which the last inward resistance is overcome, and full sensational process explodes."<sup>211</sup>

In all this, let's keep in mind that famous statement of James, that "inhibition is an essential and unremitting element of our cerebral life."<sup>212</sup> This is the law, which James applies for the explanation of the phenomenon of the will, as we mentioned already.

As cases of peripheral influence, James mentions those of "slight peripheral irritation...if it reaches the centres of consciousness at all during sleep, will give rise to the dream of a violent sensation."<sup>213</sup> Let's underline this case as a form of activity of the subconscious although not

209 Psychology II, p. 123

210 Ibid., p. 123

211 Ibid., p. 127

212 Ibid., p. 533

213 Ibid., p. 127

registered thus by James in his Principles. This is indeed a case of unattended activity which he related here to a weak sensorial call of low intensity. Let's remark also how well the whole theory of James agrees with the physiological ground for the phenomenon of attention which was specially analyzed above.

Now let's close this section of pre-perception with that "typical" nativistic perception of space. When beginning the discussion on "the construction of 'real' space,"<sup>214</sup> he remarks "that all the facts can be accounted for on the supposition that no other mental forces have been at work save those we find everywhere else in psychology: sensibility, namely, for the data; and discrimination, association, memory, and choice for the rearrangements and combination which they undergo."<sup>215</sup> The problem at work is that of how is "the subdivision and measurement of the several sensorial spaces completely effected," and of "how are the various sense-spaces added together into a consolidated and unitary continuum."<sup>216</sup> In what concerns to the first problem the solution or answer is given with the key of "discrimination" performed under "the first great condition is that different points of the surface shall differ in the quality of their immanent sensibility."<sup>217</sup> The fact of

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<sup>214</sup>

Psychology II, p. 166

<sup>215</sup>

Ibid., p. 167

<sup>216</sup>

Ibid., p. 181, 166

<sup>217</sup>

Ibid., p. 167

experience is that "two points which have the same local-sign will always be felt at the same point."<sup>218</sup> "We do not judge them two unless we have discerned their sensations to be different."

In what concerns the second problem of consolidation into a unitary continuum, James, granting the "primitively our space-experiences form a chaos."<sup>219</sup> He applies to them "the great intellectual law of economy" or that "we simplify, unify, and identify as much as we possibly can."<sup>220</sup> Thus, "whatever sensible data can be attended together we locate together." This is a "coalescence in a 'thing'" in which, "one of the coalescing sensations is held to be the thing, the other sensations are taken for its more or less accidental properties, or modes of appearance."<sup>221</sup> At this point, let's bear in mind what we discussed before of "sense-qualities" understood as an elementary and primary datum by British empiricism. The same applies to the conception of positivism of the "scientific fact." Both the sense-qualities and the scientific facts are, according to modern phenomenology, constructions of the mind. The scientific fact for instance can never be considered as an original "fact" inasmuch as it presupposes a prescientific contact with the world.<sup>222</sup> "The order of scientific thought is

218  
Psychology II, p. 167

219  
Ibid., p. 131

220  
Ibid., p. 133

221  
Ibid., p. 184

222  
Ibid., p. 634

quite incongruent either with the way in which reality exists or with the way in which it comes before us. Scientific thought goes by selection and emphasis exclusively." Once again, let's mark this insight of James of the perception of a Gestalt as a prophecy of the forthcoming developments in psychology and philosophy. What else could be said of that analysis of our perceptions of diagrams in which "the real objects, lines meeting or crossing each other on a plane, is replaced by an 'imagined solid which we describe as seen?" James affirms: "Really it is not seen but only so vividly conceived as to approach a vision of reality."<sup>223</sup> Of course, this is based upon previous experiences, but James insists on the activity of the mind which "uniformly uses its sensations to 'identify things by."<sup>224</sup> It is quite interesting that James resorts to the law of Equilibrium of the mind for this shall be the key-word for the explanation of the phenomenon of attention, as we shall see, and for that of what he calls "the sentiment of rationality." Our previous perceptions "by incessantly repeated presence and reproduction, will plough deep grooves in the nervous system. There will be developed, to correspond to the paths of least resistance, of unstable equilibrium, liable to become active in their totality when any point is touched off. Even when the objective stimulus is imperfect, we shall still see the full convexity of a human face, the correct inclination of an angle or sweep of a curve or the distance of two lines. Our mind will be like a polyhedron, whose facets are the attitudes of perception in which it can most easily rest"<sup>225</sup>

223 Psychology II, p. 258

225 Psychology II, 260

224 Ibid., p. 259-260

Thus far we have done an effort to present in its totality the UNITY OF ATTENTION in James by linking it immediately to the selective quality of the mind, to the unity of sense experience and to the unity of apperception. There is one important element which we should add before we go into the discussion of the center of attention and its mechanism. This important element is the reinterpretation which James gives to the term "rational" in his famous essay "The Sentiment of Rationality."<sup>226</sup> His basic problem is how the philosopher knows when he has fulfilled his task of attaining a rational frame of things. James gives the subjective marks into these terms: "a strong feeling of ease, peace, rest...The transition from a state of puzzle and perplexity to rational comprehension is full of lively relief and pleasure."<sup>227</sup> He then defines it as follows: "The feeling of the sufficiency of the present moment, of its absoluteness--this absence of all need to explain it, account for it, or justify it,--is what I call the Sentiment of Rationality. As soon, in short, as we are enabled from any cause whatever to think with perfect fluency, the thing we think of seems to us 'pro tanto' rational."<sup>228</sup>

"There are two ways of attaining this sentiment; one is the theoretic, the other the practical. The first fulfills man's craving both to simplify and to distinguish by classifying things into kinds and by arranging their relations and

<sup>226</sup>The Will to Believe (W.B.), p. 63

<sup>227</sup>Ibid., p. 63

<sup>228</sup>Ibid., p. 64

conduct into extensive laws. This procedure succeeds in some measure in accounting for both the unity and multiplicity of things. Yet because it is abstract it is inadequate, 'the rest of the living fact being for the time being ignored by the classifier.'<sup>229</sup> From this we conclude 'that the simple classification of things is, on the other hand, the best possible theoretic philosophy, but is, on the other hand, a most miserable and inadequate substitute for the fullness of the truth. It is a monstrous abridgment of life.'<sup>230</sup> This indicates that there is another road to the free movement of the mind and it is called the practical aspect of the rational. Other demands besides the theoretic must be considered: cravings, needs, and exigencies without which the universe will in no way appear 'rational' in spite of neat classifications and conceptualizations.

Specifically, there is in man, according to James, the 'ontological wonder' which is the craving of the mind for further explanation. He is not satisfied with abstract classifications but presses on to the further question of the ultimate 'why;' 'Why was there anything, but noneity; why just this universal datum and not another?' In James' view, the theoretic aspect of the rational leads to unanswered questions and the free movement of the mind has been blocked."<sup>231</sup> At this moment he makes the supreme effort to

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<sup>229</sup> W.B., p. 67

<sup>230</sup> Ibid., p. 69

<sup>231</sup> American Religious Philosophy, by Robert J. Roth, S.J., Harcourt, Bruce and World, 1967, p. 36

establish those elements of the philosophical conception of the universe which will bring the rest to the mind of man: Equilibrium in Knowledge.

In Psychology II, page 234, James speaks of "the states of consent and belief" as "characterized by repose on the purely intellectual side." Thus James speaks of a faculty attempting to rest in the fullness of its act.

In the last chapter of his Psychology, James investigates the ultimate grounds of rationality. James relies ultimately in brain structure, and in an "order of scientific thought," "quite incongruent" with the way in which reality exists."<sup>232</sup>

This is a Copernican conception of knowledge in which the mind questions in accordance with its structure. The rest of this faculty, the fullness of its act is ultimately determined by its subjective conditions.

Of the "mechanical equilibrium" of the mind James makes a full description in Varieties of Religious Experience, pages 194-195, as we shall see later.

It must be one which, somehow, clears away the uncertainty of the future, for otherwise man will be haunted with the fear of the ultimate doom.

Besides, to deserve the title of 'rational', a philosophy must define the future in accordance with our spontaneous

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<sup>232</sup>

Psychology II, p. 634

powers.<sup>233</sup> "Any philosophy which annihilates the validity of the reference by explaining away its objects or translating them into terms of no emotional pertinency, leaves the mind with little to care or act for. This is the opposite condition from that of nightmare, but when acutely brought home to consciousness, it produces a kindred horror. In nightmare we have motives to act, but no power; here we have powers, but no motives. A nameless 'unheimlichkeit' comes over us at the thought of there being nothing eternal in our final purposes, in the objects of those loves and aspirations which are our deepest energies."<sup>234</sup> Without lasting goals to our final purposes and objects for our deepest loves and energies, the world will be completely unintelligible in spite of all the theoretical explanations. On these grounds James rejects materialism.

This is a challenge to any purely theoretical philosophy or to any philosophy that does not appeal to the whole man, not merely the one that reduces everything to unity and order.

This is the interpretation given to the term "rational" and herein lies the strength of this essay as opposed to the weak presentation given to the term "passional nature" in the former essay: "The Will to Believe," which seems to be

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<sup>233</sup>

W.B., p. 82

<sup>234</sup>

Ibid., p. 85

its cardinal point or hinge."<sup>235</sup>

According to James, whenever a genuine option cannot be settled on intellectual grounds, it is right and necessary to settle it according to our passional inclinations. Now, as Collins says: "What makes this viewpoint irrational is not its respect for what our practical life and beliefs testify about God but its insistence that speculative reason is thoroughly nonexistential, nonexperiential, and hence inherently incapable of yielding any reliable knowledge of God."<sup>236</sup>

"James makes a breach between speculative and practical reason with respect to God and answers skepticism simply by countering one voluntary act against another."<sup>237</sup>

James falls then into sheer voluntarism and skeptical despair in ultimate matters and defines faith much in the same way or concept of Kierkegaard: Faith is a leap.

James goes from the extreme of no acceptance of rationalism as a definitive proof for faith to the extreme of blind fideism.<sup>238</sup> "Incidit in Scyllam, cupiens vitare Charibdim." He defines faith as the genuine option between two alternatives neither one of which can be proven.<sup>239</sup>

Since one cannot remain non-committal--since, in other words, there is a "forced option" "our passional nature not only lawfully may, but must decide."<sup>240</sup>

Sit pro ratione voluntas!

The ultimate root of this irrationism and voluntarism

<sup>235</sup>

W.B., p. 11

<sup>236</sup>

God in Modern Philosophy, p. 304

<sup>237</sup>

Ibid., p. 304

<sup>238</sup>

V.R.E., p. 73

<sup>239</sup>

W.B., p. 25

<sup>240</sup>

Ibid., p. 11

of James coincides with the ultimate roots of his Pragmatism and was best expressed by James himself in the last chapter of the second volume of his Psychology as Dewey says: "That the value of ideas is independent of their origin, that it is a matter of their outcome as they are used in directing new observation and new experience."<sup>241</sup>

This conception of ideas as questioning the objective world is the trademark of James' radical empiricism which distinguishes it from British empiricism. In my opinion, pragmatism questions rationality as the ultimate of things, for what makes rationality rational? Answer: mental structure.

Let us keep in mind the strong element of irrationalism at the basis of James' mental dynamism. In the "Varieties," he discusses "The Reality of the Unseen." James elaborates in the element of conviction that characterizes both sensitive knowledge and mysticism as opposed to the "results established by mere logic."<sup>242</sup>

"To the philosophy of rationalism (which James sometimes wrongly identifies with the scholasticism of his time), James opposes "man's whole mental life:"<sup>243</sup> "If you have intuitions at all, they come from a deeper level of your nature than the loquacious level which rationalism inhabits."<sup>244</sup>

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"An Empirical Survey of Empiricisms" in "Studies in the History of Ideas," New York, Columbia University Press, 1935, III, p. 20-21

<sup>242</sup> V.R.E., p. 72

<sup>243</sup> Ibid., p. 72

<sup>244</sup> Ibid., p. 73

"Your whole subconscious life, your impulses, your faiths, your needs, your divinations, have prepared the premise, of which your consciousness now feels that weight of the result; and something in you absolutely knows that the result must be truer than any logic-chopping rationalistic talk, however clever, that may contradict it. This inferiority of the rationalistic level in founding belief is just as manifest when rationalism argues for religion as when it argues against it."<sup>245</sup> "The truth is that in the metaphysical and religious sphere, articulate reasons are cogent for us only when our inarticulate feelings of reality have already been impressed in favor of the same conclusion. Then indeed, our intuitions and our reason work together, and great world-ruling systems, like that of the Buddhist or of the Catholic philosophy, may grow up. Our impulsive belief is here always what sets up the original body of truth, and our articulately verbalized philosophy is but its snowy translation into formulas. The unreasoned and immediate assurance is the deep thing in us, the reasoned argument is but a surface exhibition. Instinct leads, intelligence does but follow."<sup>246</sup>

Emotion, as an alterer of life's value was studied by James in the chapter of "The Sick Soul" (Varieties). The case at hand is that of Tolstoy with "anhedonia" or "of passive loss of appetite for all life's value"<sup>247</sup> and "the altered and estranged aspect which the word assumed in consequence."<sup>248</sup> Before entering into the discussion proper of Tolstoy, James makes these preliminary remarks "on our spiritual judgments and the sense of value in general."<sup>249</sup>

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<sup>245</sup> V.R.E., p. 73

<sup>246</sup> Ibid., p. 73

<sup>247</sup> Ibid., p. 147

<sup>248</sup> Ibid., p. 147

<sup>249</sup> Ibid., p. 147

"There is no rationally deducible connection between any outer fact and the sentiments it may happen to provoke. These have their source in another sphere of existence altogether, in the animal and spiritual region of the subject's being. Conceive yourself, if possible, suddenly stripped of all the emotion with which your world now inspires you, and try to image it "as it exists," purely by itself, without your favorable unfavorable, hopeful or apprehensive comment. It will be almost impossible for you to realize such a condition of negativity and deadness. No one portion of the universe would then have importance beyond another; and the whole collection of its things, and series of its events would be without significance, character, expression, or perspective. Whatever of value, interest, or meaning our respective worlds may appear endowed with are thus pure gifts of the spectator's mind. The passion of love is the most familiar and extreme example of this fact. If it comes, it comes; if it does not come, no process of reasoning can force it. Yet it transforms the value of the creature loved as utterly as the sunrise transforms Mont Blanc from a corpse-like gray to a rosy enchantment; and it sets the whole world to a new tune for the lover and gives a new issue to his life. So with fear, with indignation, jealousy, ambition, worship. If they are there, life changes. And whether they shall be there or not, depends almost always upon non-logical, often on organic conditions. And as the excited interest which these passions put into the world is our gift to the world, just so are the passions themselves "gifts"--gifts to us, from sources sometimes low and sometimes high; but almost always non-logical and beyond our control."<sup>250</sup>

We are going to see later on the role by which the emotional excitement alters the centers of our dynamic energy. This center plays the definitive role in the character of a person striking the balance between impulses and inhibitions.<sup>251</sup> "There is a pitch of intensity, through,

<sup>250</sup>

"Sick Soul," p. 147-148 (V.L.E.)

<sup>251</sup>

Ibid., p. 156-157

which, if any emotion reaches it, enthrones that one as lone effective and sweeps its antagonisms and all the inhibitions away"<sup>252</sup> "in these sovereign excitements, things ordinarily impossible grow natural because the inhibitions are annuled".<sup>253</sup> James comes to the extreme of saying: "great passions annul the ordinary inhibitions set by "conscience", "the difference between willing and merely wishing, and between having ideas that are creative and ideals that are put pinings and regrets, thus depends solely either on the amount of steam-pressure chronically driving the character in the ideal direction, or on the amount of ideal excitement transiently acquired."<sup>254</sup>

"The saintly character is the character for which spiritual emotions are the habitual center of the personal energy."<sup>255</sup>

The emotional element characterizes also the religious feeling which is "what Kant calls a 'sthenic affection,' an excitement of the cheerful, expansive, 'dynamogenic' order which, like any tonic, freshens our vital powers."<sup>256</sup> "The name of 'faith-state' by which Professor Leuba designates it, is a good one. It is a biological as well as a psychological condition, and Tolstoy is absolutely accurate in classing faith among the forces 'by which men live.' The total absence of it, anhedonia, means collapse. The faith-

<sup>252</sup>V.R.E., p. 257

<sup>253</sup>Ibid., p. 258

<sup>254</sup>Ibid., p. 261

<sup>255</sup>Ibid., p. 266

<sup>256</sup>Ibid., p. 495

state may hold a very minimum of intellectual content."<sup>257</sup>  
 "When, however, a positive intellectual content is associated with a faith-state, it gets invincibly stamped upon belief."<sup>258</sup>  
 This combination of creed and faith-state forms religions in the concept of James and "without regard to the question of their 'truth' and 'on account of their extraordinary influence upon action and endurance' he classifies them (religions) as the 'most important biological functions of mankind.'"<sup>259</sup>

We are letting William James speak for himself for we do not want to give the impression that we are contriving any explanations in what his irrational conception is concerned. We just had to give a truthful account of the implications of his term "passional nature." Let's keep in mind also that in his conception of emotions James reversed the usual assumption about cause and effect; it held that the emotion is the perception of certain bodily changes and not that the bodily changes take place as the result of the emotion.<sup>260</sup> Which position makes his subjectivism somehow deeper than the ordinary ones.

Thus we put an end to our extensive survey of all the mind determinants of the phenomenon of attention in James. We cannot deny that the emphasis has been put on the subjective side. Let's now enter into our more pertinent study

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257

V.R.E., p. 495

258 Ibid., p. 192

259 Ibid., p. 496

260 P.B.C., p. 375-376

of the Center of Attention and its fundamental mechanism. We are to bear in mind the total vision of the religious act in James as a Polarity--the higher control and ourselves, a release of the tension through the subconscious and finally the climax or the development of a center of energy with its resulting emotional situation.

#### 5. THE FIELD OF CONSCIOUSNESS AND THE CENTER OF INTEREST

What is the "Field of Consciousness?" What is its range? It is not a "single idea" but "the total mental state, the entire wave of consciousness or field of objects present to the thought at any time." "It is impossible to outline this wave, this field, with any definiteness."<sup>261</sup> And we might ask--is there any variety in the range of these fields? James feels that some fields are wider than others. As we have wider ones we see "masses of truth together" and we even project our vision beyond the field. "Drowsiness, illness or fatigue," "can narrow our fields almost to a point." All is a matter of "different individuals" for the "great organizing geniuses are men with habitually vast fields of mental vision."<sup>262</sup>

The most typical feature of these fields, as James points out is that "each has its center of interest,"<sup>263</sup>

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261

V.R.E., p. 226

262

Ibid., p. 226-227

263

Ibid., p. 226

as our fields succeed one another. All the other objects which do not have the spot of our attention "fade to a margin so faint that its limits are unassignable."<sup>264</sup> James points out some negative feature of that margin in that it has "undetermination." However, "lies around us like a "magnetic field" inside of which our center of energy turns like a compass-needle" guiding our behavior and attention.<sup>265</sup> This is precisely that active power of the margin but James really doesn't specify its influence on the center of energy. Also, to anyone familiar with the psychological ideas of Herbart all this description has a peculiar ring of similarity, in spite of the fact that James himself seems to ignore this connection. All the admiration of James is going to be given to Myers. Anyway, it would have been very convenient to clarify the influence of this magnetic field on the center of energy inasmuch as James is so fond of expressing the mechanism of such centers. Thus we read that description in the chapter of Conversion based at the same time on his theory of association.

We can find at least nine definite steps in the development of a system of ideas.<sup>266</sup>

- 1) His aims awaken interest which gather a certain group of ideas.
- 2) Exclusion of others.

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<sup>264</sup>  
V.R.E., p. 226

<sup>265</sup>  
Ibid., p. 227

<sup>266</sup>  
Ibid., p. 190-193

- 3) Transformation of the individual accordingly.
- 4) This gives a focal point to the succession of fields of consciousness or "soul."
- 5) But emotional interests may create new centers.
- 6) Which become centers of our dynamic energy (hot places.)
- 7) But oscillation of emotional interests
- 8) May bring "divided selves"
- 9) Or the focus may come to be permanently within a certain system-conversion-habitual center of his personal energy.

Now James asks the pertinent question why something becomes center of energy so that "everything has to re-crystalize about it."<sup>267</sup> The shifting of excitement of "sudden motor efficacy" responds merely to a worn-out symbolism of "mechanical equilibrium."<sup>268</sup>

We can discover five definite steps in this mechanical process.

- 1) A mind is a system of impulse and inhibitive ideas which mutually check or reinforce one another.
- 2) A new perception may bring a center of gravity for more stability.
- 3) This change of equilibrium responds to two factors. Retardation, if these are formed habits; acceleration if there is new information.
- 4) And when you get a subject in whom the subconscious life is largely developed, and in whom motives habitually ripen in silence:<sup>269</sup> these influences work subconsciously, even to the wonder of the subject.

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<sup>267</sup> V.R.E., p. 194

<sup>268</sup> Ibid., p. 194-195

<sup>269</sup> Ibid., p. 194-195

- 5) Emotional occasion are potent in precipitating a system's arrangement.

INFLUENCE OF THE SUBCONSCIOUS ON THE  
CENTER OF ENERGY

I think it is relevant to note that James refers to persons that cannot be converted inasmuch as their personal energies never get to their religious centers.<sup>270</sup> A remark which should be read by those who defend the "merely" psychological attitude by James!

James also refers to involuntary conversions, which is so much in agreement with those "motive ripening in silence" that he did mention. The term favored by James is that of "unconscious cerebration" of Dr. Carpenter to explain that type of conversion called "self-surrender" which coincides with the voluntary one in one James' opinion!<sup>271</sup> James so much trusts our "mere organic ripening"<sup>272</sup> that he has come out with a slogan of Christian psychological ascetism--"Let one do all in one's power, and one's nervous system will do the rest!"<sup>273</sup> Thus in his psychological reductionism everything should almost be sacrificed to the efficiency of the subconscious. That's the meaning of the other slogan "Hands off" when the new center of personal energy has been subconsciously incubated so long as to be just ready to "open into flower."<sup>274</sup>

<sup>270</sup> V.R.E., p. 201

<sup>271</sup> Ibid., p. 204

<sup>272</sup> Ibid., p. 205

<sup>273</sup> Ibid., p. 206

<sup>274</sup> Ibid., p. 207

In order to defend his position, James establishes at this point a perfect harmony between psychology and religion "since both admit that there are forces seemingly outside of the conscious individual that bring redemption to his life. Nevertheless, psychology, defining those forces as 'subconscious' and speaking of their effects as due to 'incubation' or 'cerebration,' implies that they do not transcend the individual's personality; and herein she diverges from Christian theology, which insists that they are direct supernatural operations of the 'Deity!'"<sup>275</sup>

In order to play up this harmony, James enhances the psychological explanation given to the "self-surrender." Psychologically speaking, James seems to say, there are only two ways for conversion--either something over-powering breaks over us, or, by getting so exhausted with the struggle, we give up. This latter case seems to be the case by a mechanism of equilibrium by a new psychic energies moving toward the personal center and by recessing old ones toward the margin.<sup>276</sup> The inferior or the old is thus exhausted and makes way to the superior or new. Because of this internal operation and only because of it. James regards "self-surrender" "as the vital turning point of the religious life: contrasting with the "affair of outer works and ritual and sacraments,"<sup>277</sup> or "propitiatory machinery."

Once we have established the influence of the sub-conscious on the centers of energy, I think we should return

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V.R.E., p. 203

276 Ibid., p. 211

277 Ibid., p. 207

to that extramarginal field of investigation.

#### 6. JAMES' DESCRIPTION OF THE SUBCONSCIOUS

What there is beyond that margin? THE SUBCONSCIOUS:

"Our whole past store of memories floats beyond this margin, ready at a touch to come in; and the entire mass of residual powers, impulses, and knowledges that constitute our empirical self.<sup>273</sup>

Somewhere else he defines the subconscious thus:  
 "A place for accumulation of vestiges of sensible experience (whether inattentively or attentively registered) and for their elaboration according to ordinary psychological or logical laws into results that end by attaining such a "tension" that they may at times enter consciousness with something like a burst."<sup>279</sup>

James sees a very significant psychological value in this content. As a matter of fact, he terms as "the most important step forward that has occurred in psychology" since he has been a student "the discovery, first made in 1886, that, in certain subjects, at least, there is not only the consciousness of the ordinary field, with its usual center and margin, but an addition thereto in the shape of a set of memories, thoughts and feelings which are extramarginal and outside of the primary consciousness

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V.R.E., p. 227

279

Ibid., p. 227 Notice; a) Storage place; b) Its source-sensible experience of two kinds (as registered or not by attention) c) Elaboration of the subconscious elements, d) Result--Tension and Burst back into consciousness.

altogether, but yet must be classed as conscious facts of some sort, able to reveal their presence by unmistakable signs."<sup>280</sup>

I think that the tribute is payed here by James to Frederic Myers who was developing over the years from about 1880 to 1900 a theory of the subconscious of the "subliminal", to which a few, notable the philosopher von Hartman,, had devoted major efforts, and to which a few psychiatrists, such as Janet were beginning to dedicate experiments.

In 1901 James wrote in the "Proceedings of the Society for Psychical Research"<sup>281</sup> that Myers had endowed psychology with a new problem--the exploration of the subliminal region being destined henceforth to be called "Myer's Problem" having "pushed forward the topographical survey of that region."<sup>282</sup>

#### PROOF OF THE SUBCONSCIOUS

James remarks that "the human material on which the demonstration has been made has so far been rather limited and in part at least, eccentric, consisting of unusually suggestible hypnotic subjects and of hysteric patients."<sup>283</sup> Yet James appeals to a classical law of his Varieties--"the

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<sup>280</sup>

V.R.E., p. 228

<sup>281</sup>

Vol. XVII Part XLII-Reprinted in "Memories and Studies", New York, Longmans Green, 1911.

<sup>282</sup>

See Review of "Human personality and its survival of Bodily death" - Proceedings Vol. XVIII-Part XLVI, June, 1903

<sup>283</sup>

V.R.E., p. 229

elementary mechanisms of our life are presumably so uniform that what is shown to be true in a marked degree of some persons is probably true in some degree of all."<sup>234</sup> He had already said in his first lecture "Religion and Neurology" that it "leads to a better understanding of a thing's significance to consider its exaggerations and perversions."<sup>235</sup> James terms this type of learning "by contrast"<sup>236</sup> to its normal size, because "we learn most about a thing when we view it under a microscope, as it were, or in its most exaggerated form."<sup>237</sup>

We actually know that "The Varieties" were received with the common criticism of stressing too much morbid cases.<sup>238</sup>

#### AUTOMATISM

The most outstanding feature of this reservoir is that of the fermentation of the subliminal memories up to the tension point so as to produce a burst into the conscious. This is a phenomenon of automatism defined by James following Myers as "uprushes" into the ordinary consciousness of energies originating in the subliminal part of the mind."<sup>239</sup> "The most important consequences, says James, of having a strongly developed ultramarginal life of this sort is that one's ordinary fields of consciousness are liable to incursions from it of which the subject does not guess the source, and which therefore, take for him the form of unaccountable impulses to act, or inhibitions of action, of obsessive ideas, or even hallucinations of sight or hearing. The

234 V.R.E., p. 229  
 235 Ibid., p. 23  
 236 Ibid., p. 23  
 237 Ibid., p. 39

impulses may take the direction of automatic speech or writing, the meaning of which the subject himself may not understand even while he utters it; and generalizing this phenomenon, Mr. Myers has given the name of "automatism," sensory or motor, emotional or intellectual, this whole sphere of effects, due to "uprushes" into the ordinary consciousness of energies originating in the subliminal parts of the mind."<sup>290</sup>

"The simple instance" of automatism offered by James is that of "post-hypnotic suggestion"<sup>291</sup> and "patients with hysteria" with "whole systems of underground life, in the form of memories of a painful sort" with "parasitic existence" with a "whole procession of symptoms," but "alter or abolish by suggestion these subconscious memories and the patient immediately gets well."<sup>292</sup>

#### HYPNOSIS

No doubt that the hypnotic experiment is conclusive inasmuch as "we ourselves create the source by our suggestion" and "so we know it directly." In relation to the "lost memories" of the hysteric cases, which "have to be extracted from the patient's subliminal,"<sup>293</sup> I want to cite the very relevant case presented by Maritain. "A young girl experienced symptoms of anxiety, that were becoming more distressing every year, whenever she found herself in an enclosure like a closed room or the compartment of a train.

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<sup>290</sup>

V.R.E., p. 230

<sup>291</sup>

Ibid., p. 230

<sup>292</sup>

Ibid., p. 230

<sup>293</sup>

Ibid., p. 230

She happened to be an open soul and was accustomed to seeing herself clearly. One day when she was taking a walk in the country she said to herself, "It is not possible, there must be some explanation for it." She then began to reflect on her past. Suddenly the memory of a "Completely forgotten incident of her early childhood came to mind. When she was about three years old, she was once with her father whom she rarely saw and whom she greatly feared. (The father was separated from her mother.) She wanted to leave the room they were in. The instant she turned the knob on the door, her father put on the lock that was placed too high for the child's hand to reach. She made for the window, but her father closed the window and stood in front of it. The child felt herself imprisoned and overcome with anxiety and humiliation. It was easy to grasp the connection between this event of her early childhood and the anxiety now experienced by the young girl whenever she found herself shut up in a given place. Suddenly the symptoms of the building neurosis disappeared forever. This young girl, who knew nothing about psychoanalysis, had effected a psychoanalytic cure without knowing it."<sup>294</sup>

No doubt whatsoever that James had established the existence of the subconscious with the evidence of its

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<sup>294</sup>\*Freudianism and Psychoanalysis--by Jack Maritain--  
 "Freud and the 20th Century", p. 237-38, About Hypnosis,  
 William James writes in his Psychology: Hypnotism I 407; II.  
 128, 351; general account of, Chapter XXVII: methods, II. 593;  
 theories of, 596; symptoms of trance, 602 ff.; posthypnotic  
 suggestion, 613. \*Meridian Books, 1957, p. 230-258

effects. But he did not establish the necessary parallel level in the subconscious to the conscious psychic life and that the fruits of the subconscious are directly proportional to the capacity and activity of conscious life. Indeed, the reference to the origin of the subconscious is given in James' definition and traced to its sensitive experience, but it is just a topographical region of human beings different somehow from them. He calls it a "place for accumulation," and he overlooks that the subconscious is nothing but the human soul and its faculties as far as they operate without the clear attention of the psychological ego. For James and Myers the topographical diagram of the subconscious becomes a reality--an immense and shadowy chamber surrounding in a concentric manner the central chamber lightened by the conscious attention. Other time, is the invisible prolongation of the luminous spectrum of the conscience as we saw before.

Now, in this obscure place and invisible region Myers placed the transcendent or higher faculty that has the immediate communication with the spiritual world, the meeting of our human ego with the supreme ego or the more, the proper center of the mystical intuition. Now our question is, does the subconscious lend itself as the best explanation for those facts? Is it just a plain mirage, a scientific fad of the age and the natural tendency of "reductionism" of an age not yet sober from a big psychological discovery? If we establish in a categorical manner that the subconscious is nothing but the ordinary faculties of man without the

psychological attention and that the subconscious does not bring out anything that did not enter it before, is it still to be the "deus ex machina" of conversion and mystical intuition, of the insight of the genius and of the virtues of the saint? These questions shall be answered in Chapter III.

It is evident (and shall be even more so in the next chapters) that not much material has been gathered, regarding the subconscious from James' Psychology. In Chapter VI of Vol. I of his Psychology, James discusses the question, "Do unconscious mental states exist?" (Page 164). James seems interested in proving that the unconscious is nothing mental at all but merely latent traces in the brain. He replies to a series of so-called proofs for the subconscious, as many as ten, and he replies negatively to all of them, offering the explanation either of "lack of memory"<sup>295</sup> or "split-off cortical consciousness."<sup>296</sup>

It is interesting as a development of James' thought that the argument of hypnotism, used later as conclusive in the Varieties, is disregarded in his Psychology also as a case of lack of memory.<sup>297</sup>

As far as the arguments presented by Hartmann, James considers a "waste of time"<sup>298</sup> to consider them in detail.

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<sup>295</sup> Psychology I, p. 165

<sup>296</sup> Ibid., p. 165

<sup>297</sup> Ibid., p. 166

<sup>298</sup> Ibid., p. 169

The conclusion of James is this: "None...attached."<sup>299</sup>

Indeed, the issue of the subconscious is notoriously absent in his *Principles*. To this respect let us hear the words of Norman Cameron in his excellent speeca--William James and Psychoanalysis:<sup>300</sup>

When one considers James' medical and physiological background, his clarity as a psychologist and the brilliance of his literary style, it is at first hard to understand why he had so little influence upon the development of the abnormal psychology of his day, and why his influence since then has, if anything, grown progressively slighter. For one thing, of course, he himself never wrote out an organized account of psychopathology. His thoughtful and original work on religious experiences has been of most use to theologians; and his frank sympathies with psychic research tended ultimately to diminish rather than to augment his professional influence. The Principles of Psychology helped change the face of general psychology in America permanently, but had no such effect upon the abnormal. Once, during the last decade of his life when a difficult problem faced him, James mentioned as one alternative a return to the positions maintained in that work; but he dismissed it at once because, as he said, it would have meant undoing a lifetime of philosophizing. For he had deliberately and admittedly evaded there some very fundamental issues just to enable him to get the long job finished and the book into print. With the exception of his general concept of the continuity of experience, the *Principles* held little that was of direct use to psychopathology beyond the clear exposition of the views of some contemporaries.

It is in the productions of his last decade that the brightest hopes lie for the future of abnormal

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Psychology I, p. 170

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William James, "The Man and the Thinker," 147 pages. Addresses delivered at the University of Wisconsin in celebration of the centenary of his birth--by Max C. Otto-Dickinson S. Miller--Norman Cameron--John Dewey--Boyd H. Bode--J. Seelye Dixler--with Introductions by George C. Sellery and Clarence A. Dykstra--Madison. The University of Wisconsin Press, 1942.

psychology. But the medical and the educational practitioners of James' day were looking for some immediate help, for some simple formulas to apply to their difficult problems in personality disorders; and James had no finalistic system of hypotheses to offer. As I pointed out in my opening words, it was near the close of his life that an intellectual invasion was carried out which gradually imposed upon American thought, and particularly upon American psychiatry, a speculative system quite typical of nineteenth-century Europe, but diametrically opposed to fundamental pragmatic attitudes. It was a highly successful invasion. All the important things that James stood for were gradually eclipsed, while a rationalistic philosophy of the abnormal waxed stronger year by year, until today it dominates our official psychopathology-- a complete system, a finished product, a closed world.

The first important beach-head was established in America when Sigmund Freud presented the rudiments of his system at Clark University in 1909. James heard him there and left his impressions with characteristic directness. At the time James was urging the superiority of functional psychology over Titchener's structuralism; he rightly felt that psychoanalysis belonged more to the former than to the latter. And James at sixty-seven had still a generously adventurous spirit. "I hope," he wrote to Fournoy a few days after the Clark celebration, "that Freud and his pupils will push their ideas to their utmost limits, so that we may learn what they are. They can't fail to throw light upon human nature." He was very skeptical of Freud's dream theory, of being a regular hallucin, "he wrote to Mary Calkins; and to Flournoy, "I confess that he made upon me personally the impression of a man obsessed with fixed ideas. I can make nothing in my own case of his dream theories, and obviously 'symbolism' is a dangerous method." These criticisms are worth noting because the dream book, which had been published nine years before the Clark lectures, was regarded by Freud throughout his life as the keystone of his psychic theories. In 1931, when he wrote a few words introducing the third English edition, Freud said, "This book, with the new contribution to psychology which surprised the world when it was published (1900), remains essentially unaltered. It contains, even according to my present-day judgment, the most valuable of all the discoveries it has been my good fortune to make."<sup>301</sup>

<sup>301</sup>"William James and Psychoanalysis," by Norman Cameron p. 62-63 from William James "The Man and the Thinker"

As for James, his position regarding consciousness varied greatly at different times and in relation to different subjects. There is no denying that he was fascinated by Myers' theory of subliminal consciousness. This was directly connected with James' interest in spiritism and psychic research, to which I have already alluded. To the admiring student of James, who is not quite blinded by his extraordinary genius, his critical functions in the field seem definitely blunted; they are in quality far below his judgments in mundane matters. But even so, his conscious, subconscious, and unconscious are most of the time decidedly a matter of degree. They are what his admirer, the psychiatrist Adolf Meyer, always called a "more-or-less conscious." Even when James was flirting with a psychic research, his dominant concern seems to have been that of establishing this same continuity, here the continuity of the life before with the life after death.

I think it is quite feasible to assume that when are popularly called conscious, preconscious, coconscious, subconscious, and unconscious represent different degrees of accessibility in human behavior. They are after all only adjectives, descriptive terms which try to set off certain kinds of activity from other kinds. They do not create discrete worlds of existence. James liked to express this in terms of attention, and to compare it with the retinal fields of vision. Those matters to which we are directly and exclusively relating, James might have said, occupy the center of attention. This is only another way of stating the same fact; it does not introduce a new form of being or even a new function. Things to which we are partially or slightly responding may in the same sense be said to occupy what James called the fringes of attention. "The centre works in one way," he wrote, "while the margins work in another, and presently overpower the centre and are central themselves...Every bit of us at every moment is part and parcel of a wider self, it quivers along various radii like a wind-rose on a compass, and the actual in it is continually one with possibles not yet in our present sight." That is again only another way of putting it, an analogical and more attractive way.<sup>302</sup>

A completion of the presentation of James' theory of the subconscious as well as its corresponding criticism from

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<sup>302</sup>  
"William James and Psychoanalysis" by Norman Cameron,  
p. 77-78

our part shall be made on Chapter III and Chapter V and of course, again, in the Chapter of Conclusion and Criticism.

CHAPTER II. STUDY OF THE PRAGMATIC METHOD AND OF  
THE PSYCHOLOGICAL ANTECEDENT

"By their fruits ye shall know them,  
not by their roots."<sup>1</sup>

Relations of Psychology and Religion. The Pragmatic  
criterium. There are three fundamental ideas in this chapter

1. Study of the pragmatic method: "By their fruits".
2. Study of the relation of pragmatism and the religious  
experience.
3. Study of the "psychological antecedent": Not by their  
roots.

1. INTRODUCTION: EXPERIENCE AND PRAGMATISM

The two poles of his Religious con-  
ception--These two ideas were wonderfully expressed by  
Perry:

"An empiricist looks for knowledge to experience,  
and there is an implication that the "religious  
experience" will be the source to which one should  
turn for religious knowledge. The central religious  
experience is the mystical state which claims to know  
God. James supported this claim by the hypothesis of  
a subliminal self through which an individual may become  
aware of a sphere of life and a sustaining power beyond  
his normal consciousness. This is the religious datum,  
the further interpretation of which must be left to  
philosophy, guided by the "pragmatic" principle.  
Religious beliefs must be fruitful, and must be in  
agreement with man's moral and esthetic demands. The  
religious hypothesis has, in other words, two types of  
proof, the proof by immediate experience and the proof  
of life. This distinction not only reaches back to  
James's original coupling of empiricism and voluntarism,  
but affords the best clue to his philosophical develop-  
ment after 1902. Seeking a final metaphysics, and  
hoping to write it down in a definitive and systematic  
form, he oscillated between these two methods: a  
deepening and broadening of the notion of experience  
so as to provide an immediate apprehension of reality,  
and an elaboration of the practical and emotional

<sup>1</sup>

V.R.E., p. 21

demands which a true conception of reality must satisfy."<sup>2</sup>

"Pragmatism was not a new departure, even for James himself. It can be found in the concluding chapter of the Principles of Psychology, and in every book of James published after that time. It is the doctrine that the meaning of an idea consists in the particular consequences to which it leads. Particular consequences may be perceptual, practical, or emotional. If an idea has no such consequences, it means nothing. If the consequences of two ideas are the same then there is really only one idea. Stress the perceptual consequences and one finds James's empiricist maxim, that a thing is what it is experienced as; stress the practical and emotional consequences, one finds his voluntaristic doctrine that subjective motives play, and deserve to play, an important part in human beliefs."<sup>3</sup>

## 2. RELATIONS OF PSYCHOLOGY AND RELIGION

Before we analyze the issue of Pragmatism and of the psychological antecedent and the fundamental relation of these two issues, I think we should clarify once and for all the position of James about the relations of psychology and religion. James states simply that "if the grace of God miraculously operates, it probably operates through the subliminal door."<sup>4</sup> Thus, the instantaneous conversions are due to the fact that the subject possesses an active subconscious.<sup>5</sup> This, according to James, does not destroy its supernatural value, since the latter is determined by its fruits and not by its origin,<sup>6</sup> implying that the psychologi-

<sup>2</sup> Dictionary of American Biography, Vol. 9, p. 597, American Council of Learned Societies, 1932

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., p. 598

<sup>4</sup> V.R.E., p. 265

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., p. 232

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., p. 232

cal antecedent doesn't destroy the character of the produced phenomenon. James sets himself "against the notion that the worth of a thing can be decided by its origin." "If the fruits for life of the state on conversion are good, we ought to idealize and venerate it, even though it be a piece of natural psychology."<sup>7</sup>

All the first lecture of the Varieties is centered around his affirmation that it is not the origin what is important but the results even though the neurotic temperament might be the main condition to receive inspiration from the superior region. James declares with vigor that although, as a matter of fact, the religious persons might be neurotic, medical materialism is in the wrong as it is pansexualism upon trying to ridicule things by their origins<sup>8</sup> "By their fruits ye shall know them, not by their roots"<sup>9</sup> --The criterium for the judgment of those fruits is triplex according to James--immediate luminous--philosophical reasonableness--moral helpfulness--inasmuch as they should be related to "our own immediate feeling primarily and secondarily on what we can ascertain of their experimental relations to our moral needs and to the rest of what we hold as true."<sup>10</sup> Thus, we can conclude that for James the psychological antecedent does not destroy the produced

<sup>7</sup>  
V.R.E., p. 232

<sup>8</sup>  
Ibid., p. 11-12

<sup>9</sup>  
Ibid., p. 21

<sup>10</sup>  
Ibid., p. 19

phenomenon but it could very well be at the same time a decisive condition--as if he was stressing that the important thing is what happens, and not how it happens.

There is not a clear cut distinction between what is supernatural or infused and what is neurotic, but there is a very outstanding, a relevant exception described in pages 21 and 22 where, after playing up the value of the fruits and not of the roots and the testimony of Jonathan Edwards on behalf of "practice" as sure evidence, even to ourselves, that we are genuinely Christians, James remarks, assuming a catholic backing, that "the good dispositions which a vision, or voice, or other apparent heavenly favor leave behind them are the only marks by which "we may be sure they are not possible deceptions of the tempter"<sup>11</sup> and right afterwards James offers a delightful passage from Saint Theresa's autobiography, Chapter XXIII, where the Saint stresses "the jewels which the divine hand had left with her"--her actual dispositions. James strikes a good note to discern the deceptions of the tempter but at the same time makes it exclusive. James is too slave to the pragmatic results within anybody's religious frame of reference or as long as they bear enough luminousness for the subject. While doing this he neglects some fundamental aspects:

First, in the experience, in itself, he neglects its analysis and its relevant circumstances to determine whether it is good or bad.

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<sup>11</sup>

V.R.E., p. 22

Second, in the effect, ignores the motivation.

Third, in the How or the way it happens, overlooks that only God can reach directly any intellectual faculties, provided there is not previous sensitive knowledge--ignores that the subsequent operations of the soul that had the mystical graces are possibly only hers--and that sometimes the devil could nail things in such a way to the mind of somebody who has surrendered himself to him that in the "efficiency" resembles the way God operates on the spirit. There are besides some psychological effects that at first sight resemble these supernatural effects.

Now also the bad spirit could reach us through the senses both internal and external, thus we have to be careful of his approach to the soul, inasmuch as he could be a wolf in sheep's skin. In general, it can be said that there is some "affinity" or harmony between the soul and spirits. Thus, each spirit deals with the souls in a soft manner when there is similarity, in a harsh manner when there is not. Thus, the goadings of his conscience in the sinner are a good sign of spirit. However, it has happened that the bad spirit enters with a friendly attitude to end up being a tempter.

As conclusion, we can say that it is not enough to show one sign exclusively; one has to consider the matter of experience in itself, the end and the way. One has to observe the general process, being careful not to confuse the important with the irrelevant. But one cannot deny

certain very relevant marks as the conclusive one presented by Saint Theresa.

As such this discernment of the spirit implies a keenness and discrimination and a perceptive accuracy that cannot be dealt with easily. Most of the previous remarks were taken from the rules of St. Ignatius of Loyola to discern the spirits.<sup>12</sup> There are just a token of St. Ignatius' tremendous acumen and are precisely what constitutes the most outstanding missing point of the Varieties. As a matter of fact, James is going to give up on the extensive authority of the mystical revelations as they do not constitute a conclusive revelation--but of this James is himself responsible for the lack of discrimination of the experimental material used in his Varieties. He regarded them somehow "a study of morbid psychology."<sup>13</sup>

<sup>12\*</sup>

Ejercicios Espirituales de San Ignacio de Loyola #314 to 336. See also the spiritual advices of St. John of the Cross.

<sup>12\*</sup>-Note: Sister Miriam Joseph C.S.C. in her "A 'Trivial' Reading of Hamlet" distinguishes three successive steps in the science of the discernment of spirits: (1) Is a natural explanation of the appearance or the occurrence under consideration possible? Is it due to faulty apprehension of the senses or to illness or to imagination? If natural causes are ruled out, then it is preternatural and must be produced either (2) by an evil spirit, or (3) by the power of God acting either indirectly through a holy angel or through a sanctified human spirit, or directly. (A 'Trivial' Reading of Hamlet, 1960, by Sister Miriam Joseph, C.S.C. Extrait du Laval Theologique et Philosophique, Vol. XV, n<sup>o</sup>2, 1959.) "The discernment of spirits is a science that has received attention in the Church since the beginning. (See Summary in Pope Benedict XIV, 'De Servorum Dei Beatificatione, et Beatorum Canonizatione,' Opera Omnia (Prati, 1840), III, 584-614. Also the Catholic Encyclopedia, III 539; V, 28; SV, 477f. These summaries draw from Scripture, St. Athanasius' Life of St. Anthony (c. 270-356; Migne, Patrologia Graeca XVI), St.

<sup>13</sup>See Perry--Thought and Character, Briefer Version, 254

I would say that the exceptional distinction he made between the mystic (supernatural) and the neurotic is a tremendous inconsistency with a system that in spite of playing up the fruits and results stresses so much the psychological antecedents that the "conditio sine qua non" becomes so necessary and sufficient that it is not short from being a cause.

"His possession of a developed subliminal self, and of a leaky or previous margin, is thus a conditio sine qua non of the subject's becoming converted in the instantaneous way."<sup>14</sup> Then James wants to face the difficulty squarely-- "But if you, being orthodox Christians, ask me as a psychologist whether the reference of a phenomenon to a subliminal self does not exclude the notion of the direct presence of the Deity altogether, I have to say frankly that as a psycholo-  
gist I do not see why it necessarily should."<sup>15</sup> And here James gives the reason--

"The lower manifestations of the subliminal, indeed fall within the resources of the personal subject--his ordinary sense-material, inattentively

12\*-Note (cf.) Augustine, St. Thomas Aquinas, St. Bernard's XXIII Sermon, works of St. Ignatius Loyola, St. Teresa, St. John of Cross, St. Francis de Sales, St. Catherine of Siena, Gerson, Suarez, Etc. The discernment of spirits is applied also to the movements of nature and of grace, as described in Roman 7 19-25 and in the Imitation of Christ, Bok. III, Ch. 54; Hamlet, IV., 53-57)", p. 16-17

14

V.R.E., p. 237

15

Ibid., p. 237

taken in and subconsciously remembered and combined, will account for all his usual automatisms. But just as our primary wide-awake consciousness throws open our senses to the touch of things material, so it is logically conceivable that IF THERE BE higher spiritual agencies that can directly touch us, the psychological condition of their doing so might be our possession of a subconscious region which alone should yield access to them. The hubbub of the waking life might close a door which in the dreamy subliminal might remain ajar or open."<sup>16</sup>

Three things notes here James-- 1) The psychological presence of the subconscious in the individual to account psychologically for his automatisms. 2) A "logical" parallel between the sensitive perception of the external senses in consciousness and the (spiritual) perception of the spiritual reality through the subconscious. 3) A contrast between the open eyes to the external world which snuts a door to the spiritual reality while it is open to the subconscious. To this James adds "perception of external control,"<sup>17</sup> as essential feature of conversion. This element of "transcendancy"<sup>18</sup> remaining ambiguous as if James would put on equal footing of insecurity those who say that the subconscious explanation excludes God with those who explain conversion or mysticism in any other way. Of course, we could argue with James that the fact that the control is external (which for him is a perception and for us a theological reality) that doesn't imply an absolute lack of basis to discriminate between its being rather

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<sup>16</sup>

V.R.E., p. 237

<sup>17</sup>

Ibid., p. 237

<sup>18</sup>

Ibid., p. 237

"divine than diabolical"<sup>19</sup> and that it should give him the upper hand just for having the reality of the subconscious. For James external being is equivalent to "unknown" and from here, of course, we grant the impossibility of logical inference. I am not saying that James implies that the religious experience since it could be explained also without the notion of the divine reality, that it precludes God.<sup>20</sup> What I am saying is that James is so much interested in the proximate cause (psychological, for him) that he refers to the remote one ("external") rather as unknown. The inconsequence of James would be, in our opinion, in establishing (as he does) an immediate cause, insufficient for his purpose, and once it is established as a cause, he has to accept that it produces because of itself the effect. This would be a paradox in James inasmuch as he presents an explanation that eliminates that superior "MORE." I call it, (the cause) insufficient for his purpose, inasmuch as he is forced to present the real explanation of a psychological effect without destroying that external control. Can he do it? And why should the subconscious be able to perform something that the conscious cannot? It rather looks impossible inasmuch as the psychological subconscious depends upon the sensitive data while the mystical intuition lacks sensitive image. What is there in the subconscious that "de

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<sup>19</sup>

V.R.E., p. 238

<sup>20</sup>

See Collins "God in Modern Philosophy", p. 304

"Facto" and "de Iure" has to establish contact with the divinity? And James speaks in this sense, as we shall see later, when he refers to the "anaesthetic revelation",<sup>21</sup> which is nothing but provoked supernaturalism. Something also could be said of the validity of the distinction between the remote and the proximate cause when they are connected to produce the SAME effect. According to James the most typical feature of the conversion experience is the "sense of higher control."<sup>22</sup> This feature as such constitutes the frame or stage for the "hypothesis" of the subconscious: "Let me then propose as an hypothesis that whatever it may be on its 'farther side' the 'more' with which in religious experience we feel ourselves connected is on its 'hither' side the subconscious continuation of our conscious life."<sup>23</sup>

### 3. PRAGMATISM

Although Peirce did not accept James' theory of truth, it is a fact that James attributed his pragmatic theory of knowledge and its name to him. James' reference to Peirce is in the second lecture of Pragmatism:

"A glance at the history of the idea will show you still better what pragmatism means. The term is derived from the same Greek word PRAGMA, meaning action, from which our words 'practice' and 'practical' come. It was first introduced into philosophy by Mr. Charles Peirce in 1870. In an article entitled, 'How to Make our Ideas Clear,' in the 'Popular Science Monthly' for January of that year Mr. Peirce, after pointing out that our beliefs are really rules for action, said that to develop a thought's meaning, we need only determine what conduct it is fitted to produce: that conduct is for us its sole significance. And the tangible fact at the root of all our thought-distinctions, however subtle, is that

<sup>21</sup> V.R.E., p. 317-333

<sup>22</sup> Ibid., p. 238

<sup>23</sup> Ibid., p. 532

there is no one of them so fine as to consist in anything but a possible difference of practice. 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."<sup>24</sup>

The conception then is a system of expectations, experience projected to the future, foresight of effectivity. Pragmatism consists in the very first place in a method which interprets our idea of an object as "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." In other words, the meaning of an idea consists in its anticipatory value. This is a reverse of the traditional empiricism inasmuch as instead of going backward to its sensory original, the meaning of an idea looks forward to consequences. The truth of an idea then has to be related to its meaning, for if meaning is its anticipatory value, then verification should be the actual occurrence of the experience. Hence, it is said that "truth is the expedient in our way of thinking."<sup>25</sup>

Now it is extremely important to note that since for James "man's thinking is organically connected with his conduct,"<sup>26</sup> then we only form expectations for the purpose of action. This means that the actual occurrence of the

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<sup>24</sup>

Pragmatism: A New Name for Some Old Ways of Thinking, 1907, p. 46. Further referred to as Pragm.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid., p. 222<sup>26</sup> V.R.E., p. 433

experience is only an incident of practical success. Thus, the "expediency" refers to the dealing with the situation of an idea rather than to its content.

Pragmatism is rooted then in James' conception of knowledge and in the relation of thinking to action. The relation of pragmatism to James' conception of knowledge is evidenced in his own words: "We harness perceptual reality in concepts in order to drive it better to our ends."<sup>27</sup>

If knowledge is thus, hence it follows that the pragmatic method is the best for this foresight of effectivity.

His subjective conception of science was evidenced in his declaration:

"All that Schiller and I contend is that there is no 'truth' without some interest and that non-intellectual interest plays a part as well as intellectual ones."<sup>28</sup>

Perhaps Pragmatism is an effort to go over and beyond what is called "rational." They do not want to take rationality for granted as something self evident. This could explain James' effort in that other essay previously analyzed: On the Sentiment of Rationality.

James' pragmatism and his psychological view of the role of ideas in human behavior, was expressed in his essay "Reflex Action and Theism": "The sensory impression exists only for the sake of calling forth the final act".<sup>29</sup> Herein lies the practical approach of his pragmatism: "What

<sup>27</sup>  
S.P.P., p. 54

<sup>28</sup>  
L.H.J.<sup>2</sup>, p. 295

<sup>29</sup>  
W.B., p. 113-114

sensations we are to expect, what reactions we must prepare" stressing always the action component inasmuch as "the willing (acting) department and the feeling department, or in plainer English, perception and thinking are only there for behaviors sake."<sup>30</sup>

Now if we keep in mind James' theory of "the kinaesthetic image"<sup>31</sup> then we have to see the immediate relation of Pragmatism to the Psychomotor action as was so forcefully stressed by Muller-Freinfel: "pragmatism is for action and all action is related to motion."<sup>32</sup>

If we have to stress always the action component to the point "that thinking is for behaviors sake" or that "beliefs are rules for action,"<sup>33</sup> then we see why for James the final justification of all ideas, like their meaning, is to be found, not in their logical structure or in their origin, but in the service which they render to the will. It is the will which is responsible for our thinking this rather than that, i.e. for choosing concepts.<sup>34</sup> Thus, we have to stress pragmatism as a form of voluntarism. In the very first place, for James, the activity of consciousness is selective, interested, teleological.<sup>35</sup> The will, by dwelling upon one

<sup>30</sup>  
W.B., p. 114

<sup>31</sup>  
Psychology II, p. 558-579

<sup>32</sup>  
The Evolution of Modern Psychology, Yale University Press, 1936, p. 231-236.

<sup>33</sup>  
V.R.E., p. 434

<sup>34</sup>  
Principles, Vol. II, p. 283

<sup>35</sup>  
S.P.P., p. 65 "We harness perceptual reality in concepts in order to drive it better to our ends."

idea to the exclusion of the others, causes it to fill the mind and thus to express itself in outward action, while the intellect isolates and integrates things, imputes reality to them insofar as they are related to "our emotional life and active life" and conceives them under whatever aspect may prove most significant and fruitful.<sup>36</sup>

If it is the will which accounts for our choosing concepts and it is the will to which in the last analysis they are accountable, then, moral or aesthetic demands may properly be decisive where ideas are not verifiable in the qualified or limited sense of the fulfillment of sensory expectations. This is precisely the point of departure of James in his basic conception of the "Will to Believe" where he argues against positivism, that since science itself arises in response to practical demands, it cannot overrule them. But the problem is that James goes from the extreme of no acceptance of rationalism as a definite proof of faith to the extreme of blind fideism.<sup>37</sup> "Incidit in Scyllam cupiens vitare Charibdim." James comes then to define faith as the genuine option between two alternatives, neither one of which can be proven: "If religion be true and the evidence for it be still insufficient, I do not wish...to forfeit my sole chance in life of getting upon the winning side" by remaining skeptical or by failing to make a decision

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<sup>36</sup>

Principles II, p. 295

<sup>37</sup>

V.R.E., p. 73

when that chance depends entirely upon "my willingness to run the risk of acting as if my passional need of taking the word religiously might be prophetic and right."<sup>38</sup>

Thus, according to James, we have recourse to belief in situations where we are faced with living options which we cannot resolve by our intellect alone. If we cannot have a direct empirical verification, then at least we can form an hypothesis. Acting on this hypothesis is the only way to put it to test inasmuch as the believer's actions will be the testability of this hypothesis. Of course, the verification should be according to the ordinary pragmatic course of verification:

"Her only test of probable truth is what works best in the way of leading us, what fits every part of life best and combines with the collectivity of experience's demands."<sup>39</sup>

Since James knows that there is no hope for the idea of God to become a fact, he exploits "the satisfactory leading" of that idea toward some kind of perceptual conjunction with the object. Having left the testimony of the subconscious as ambiguous ("To come from thence is no infallible credential"),<sup>40</sup> he wants to reinforce it by establishing some kind of a connection between the hypothesis of God as manifested in our behavior and the fact presented by the mystical experience. In Lecture VIII or the Con-

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<sup>38</sup>  
W.B., p. 27

<sup>39</sup>  
Pragm., p. 80

<sup>40</sup>  
V.R.E., p. 417

clusions of a Pluralistic Universe, James plays up a specific religious experience: that of Luther. "Religious experience of the lutheran type brings all our naturalistic standards to bankruptcy."<sup>41</sup> The nature of this specific religious experience is described thus by James: "based on giving up our own will and letting something higher work for us."<sup>42</sup> Also in the phenomenon of Conversion he refers to "forces seemingly outside of the conscious individual that bring redemption to his life."<sup>43</sup> Thus, in his efforts to go over and beyond the naturalistic explanation of a merely and exclusively psychological explanation, James brings in Fechner's theories inasmuch as "the worth of belief that religious experience of this type naturally engenders in those who have it is fully in accord with Fechner's theories".<sup>44</sup> "In a word, the believer is continuous, at any rate, with a wider self from which saving experiences flow in."<sup>45</sup>

James was truly aware that his psychological explanation could not bridge the gap of naturalism. For this reason I insist that his pragmatic method has a character of complement to reinforce the supernatural value of the mystical testimony.

Thus, we have to see, in order to be fair to James, his

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<sup>41</sup>

P.U., p. 305

<sup>42</sup>

Ibid., p. 305

<sup>43</sup>

V.R.E., p. 207

<sup>44</sup>

P.U., p. 307

<sup>45</sup>

Ibid., p. 307

pragmatic method within the total perspective that he gives to the hypothesis of God. As a matter of fact, he himself offers a threefold pragmatic yardstick for it:<sup>46</sup> "immediate luminousness," "philosophical reasonableness" and "moral helpfulness." The first factor refers to the direct evidence of God that is given to us by the testimony of the mystics. There is a common denominator in the religious experience of a conviction of a "higher power."<sup>47</sup> The second factor refers to the consistency of this mystical fact with beliefs already accepted. In relation to this point, James would, for instance, establish the subconscious as a psychological explanation of the religious act so as to be consistent with science. The strict "philosophical reasonableness" is obtained by James through his pluralism and his experimental supernaturalism, as we shall see later. Finally, the "moral helpfulness" seems to play up the stimulation of the moral will provided by the hypothesis of God. These three criteria coincide perfectly with the program of pragmatism expressed before: "what fits every part of life best and combines with the collectivity of experience's demands, nothing being omitted."<sup>48</sup>

The relation of Pragmatism to the Varieties of Religious Experience was presented by Collins in the most relevant manner. After noting that the naturalistic explanation of religious experience was not intended by James as a refutation of theism, but one that could occur simultaneously with the

46 V.R.E., p. 18

47 Ibid., p. 498

48 Pragm., p. 80

notion of divine reality, he adds that James himself "emphasized that the hopeful, religious outlook is something precisely unattainable through a naturalistic hypothesis. This indicates his awareness of the problem of securing the determinate, logical entailment of a certain practical attitude from the hypothesis of God and of showing that certain states of consciousness are not only present, but also truly indicative of their object."<sup>49</sup>

The pragmatic method is then a necessary complement of the insufficiency of the naturalistic hypothesis. But the problem is that James, as Collins so remarkably notes, "did not fully work out his theory of indirect and practical verification,"<sup>50</sup> for he "failed to show that realizing a certain moral idea is precisely realizing a moral order intended by his deity".<sup>51</sup>(Note)

James realized, of course, that he could not apply the direct scientific method of pragmatism through which

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<sup>49</sup>

God in Modern Philosophy, p. 305

<sup>50</sup>

Ibid., p. 304

<sup>51</sup>

Ibid., p. 305. Note: I would add with all due respect to Collins that it is not only a matter of "failing" to show this or that, it is rather a matter of finding out whether James could have done it, within the context of his pragmatism. Our answer is that in James' view, truth is that property of an idea which asserts that there is a relation of satisfactory working between the idea of the object and the object. If this relation is not real, then truth is illusory in James' system.

the hypothesis of God may be proved to be a fact. Judging pragmatism in this manner as William Turner does in Vol. XII of the Old Catholic Encyclopedia (1911) is both an injustice and a misunderstanding of the range of pragmatism. Turner and many others fail to understand the implications of a system in which the idea "leads" towards some kind of perceptual conjunction with the object. Of course, everybody knows that what works satisfactorily is not the existence of God but the belief in God, but James himself is working on the basis that a direct inferential evidence is not possible and thus he tries to complement the testimony of the mystic with the demands of our moral and emotional life. If he failed in making the logical connection between a certain type of morality and his deity that's another point.

The point to consider in Pragmatism is rather its "action" component. We have to give James credit in presenting man as a fundamentally active being who utilizes his knowledge as a means for action most of his life. However, James has carried this thought too far. He made truth equivalent to utility. One could rightfully ask James whether in the functioning of ideas in the practical life the situation is rather reverse: A belief is useful because it is true; it is not true because it is useful. Indeed, the truth of a judgment is not its utility, neither is the latter an ultimate criterium of truth, since, if it is to be of value, it must presuppose a knowledge of the truth. But even this coincidence of the truth with the practical

utility is rather questionable in many scientific problems. There are indeed many judgments of higher mathematics, astronomy, history, etc., which have no bearing on practicality.<sup>52</sup> How could we apply the test of utility to them? But the most outstanding difficulty the pragmatist faces is in establishing the fundamental pragmatic criterium or the basis of their system. The principle of pragmatism cannot be established in pragmatic terms. Besides, the pragmatist lacks an ultimate criterium to establish the "goodness" of the fruits of life. Indeed, pragmatism holds that a theory is true if it is successful, if it is a belief enlarging human life. But what is the end or the purpose of life? Until I know the end and purpose of life I am unable to know whether the working out of my opinions will be good or bad, i.e., true or false. We might as well remember that utility presupposes truth and not vice-versa.

When we come to analyze the pragmatic method of James as applied to religion we discover that it has its ultimate roots in skepticism...Without forgetting another perhaps deeper root, namely, the unwillingness to admit the subordination to a transcendental maker. James' skeptical position was portrayed forcefully in the Lecture "The Value of Saintliness": "I fear to lose truth by this pretension to

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This is a very complicated problem. One of the most remarkable aspects of the progress of science is the growing utility of theoretical knowledge and the breaking down of barriers between theoretical and practical knowledge. It may well be that James had an insight (even if inadequate) into a very important aspect of knowledge reflected by previous thinkers.

possess it already wholly."<sup>53</sup> The thought of James is that one is closer to truth who admits his limitations than the scholastic philosopher who seems to deny them. Then James insists on the diverse judgments about religious phenomena to prove the lack of universal validity. However, the pragmatic attitude differs from the skeptic one inasmuch as the pragmatist tries to surpass skepticism. To put it in another way, as James himself did, it puts an end to fruitless and unending philosophical disputes. The whole function of philosophy, therefore, ought to be to "find out what definite difference it will make to you and me, at definite instants of our life, if this world-formula or that world-formula be the true one".<sup>54</sup>

It is within this perspective that we have to consider the meaning of the "Fruits of Life". In the Lecture "The Value of Saintliness," James decides that its value must be tested by the human value of its fruits.<sup>55</sup>

"What I then propose to do is, briefly stated, to test saintliness by common sense, to use human standards to help us decide how far the religious life commends itself as an ideal kind of human activity."<sup>56</sup> This human criterium follows from the fact that the "gods we stand by are the gods we need and can use."<sup>57</sup> After an analysis of saintliness

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<sup>53</sup>

God in Modern Philosophy, p. 327

<sup>54</sup>

Pragm., p. 50

<sup>55</sup>

V.R.E., p. 320

<sup>56</sup>

Ibid., p. 324

<sup>57</sup>

Ibid., p. 324

according to these human standards, James concludes by giving the saints "its towering place in history".<sup>58</sup>

James takes the reverse position of Nietzsche, for whom "the saint represents little but sneakingness and slavishness--He is the sophisticated invalid, the degenerate par excellence; the man of insufficient vitality--His prevalence would put the human type in danger."<sup>59</sup> For James, however, "economically, the saintly group of qualities is indispensable to the world's welfare".<sup>60</sup> But the issue of difference with Nietzsche is strictly pragmatic inasmuch as "there is in short, no absoluteness in the excellence of sainthood".<sup>61</sup> For James, then, the point of view of saintliness as doing God's will and of religion as a virtue included in justice (inasmuch as we are creatures obliged to worship God) is out of the question. Even the features of saintliness are described by James in experimental and psychologically descriptive terms: "The saintly character is the character for which spiritual emotions are the habitual center of the personal energy."<sup>62</sup>

Now, in order to fully understand the meaning and implications of James' pragmatism, I consider it absolutely necessary to analyze fully the pragmatic conception of this universe.

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<sup>58</sup> Pragm., p. 363

<sup>59</sup> Ibid., p. 363

<sup>60</sup> Ibid., p. 368

<sup>61</sup> V.R.E., p. 367

<sup>62</sup> Ibid., p. 266

"We have discussed the sense in which pure experience may become either a mind or a material object. If taken on one sequence it is a material object. If taken in another sequence it is a mind. Some experiences taken from one perspective are part of the history of a material object, a table; the same experiences taken from another perspective are part of the history of a mental object, my conscious self."<sup>63\*</sup>

"Two important new points are now to be noted. First of all, the material object and the self do not exist per se in the neutral monism of James."<sup>64</sup> Let's keep in mind his words: "There is no general stuff of which experience at large is made"---"there appears no universal element of which all things are made." Is it possible to find a more drastic denial of substance?<sup>65</sup> "They are simply the pure experience taken in different sequences. They are the sequences, so to speak, not the contents of the sequence. For this reason a second point comes to view: the same portion of pure experience can be in one sequence as part of the table and in another sequence as part of a self."

The pure experience is not "swallowed up" by one sequence to the exclusion of others.<sup>66</sup> "We may recall the illustration of James of an event occurring at a street

<sup>63</sup>"William James" by Edward C. Moore, Washington Square Press, New York, 1965, p. 145-146. \*Note. A more extensive discussion of James' relational theory of consciousness is offered in Chapter V.

<sup>64</sup>Ibid., p. 146

<sup>65</sup>E.R.L., p. 26-27

<sup>66</sup>"William James", p. 146

intersection.<sup>67\*</sup> An event taken in the "Main Street sequence" could at the same time be taken in the "Jones Avenue sequence". We may generalize the illustration by saying in James' favorite example, that a point may be found simultaneously on two lines if the lines intersect. Furthermore, an infinite number of lines may be drawn through any given point, so that the same point may simultaneously be part of an unlimited number of sequences. Thus a number of knowers may in fact know the same thing because they know simultaneously the same piece of pure experience. The same piece may in fact be simultaneously a part of the sequence that makes up a physical object and a number of minds.<sup>68</sup>

Finally, let's gather James' conclusions:

"But if, on the strength of these analogies, one should ask: 'Why, if two or more lines can run through one and the same geometrical point, or if two or more distinct processes of activity can run through one and the same physical thing so that it simultaneously plays a role in each and every process, might not two or more streams of personal consciousness include one and the same unit of experience so that it would simultaneously be a part of the experience of all the different minds?' One would be checked by thinking of a certain peculiarity by which phenomena of consciousness differ from physical things.

<sup>67\*</sup> Meaning of Truth, p. 49.

\*Note-Lovejoy says: "The intersection" of which he speaks is not a spatial intersection of two lines; it is a temporal intersection--the occurrence at a given moment of an event which has two different series of other events preceding it in time--The two contexts in question are admittedly different contexts." (The Thirteen Pragmatisms, p. 123, The John Hopkins Press, Baltimore, 1963)

<sup>68</sup>

"William James", p. 146

"While physical things, namely, are supposed to be permanent and to have their 'states,' a fact of consciousness exists but once and is a state. Its esse is sentiri; it is only so far as it is felt; and it is unambiguously and unequivocally exactly what is felt. The hypothesis under consideration would, however, oblige it to be felt equivocally, felt now as part of my mind and again at the same time not as a part of my mind, but of yours (for my mind is not yours), and this would seem impossible without doubling it into two distinct things, or, in other words, without reverting to the ordinary dualistic philosophy of insulated minds each knowing its object representatively as a third thing,--and that would be to give up the pure-experience scheme altogether.

"Can we see, then, any way in which a unit of pure experience might enter into and figure in two diverse streams of consciousness without turning itself into the two units which, on our hypothesis, it must not be?<sup>69</sup>

"The paradox of the same experience figuring in two consciousnesses seems thus no paradox at all. To be 'conscious' means not simply to be, but to be reported, known, to have awareness of one's being added to that being; and this is just what happens when the appropriative experience supervenes. The pen-experience in its original immediacy is not aware of itself, it simply is, and the second experience is required for what we call awareness of it to occur. The difficulty of understanding what happens here is, therefore, not a logical difficulty: there is no contradiction involved. It is an ontological difficulty rather. Experiences come on an enormous scale, and if we take them all together, they come in a chaos of incommensurable relations that we can not straighten out. We have to abstract different groups of them, and handle these separately if we are to talk of them at all. But how the experiences ever get themselves made, or why their characters and relations are just such as appear, we can not begin to understand. Granting, however, that, by hook or crook, they can get themselves made, and can appear in the successions that I have so schematically described, then we have to confess that even although (as I began by quoting from the adversary) 'a-feeling only is as it is felt,'

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E.R.E., p. 126-127

there is still nothing absurd in the notion of its being felt in two different ways at once, as yours, namely, and as mine. It is, indeed, 'mine' only as it is felt as mine, and 'yours' only as it is felt as yours. But it is felt as neither by itself, but only when 'owned' by our two several remembering experiences, just as one undivided estate is owned by several heirs."<sup>70</sup>

"The particular intellectualistic difficulty that had held my own thought so long in a vise 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."<sup>71</sup>

"What is true here of successive states must also be true of simultaneous characters. They also overlap each other with their being. My present field of consciousness is a centre surrounded by a fringe that shades insensibly into a subconscious more. I use three separate terms here to describe this fact; but I might as well use three hundred, for the fact is all shades and no boundaries. Which part of it properly is in my consciousness, which out? If I name what is out, it already has come in. The centre works in one way while the margins work in another, and presently overpower the centre and are central themselves. What we are thinking of at any time is the centre; but our full self is the whole field, with all those indefinitely radiating subconscious possibilities of increase that we can only feel without conceiving, and can hardly begin to analyze. The collective and the distributive ways of being coexist here, for each part functions distinctly, makes connexion with its own peculiar region in the still wider rest of experience and tends to draw us into that line, and yet the whole is somehow felt as one pulse of our life,--not conceived so, but felt so.

"In principle, then, as I said, intellectualism's edge is broken; it can only approximate to reality, and its logic is inapplicable to our inner life, which spurns its vetoes and mocks at its impossibilities. Every bit of us at every moment is part and parcel of a wider self, it quivers along

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E.R.E., p. 132-133 (The underlining is ours.)

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P.U., p. 221

various radii like the wind-rose on a compass, and the actual in it is continuously one with possibles not yet in our present sight. And just as we are co-conscious with our own momentary margin, may not we ourselves form the margin of some more really central self in things which is co-conscious with the whole of us? May not you and I be confluent in a higher consciousness, and confluent active there, tho we now know it not?"<sup>72</sup>

"The absolute is not the impossible being I once thought it. Mental facts do function both singly and together, at once, and we finite minds may simultaneously be co-conscious with one another in a superhuman intelligence. It is only the extravagant claims of coercive necessity on the absolute's part that have to be denied by a priori logic."<sup>73</sup>

"Is it probable that there is any supernuman consciousness at all, in the first place? When that is settled, the further question whether its form be monistic or pluralistic is in order."<sup>74</sup>

"...the drift of all the evidence we have seems to me to sweep us very strongly towards the belief in some form of superhuman life with which we may, unknown to ourselves, be co-conscious."<sup>75</sup>

For James then, "one of these knowers may be a sequence which is more all-inclusive<sup>76</sup> than the rest, more percipient or more perfect." This sequence may be what we mean by God. "Thus, the same bit of pure experience may simultaneously be part of a physical object, several human minds, and God's mind. But the physical object, the human knowers, and God are not entities in themselves, but only certain sequences cut out of the flux. They are different statues

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<sup>72</sup>

P.U., p. 288-290

<sup>73</sup>

Ibid., p. 292

<sup>74</sup>

P.U., p. 295

<sup>75</sup>Ibid., p. 309

<sup>76</sup>

The thought always occurs--What is the content of that inclusion once we have gotten rid of the subject-object distinction?

seen in the same piece of marble. From this same flux with its sequences we get a pluralistic universe. Not all the sequences will have points in common--some will be completely separated from others so that no intersection of any kind occurs. They will have no possibility of internal relations. They will continue a many, a plurality of things which will not get united in any way. Perhaps they may become united. But as we now know them they do not present themselves as united even in God's experience."<sup>77</sup>

"Only one thing is certain, and that is the result of our criticism of the absolute: the 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."<sup>78</sup>

"The line of least resistance, then, as it seems to me, both in theology and in philosophy, is to accept, along with the superhuman consciousness, the notion that it is not all-embracing, the notion, in other words, that there is a God, but that he is finite."<sup>79</sup>

"In such a flux where new sequences occur and new conjunctions of old sequences are made, new and unforeseen things occur."<sup>30</sup> This is change of novelty. One must keep in mind when discussing chance and novelty that they are possible only there where determination and indetermination

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<sup>77</sup>

"William James," p. 146-147

<sup>78</sup> P.U., p. 310-311

<sup>79</sup> Ibid., p. 311

<sup>30</sup> "William James," p. 147

co-exist in a hierarchy of dependence. Neither chance nor novelty are possible in the states of pure indetermination (chaos, non-being) nor in that of pure determination.

"Our analysis has led us to reject the two extremes of radical determinism and radical indeterminism. In what sense there is a middle-of-the-road course between the two extremes will be seen in the next chapter of the final cause.

"The science of nature, alone among purely human sciences, demonstrates by all of the four determinate causes in nature: the material, the formal, the efficient, and the final causes. As a cause, chance is indeterminate and accidental; it is not so much a cause as it is a plurality of causes. Since chance is deficient in intelligibility, it cannot be invoked as a principle of explanation.

"In the present chapter, determinism was presented as a viewpoint which ascribes unerring mechanical regularity to nature and which finds in so-called chance only a case of human ignorance of how mechanical laws are operating. Indeterminism, on the other hand, holds to the lack of order in the physical world and maintains that chance is the basic cause of all natural things. Whereas determinism tends to find only order in the world and to deny chance, indeterminism would deny order and affirm the fundamental character of chance.

"Chance was seen to be a cause of relatively rare and accidental deviations from the regular order which exists between a thing and its end. Fortune or luck is chance in matters affecting human will.

"Against extreme determinism, chance was seen to be real because there is a real disconnectedness between the causes of some events, whereas other causes of events are essentially connected. There is a real difference between the accidental and the essential, and chance is as real as this difference itself. But against extreme indeterminism, it was seen that there is order in the world which is more primary than chance. In the light of our distinction between randomness and chance, it was also shown that statistics, so often taken as an argument for chance, is actually evidence of order.

"For the most part, physical things follow an order; chance is the cause of deviations from that order, and such events are relatively rare. Hence, there is something to be said for both determinism and

indeterminism, each in its own way and in its own place.

"Chance is a kind of contrary of final causes, and with our discussion of chance now behind us, it will be appropriate to turn in the next chapter to a consideration of the final cause in natural things."<sup>31</sup>

James, however, does not explain chance inside of a co-existence of determination and indetermination. In his famous essay "The Dilemma of Determinism", he makes indetermination equivalent to chance--"We have seen that indeterminism is rightly described as meaning chance."<sup>32</sup>

Then chance rules the world, and as Perry remarks: "It is as likely to be the mishap of which man is the victim, as the opportunity of which he is the master".<sup>33</sup>

We have then: In this universe in which there is no co-implication there is room for chance and novelty. The novelty which James sought for his universe was found by him in perceptual experience. They were always new sequences. There was always something different and new in each experience.

"Time keeps budding into new moments, every one of which presents a context which in its individuality never was before and will never be again. Of no concrete bit of experience was any exact duplicate ever framed."<sup>34</sup>

This novelty in experience provided an "open universe" for our choices. There was never a predetermination that they should have been so. Then the end was open, it was undetermined.

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<sup>31</sup>"The General Science of Nature", (by Vincent Edward Smith, Bruce Publishing Co., Milwaukee, 1958), p. 207-208

<sup>32</sup> W.B., p. 159

<sup>33</sup> "Present Philosophical Tendencies", 1912, Charles Scribner's Sons, p. 254

<sup>34</sup> S.P.P., p. 148

"If we look at the general mass of things in the midst of which the life of men is passed, ask 'How came they here?' the only broad answer is that man's desires preceded and produced them. Human causal activity is the only known unconditional antecedent of the works of civilization..."<sup>85</sup>

If what is to become is not determined, then we have the possibility of helping to decide its conclusion. Thus, James opposes the views both of pessimism or optimism. James could not rest in either alternative. He wanted a world in which nothing was guaranteed. A world decided by human efforts. To this attitude he gave the name of MELIORISM.<sup>36</sup>

This universe is only possible if we all work together:

"Suppose the world's author put the case to you before creation, saying: 'I am going to make a world not certain to be saved, a world the perfection of which shall be conditional merely, the condition being that each several agent does its own "level best". I offer you the chance of taking part in such a world. Its safety, you see, is unwarranted. It is a real adventure, with real danger, yet it may win through. It is a social scheme of cooperative work genuinely to be done. Will you join the procession? Will you trust yourself and trust the other agents enough to face the risk?'"<sup>37</sup>

Those who James calls "tender-minded," who feel the need for peace and security, would not accept such a universe. Nor would the so-called "tough-minded," who see such a possibility as mere wishful thinking.

The outcome or supremacy of the good is not guaranteed,

<sup>35</sup>

S.P.F., p. 214

<sup>36</sup>

Pragm., p. 286

<sup>37</sup>

Ibid., p. 290-291

but is only made possible and it is presented as a goal for our endeavor. Pluralism "has no saving message for incurably sick souls".<sup>38</sup> It is not philosophy for the "tender-minded," it makes life worth living only for those in whom the fighting spirit is alive. This is the message of Pragmatism, Lecture I and of the essay, "Is Life Worth Living?" in "Will to Believe."

In the Introduction to the "Literary Remains" of his father, James distinguished between the religious demand for an ultimate well-being and that healthy-minded moralism in which "the life we then feel tingling through us vouches sufficiently for itself, and nothing tempts us to refer it to a higher source."<sup>39</sup>

James takes the middle position which eliminates the absolute God or the God of theism since for James any god that exists cannot know the end of the final end of the universe which is an "open universe" in which nothing is predetermined. Thus, he is not omniscient. On the other hand he should not be able to reach all the goals by himself for this would turn every human effort meaningless. Hence, this god is not omnipotent. The conception of this finite god is what constitutes the essence of "HUMANISM" of pragmatism.

James says that there is a possibility of a universe containing the possibility of a higher form of consciousness

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<sup>38</sup>

Meaning of Truth, p. 223

<sup>39</sup>

"Literary Remains of the Late Henry James", edited by William James, Boston, 1885, p. 116-117

than ours:

"I believe rather that we stand in much the same relation to the whole of the universe as our canine and feline pets do in the whole of human life. They inhabit our drawing-rooms and libraries. They take parts in scenes of whose significance they have no inkling...But, just as many of the dogs and cats ideas coincide with our ideas...so we may believe, on the proof that religious experience affords, that higher powers exist and are at work to save the world on lines similar to our own."<sup>90</sup>

This religious hypothesis of "humanism or pragmatism" could not be asserted as true or false until proved to work best in the widest sense and in the long run. However, he thought there was some evidence of it in the religious experience of the mystics and in various forms of activity reported by spiritualistic mediums.

"...the drift of all the evidence we have seems to me to sweep us very strongly towards the belief in some form of superhuman life with which we may, unknown to ourselves, be co-conscious..the 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 to be frankly pluralistic and assume that the superhuman consciousness, however vast it may be, has itself an external environment, and consequently is finite..that there is a God, but that he is finite, either in power or in knowledge, or in both at once."<sup>91</sup>

James was attracted to this type of God by the struggles he encountered with the problem of evil and

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Pragm., p. 300

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P.U., p. 309-311

free will. He says: "My primary reason for advocating it is its matchless intellectual economy. It gets rid, not only of the standing 'problems' that monism engenders ('problem of evil', 'problem of freedom' and the like), but of other metaphysical mysteries and paradoxes as well."<sup>92</sup>

With an omniscient, omnipotent God, evil could not really exist. This is what James so forcefully presented in his Varieties,<sup>93</sup> and formerly in "The Dilemma of Determinism". In "The Dilemma of Determinism," James says:

"If God be good, how came he to create--of, if he did not create, how comes he to permit--the devil? The evil facts must be explained as seeming: the devil must be whitewashed, the universe must be disinfected, if neither God's goodness nor his unity and power are to remain impugned. And of all the various ways of operating the disinfection, and making bad seem less bad, the way of subjectivism appears by far the best. (To a reader who says he is satisfied with a pessimism, and has no objection to thinking the whole bad, I have no more to say: he makes fewer demands on the world than I, who, making them, wish to look a little further before I give up all hope of having them satisfied. If, however, all he means is that the badness of some parts does not prevent his acceptance of a universe whose other parts give him satisfaction, I welcome him as an ally. He has abandoned the notion of the Whole, which is the essence of deterministic monism, and views things as a pluralism, just as I do in this paper.)"<sup>94</sup>

Such God would know how to get rid of it, being able besides to do it. Even more so, as He is all good and benevolent He would do so. The only legitimate conclusion

<sup>92</sup> Radical Empiricism, p. 194

<sup>93</sup> V.R.E., p. 139

<sup>94</sup> W.B., p. 167

for James (who understood evil as a positive entity) is that evil (non-man-caused) does not absolutely exist. But since evil was a reality, James preferred to eliminate God, and he preferred to create a system to try to overcome evil. Now well, in the case of a limited God, then He may be able to understand it, but not overcome it. And here is where our help comes, while in the religious experience we feel that he helps us: "a wider self from which saving experiences flow in."<sup>95</sup>

#### THE PSYCHOLOGICAL ANTECEDENT

- 1) Psychological bent of James.
- 2) The Mind and Body Problem.
- 3) The transmissive function of the brain.
- 4) The back-door theory.
4. THE PSYCHOLOGICAL BENT OF JAMES

The general trend in James is that psychological certitude is infinitely more significant in religion than is rationalistic certainty. Reasons are cogent in religion only when one's feelings have already been impressed in favor of the conclusions to which reason leads. With this priority of feeling as a matter of fact and since the kind of religion one has is thus determined more by temperament than by intellectual acceptance or rejection of various "proofs," James proceeds to make his famous delineation of two major temperamental types of religious outlook: the healthy-minded (tough-minded) and the sick-

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<sup>95</sup>

P.U., p. 309-311

minded (tender-minded). The religion of the healthy-minded is the religion of the once-born and is rather simple, while the religion of the sick-minded is far more complex and mysterious as the religions of deliverance (Buddhism and Christianity) in which the person dies to an unreal life before being born into real life or "twice-born".

In their extreme forms healthy-minded religion is naturalism and sick-minded religion is salvationism, or conversion. In conversion James tells us that the nature of one's religious conversion will depend largely upon the character of his field of consciousness.

Finally, when James has found mysticism too private and variable to stand as universal authority for the claim of religion to be objectively true, James then investigates religion's claims from the standpoint of philosophy. Both philosophical and theological formulas are secondary products whereas feeling is primary in religion. But philosophy's essential role is that of examination of the products of religious experience.

James concluded his lectures expressing his dismay at the amount of emotionality which he found in his manuscript, but since religion for him deals with concrete personal experience is also for him nearer to truth than the scientific abstractions. Anyhow, a common element may be discerned in the feeling of uneasiness about something wrong and in the desire to seek deliverance from it through the connection with a higher power. The hypothetical way to achieve this connection is through the subconscious.

The subtitle of the work "The Varieties of Religious Experience": "A study in human nature," is also a revelation of his psychological bent, confirmed by the testimony of thousands of individual experiences used almost without discrimination.

#### 5. THE MIND AND BODY PROBLEM

We must now consider a problem that was very dear to James' heart and in the words of Perry "the psychological problem which interested him most deeply":<sup>96</sup> the so-called mind-body problem. It goes without saying that in James' thought this actually became such a problem as a result of the rejection of the Aristotelian notion of substance and that of substantial unity of man. Human nature seems to consist of two very different things, a material body and an immaterial mind. What then, we ask is the relation? Is it that there are two trains, one of physical events and another of thoughts running along parallel to the other but without a mutual influence? This runs against experience, not to mention that it destroys the unity of man. Or could we perhaps argue with Descartes that mind and body are intrinsically different but that they interact with one another? But this runs against the unity of the human person, who is clearly not two substances but one. Or could we adopt the solution of materialism, reducing the mental to the physical? Or that of spiritualism which reduces the physical to the mental? However, empirical

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<sup>96</sup>

The Thought and Character II, p. 25

evidence clearly reveals both body and mind in man. Aristotle, as a matter of fact, with his theory of hylomorphic substance provided a view which escapes all the mentioned and possible difficulties. As far as James is concerned, we will find him expounding alternative solutions to the body-mind problem. First we will find him a self-defeated "interactionist", later an epiphenomenalist (the body alone acts) not to call him a gross materialist, finally he proposes a modified version of interactionism presenting the brain as a "transmitter". We could also present him as a spiritualist or idealist when he gets rid of the cartesian dualism in his famous essay, "Does Consciousness Exist", where what is subject may also become object and vice-versa.

In order to proceed with all clarity we are going to present the development of all these problems as they appear in James.

The "conscious-automaton" theory: So was called the notion that we are only beings who are conscious of the functioning of the automation in which we reside. If we seem to be conscious of what is going on but our consciousness does not affect what goes on, we are then merely spectators of our own mechanical functioning. Are we then merely automata? James denied such a conception--

In The Principles James quotes a passage from Huxley:

"It seems to me that in men, as in brutes, there is no proof that any state of consciousness is the cause of change in the motion of the matter of the organism. If these positions are well based, it follows that our mental conditions are simply the

symbols in consciousness of the changes which take place automatically in the organism; and that, to take an extreme illustration, the feeling we call volition is not the cause of a voluntary act, but the symbol of that state of the brain which is the immediate cause of that act."<sup>97</sup>

James also quotes an illuminating passage from Tyndall:

"The passage from the physics of the brain to the corresponding facts of consciousness is unthinkable. Granted that a definite thought and a definite molecular action in the brain occur simultaneously; we do not possess the intellectual organs, nor apparently any rudiment of the organ, which would enable us to pass, by a process of reasoning, from one to the other."<sup>98</sup>

When James began his acquaintance with physiology, he was himself an advocate of this theory. In the chapter of The Principles titled "The Automaton-theory," he tells us in a footnote:

The present writer recalls how in 1869, when still a medical student, he began to write an essay showing how almost everyone who speculated about brain-processes illicitly interpolated into his account of them links derived from the entirely heterogenous universe of feeling (consciousness).. The writing was soon stopped because he perceived that the view he was upholding against these authors was a pure conception, with no proofs to be adduced of its reality. Later it seemed to him that whatever proofs existed really told in favor of their views.<sup>99</sup>

In fact, in discussing the conscious-automaton theory in The Principles, James pointed out that the theory led to a more drastic conclusion than even its ordinary adherents came to, since it actually required us to assert that the psychic chain had no causal efficacy even mentally. The links, so to speak, were not linked.

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<sup>97</sup>Psychology I, p. 31

<sup>93</sup>Ibid., p. 147

<sup>99</sup>Ibid., p. 130

He says:

"Another inference, apparently more paradoxical still, needs to be made, though, as far as I am aware, Dr. Hodgson is the only writer who has explicitly drawn it. That inference is that feelings, not causing nerve-actions, cannot even cause each other. To ordinary common sense, felt pain is, as such, not only the cause of outward tears and cries, but also the cause of such inward events as sorrow, compunction, desire, or inventive thought. So the consciousness of good news is the direct producer of the feeling of joy, the awareness of premises that of the belief in conclusions. But according to the automaton-theory, each of the feelings mentioned is only the correlate of some nerve-movement whose cause lay wholly in a previous nerve-movement. The first nerve-movement called up the second; whatever feeling was attached to the second consequently found itself following upon the feeling that was attached to the first. If, for example, good news was the consciousness correlated with the first movement, then joy turned out to be the correlate in consciousness of the second. But all the while the items of the nerve series were the only ones in causal continuity; the items of the consciousness series, however inwardly rational their sequence, were simply juxtaposed."<sup>100</sup>

All of the various aspects of the mind-body problem-- the causal efficacy of ideas, the relation of ideas to one another, the nature of idea or mind as psychic entities-- were problems which intrigued James greatly. In seeking to solve them he developed his own approach, which led him to his famous notion of the "stream of consciousness" and to the significant analysis of mind as a function rather than a thing that is discussed by us in Chapters I and V. We will examine each of these.

James discusses the nature of mind in Chapter VI of The Principles of Psychology. This chapter follows the

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<sup>100</sup>

Psychology I, p. 133

chapter on the conscious-automaton theory and begins with the admonition that:

The reader who found himself swamped with too much metaphysics in the last chapter will have a still worse time of it in this one...The fundamental conceptions of psychology are practically very clear to us, but theoretically they are very confused, and one easily makes the obscurest assumptions in this science without realizing, until challenged, what internal difficulties they involve.<sup>101</sup>

And, talking of metaphysics: "The fact is," says James, "that the whole question of interaction and influence between things is a metaphysical question."<sup>102</sup>

Along this line of metaphysics, James suggests in the first place that ever since David Hume's famous analysis of the causal process in the physical order of things, all that causation has meant scientifically is a constant conjunction or correlation of events. But if we take this to be a definition of cause-effect, then there are appropriate correlations between physical and mental phenomena which require us to say that they are causally connected.

"But psychology is a mere natural science, accepting certain terms uncritically as her data, and stopping short of metaphysical reconstruction-- Like physics, she must be naive; and if she finds that in her very peculiar field of study ideas seem to be causes, she had better continue to talk of them as such."<sup>103</sup>

James suggests secondly that consciousness as a causally efficacious instrument is supported by evolutionary

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Psychology I, p. 145

102

Ibid., p. 136

103

Ibid., p. 137

arguments. As organisms become increasingly complex the possible modes of response to the environment increase many fold. There should develop, says James, in analogy with Darwin's thought, as a survival process, a function of selection among the many possible modes of response.

"If evolution is to work smoothly, consciousness in some shape must have been present at the very origin of things."<sup>104</sup>

James says: "consciousness is at all times primarily a selecting agency."<sup>105</sup> Consciousness chooses purposes toward which organisms direct their energies.

"In a word, survival can enter into a purely physiological discussion only as an hypothesis made by an onlooker, about the future."<sup>106</sup>

Consciousness selects means appropriate to these purposes. Purposes are left out of mechanical behavior.

It is only consciousness which is goal-oriented:

Real ends appear for the first time now upon the world's stage..Every actually existing consciousness seems to itself at any rate to be a fighter for ends of which many, but for its presence, would not be ends at all. Its powers of cognition are mainly subservient to these ends, discerning which facts further them and which do not.<sup>107</sup>

All of these arguments lead James to the notion that if there is no direct evidence for interactionism, there is sufficient circumstantial evidence to warrant accepting it. He, accordingly, writes his psychology from that point of view.

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Psychology.I., p. 149

105

Ibid., p. 139

106

Psychology I, p. 141 (The underlining is ours.)

107

Ibid., p. 141 (The underlining is James'.)

On the notion of consciousness, we may ask ourselves what kind of thing consciousness is.

The contemporary biochemical hypothesis is that "life" or "consciousness" is an emergent property of a certain complex combination of chemical materials.

James knew this theory in its nineteenth-century form, but did not approve of it. He says:

"Let it not be objected that H and O combine themselves into 'water,' and thenceforward exhibit new properties. They do not. The 'water' is just the old atoms in the new position, H-O-H; the 'new properties' are just their combined effects, when in this position, upon external media, such as our sense-organs and the various reagents on which water may exert its properties and be known."<sup>103</sup>

A further alternative which James rejects is what we call "The Mind-Stuff Theory."<sup>109</sup> This is the theory that mind is made up of some kind of immaterial atoms somewhat as matter is made up of material atoms. This "mind-dust" theory is elaborately refuted<sup>110</sup> although it has a merit which the emergent-property theory lacks, namely continuity. James objects to the abrupt introduction of consciousness into the evolutionary process. "If evolution is to work smoothly, consciousness in some shape must have been present at the very origin of things."<sup>111</sup> But in what shape? In a thoroughly Jamesian expression--which tells much about the intellectual temper of our author--he expostulates:

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<sup>103</sup>

Psychology I, p. 159

<sup>109</sup>

Ibid., Chapter VI

<sup>110</sup>

Ibid., p. 150

<sup>111</sup>

Ibid., p. 149

"What shall we do? Many would find relief at this point in celebrating the mystery of the unknowable and the 'awe' which we should feel at having such a principle to take final charge of our perplexities. Others would rejoice that the finitist and separatist view of things with which we started had at last developed its contradictions, and was about to lead us dialectically upwards to some 'higher synthesis' in which inconsistencies cease from troubling and logic is at rest. It may be a constitutional infirmity, but I can take no comfort in such devices for making a luxury of intellectual defeat. They are but spiritual chloroform. Better live on the ragged edge, better gnaw the file forever."<sup>112</sup>

It takes pages and pages for him to do it, but James eventually comes around to what looks suspiciously like a variation of the emergent-property view and which does not provide the continuity from the beginning of things which he felt evolution demanded as we saw before.

Acknowledging his inability to solve the mind-body problem--"a stream of thought accompanying a stream of cerebral activity, by a law yet unexplained"<sup>113</sup>--he examines the question of what thinking or conscious thought is. Is it a series of mental phenomena inhering in a mind-stuff or a soul-substance? To assert this is simply to hide the issue in a mystery--to say it over again under another name which explains nothing and hides everything.<sup>114\*</sup> If we avoid this approach, as a "complete superfluity," the only conclusion to which we can come is that thinking is a process, not a thing. There is no mind-substance, there is only a brain-process. Just as breathing is a function of

<sup>112</sup> Psychology I, p. 178-179

<sup>113</sup> Ibid., p. 343

<sup>114\*</sup> "Altogether, the Soul is an outbirth of that sort of philosophizing whose great maxim, according to Dr. Hodgson, is, 'whatever you are totally ignorant of, assert to be the explanation of everything else'". (Psychology I, p. 347)

the lungs and walking of the legs--and there is no immaterial substance to which they belong--so thinking is simply the biological functioning of the brain. When "we take the two formulations, first of a brain to whose processes pulses of thought simply correspond, and second of one to whose processes pulses of thought in a soul correspond, and compare them together, we see that at the bottom the second formulation is only a more roundabout way than the first, of expressing the same bald fact. That bald fact is that when the brain acts, a thought occurs."<sup>115</sup>

Having gotten rid of the mind and the soul, we now have left only a functioning brain producing a stream of thoughts--what James called "the stream of consciousness"--from which selections are made.

Thus although James did not solve the mind-body problem, he did attain an original modern formulation of it. Mind as an entity disappears. It becomes simply a brain function. A relation between the two is asserted on indirect evidence. The notion prevalent since Hume, and fundamental to eighteenth- and nineteenth-century associationist psychology, that consciousness is a series of isolated ideas associated by mental bonds, the atomizing of experience into bundles of isolable sensations, is denied. Substituted for this atomistic consciousness is a continuum of consciousness--a stream of consciousness. Where for Hume, and the

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Psychology I, p. 345

associationists, the problem was how to unite the isolated experiences given in sensation, James unites them as given, so that for him the problem is how to divide consciousness up into segments which are significant.

This general analysis of consciousness contains the two central ideas that governed James' later philosophical thought--the unity and activity of consciousness. We have already elaborated on James' reduction of relations, substances, activities, and another alleged transcendental elements to be continuities of sense-experience. Thus the unity of consciousness is a flowing stream, of which the "substantive" parts shade into one another through the "transitive" parts, and in which every object is surrounded by a "fringe" or accompanied by a "feeling of tendency" through which it passes over into another.<sup>116</sup> We have also elaborated on the selectivity of the mind as it attends to this or that within a "theatre of simultaneous possibilities" and thus "carves out" its own world from "the jointless continuity of space and moving clouds of swarming atoms."<sup>117</sup>

And since in James' epistemology the function of the idea is not to reproduce the object but to lead the way to it, the meaning of an idea looks forward to consequences instead of backward to its sensory original as in traditional empiricism. Thus, for James the origin of concepts is in their utility inasmuch as "We harness perceptual reality in

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<sup>116</sup>

Psychology I, Chapter IX

<sup>117</sup>

Ibid., p. 288-289

in concepts in order to drive it better to our ends."<sup>118</sup>

Thus, concepts or ideas are actively questioning the world are nothing but that "native structure" of the mind with which we order experience. James himself tells us that "the order of scientific thought is quite incongruent either with the way in which reality exists or with the way in which it comes before us."<sup>119</sup> "What we experience, what comes before us, is a chaos of fragmentary impressions interrupting each other; what we think is an abstract system of hypothetical data and laws."<sup>120</sup>

We should notice that the proposition "chaos of fragmentary impressions"--the essence of British Empiricism--(although in itself a non-empirical proposition) was received by James without consideration of a possible alternative. Thus, a man who was formulating his theories before Gestalt (although its forerunner in many ways) had to make this natural conclusion: "There are then ideal and inward relations amongst the objects of our thought which can in no intelligible sense whatever be interpreted as reproductions of the order of outer experience."<sup>121</sup>

Finally, to this analysis of consciousness can be traced the neutral monism of James. Actually this has to be so provided to give a metaphysical reading (as we do) to his doctrine of "pure experience." If James does not intend to give a metaphysical reading to his "pure

<sup>118</sup> S.F.P., p. 65

<sup>119</sup> Psychology II, p. 634

<sup>120</sup> Psychology II, p. 634

<sup>121</sup> Ibid., p. 639

experience" then his pragmatism is in danger inasmuch as the connections between our ideas and its practical consequences, between actions and percepts are illusory. Let's remember that James always insisted that experience showed relations--conjunctive relations at that. This was James' correction of British Empiricism for which connections between things were products of the mind. It seems then that his statement: "chaos of fragmentary impressions" represents an early stage in James' thought that he was to overcome with his Radical Empiricism.

#### 6. THE TRANSMISSIVE FUNCTION OF THE BRAIN

Originally delivered as a lecture by James at Harvard in 1898, his Human Immortality: Two Supposed Objections to the Doctrine was published as a small book.<sup>122</sup> Its second edition contains a preface with further elaborations. The body-mind relationship was one of those tragic problems which continued to fascinate James throughout his life. He returned to it after his Principles of Psychology in other, more philosophical writings where his views seem less "materialistic" than even the qualified epiphenomenalism expounded in his Principles.

The gap is bridged in his own fashion in this lecture. James argues that, though there is overwhelming evidence for the functional dependence of mind and brain, such dependence does not necessarily imply that the brain "generates" consciousness--it may merely "transmit" it.<sup>123</sup>

<sup>122</sup>

James, Human Immortality: Two Supposed Objections to the Doctrine, (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin and Co., 1898).

Behind the material world there may be a "continuum of cosmic consciousness" which is transmitted through material brains in a sense analogous to that in which light is transmitted through colored glass.<sup>124</sup> The concluding chapters of the Varieties can be fully understood only in the light of this hypothesis. James is also aware that differences in individuals will depend on differences in the transmitting media. Thus the release of the spiritual energy is determined by the psychophysiological ideosyncrasy of the individual or by the proper stimulus. This is the "conditio sine qua non" or psychological antecedent "quoad se" of the religious act. This type of development goes along with the description of the "back-door effects" done by James in the last chapter of his Principles. There he describes the "psychogenesis" or the genesis of ideas through an internal force, as opposed to natural selection. The focus of the logical and historical opposition between the Jamesian pragmatism and Spencerian evolutionism was in their approach to the relationship between organism and environment. For James the data of experience are not injected into the mind but the mind manipulates the environment. The activity of consciousness is selective, interested, teleological. It attends to this or to that within a "theatre of simultaneous possibilities" and thus "carves out" its own world from the "jointless continuity of space and moving clouds of swarming atoms."<sup>125</sup>

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We shall analyze the transmissive function of the brain in Chapter V.

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psychology I, p. 283-289

## 7. THE BACK DOOR THEORY

In the last chapter of his *Psychology*, James investigates how much "the connections of things in the outward environment" is responsible for our steady reactions "even though personally we have had of the things in question no experience."<sup>126</sup> This he terms "psychogenesis."

The "organic structure" is responsible for the necessary connections, while "experience" is of the non-necessary ones.<sup>127</sup>

The organic structure is not due to experience, although the evolutionists attribute it to the experience of ancestors, which James denies;<sup>128</sup> it is rather due to accidental congenital variations.<sup>129</sup>

James insists that he is dealing now with just the combination of elements. The Empiricist traces it to the impression from the outside world while the a priorist to the nature of things themselves, independent from experience ("experience means experience of something foreign supposed to impress us").<sup>130</sup>

The sequence of impressions is cause of our forms of thought. However, this "order of experience" is not cause

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<sup>126</sup>  
Psychology II, p.617

<sup>127</sup>  
Ibid., p. 617

<sup>128</sup>  
Ibid., p. 617

<sup>129</sup>  
Ibid., p. 618

<sup>130</sup>  
Ibid., p. 619

of all our forms of thought as the empiricists want.<sup>131</sup>  
 James enlarges now the meaning of the word experience<sup>132</sup>  
 so as to include the concept of psychogenesis or the  
 origin of our organic structure as due not to external  
 experience but to accidental congenital variations. James  
 distinguishes two modes of origin of brain structure--a  
 front door way or association, and a back door way<sup>133</sup>--due to  
 inner forces which have made the brain grow.

James rejects the conception that the "mere presence"  
 of the object will bring about the latter's cognition.<sup>134</sup>  
 He rather affirms: "This is because I am already in  
 possession of categories for knowing each and all of its  
 several attributes".<sup>135</sup> Those that James calls "original  
 elements of consciousness"<sup>136</sup> are "pure ideosyncrasies,  
 spontaneous variations, fitted by good luck"<sup>137</sup> and the  
 nature of the secondary qualities "depends more on the  
 reacting brain than on the stimuli which touch it off".<sup>138</sup>

Granting that the "time and space-relations are  
 impressed from without",<sup>139</sup> James now passes to the forms  
 of judgment on secondary combinations.<sup>140</sup> In the Natural

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131

Psychology II, p. 620

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Ibid., p. 622

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Ibid., p. 628

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Ibid., p. 629

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Ibid., p. 630

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Ibid., p. 631

137

Ibid., p. 631

138

Ibid., p. 631

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Ibid., p. 632

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Ibid., p. 633

sciences he tells us that the order of scientific thought is quite incongruent "with reality,"<sup>141</sup> experience being "a chaos of fragmentary impressions."<sup>142</sup>

Then James concludes that "there are ideal and inward relations amongst the objects of our thought which can in no intelligible sense whatever be interpreted as reproductions of the order of outer experience."<sup>143</sup> When James passes into the ethical field and that of aesthetic, he classifies it as "an ideal world, a Utopia" while the Pure Sciences "express results of comparison, exclusively" understanding by comparison "not a conceivable effect of the order in which outer impressions are experienced" but "portions of our mental structure."<sup>144</sup>

"The popular notion that 'Science' is forced on the mind, ab extra, and that our interests have nothing to do with its constructions, is utterly absurd. The craving to believe that the things of the world belong to kinds which are related by inward rationality together, is the parent of Science as well as of sentimental philosophy; and the original investigator always preserves a healthy sense of how plastic the materials are in the hands."<sup>145</sup> "What makes the assumption 'scientific' and not merely poetic...is that the things of nature turn out to act as if they were of the kind assumed."<sup>146</sup>

<sup>141</sup> Psychology II, p. 634

<sup>142</sup> Psychology II, p. 634

<sup>143</sup> Ibid., p. 639

<sup>144</sup> Ibid., p. 641

<sup>145</sup> Ibid., p. 667

<sup>146</sup> Ibid., p. 668

The metaphysical axioms are "postulates of rationality, not propositions of fact. If nature did obey them, she would be pro tanto more intelligible; and we seek meanwhile so to conceive her phenomena as to show that she does obey them."<sup>147</sup> In other words, they are not derived from experience (inasmuch as they are native structures of the mind), but rather, using them, it seeks to order experience in conformity to what seems to the mind to be rational. So also with the moral postulates. We do not get them from experience, but rather, using them, we seek for an ordering of experience that will conform to these as norms.

In relation to the particular problem presented by James here, that makes one think of the Aristotelian principles of thought, one has to keep in mind that in the big problem of the origin of thought, there are actually two sub-problems: 1) the point of departure of our thought; 2) the ultimate foundation of our thought. James is dealing here with the ultimate foundation of our thought. We all remember the Leibniz's distinction between truths of fact and truths of reason. There are indeed some judgments (as those of math and logic) whose ultimate foundation is not empirical (in spite of the fact that I need experience as a condition). Thus, when we define man as a rational animal, the subject (man) contains the predicate (rational animal).

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<sup>147</sup>

Psychology II, p. 670

however, if I say "man is talkative", this knowledge is not included in the definition of man although it flows from it, and on the other hand, is not necessarily gained through experience. However, upon the condition of experience, if I see Peter talking, the mind makes the connection between the property and the specific difference. Thus, immediately upon knowing what is a whole and what is a part, the intelligence knows the whole to be greater than the part.

When we come to analyze the moral statements, we also have to make the distinction between the point of departure of our moral value judgments and the foundation of the same. We can learn from experience, but moral value judgments are closer to being truths of reason than truths of fact.

But James, confusing the issue of the point of departure with that of foundation, gives an exclusive power to the structure of the mind.

Another point should be remembered here as a criticism of James. When he discusses the inner forces which have made the brain grow into a particular structure (mentioning "molecular accidents before birth" and "collateral and remote combinations, unintended combinations, one might say, of more direct effects wrought in the unstable and intricate brain-tissue"),<sup>148</sup> he states that "Our higher aesthetic, moral and intellectual life seems made up of affections of this collateral and incidental sort."<sup>149</sup> One cannot help

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<sup>148</sup>

Psychology II, p. 527

<sup>149</sup>

Ibid., p. 527

but remembering here James' denial of the emergent property theory as an explanation of consciousness out of a certain complex combination of chemical materials. By the same token, James' explanation of the emergence of the brain structure can never satisfy the principle that more cannot come from less. In this explanation of psychogenesis, the main point stressed by James is the development of the mind out of accidental inner forces. Given this structure, the effort of science is so to order our experiences with the empirical world that they fit into these modes of thinking. Other natural ways of thinking are the moral and aesthetic relations, but so described that "the aesthetic principles are that a note sounds good with its third and fifth, or that potatoes need salt."<sup>150</sup>

The ultimate foundation of the connection among things is the structure of the mind, but James forgets the things that are connected. He forgets the Aristotelian dictum: Nihil est in intellectu quin prius non fuerat in sensu-- knowledge begins with experience, but in each experimental datum the mind sees a nexus between subject and predicate, and this nexus, this link is a priori, independent of experience. The mind's task is to abstract the universally true values from the empirical aspects of reality. The empiricist is wrong when he explains the universality of human knowledge as a generalization of individual

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Principles II, p. 672

experiences, but James is wrong in attributing that universality exclusively to the mind independent from experience.

The significance of the "back-door effects" was aptly presented by Brett:

"This insertion of relations into consciousness at the level of feelings does not, however, dispose of all the problems. That certain forms of connection exist in the data of experience, that relations are in some sense external and given, is a valuable doctrine within limits, but it is not the whole truth. If it is pushed beyond its proper sphere, the doctrine will exclude all creative activity; it will leave us bound by the mechanism which Herbert Spencer so complacently described. James was not prepared to subscribe to this "brilliant and seductive" version of empiricism. The root of the trouble was the ambiguity of the word "experience." In spite of the apparent simplicity and clarity of their program, the empiricists were actually obscuring their proper subject and blurring the outlines. James announced that he would "restrict the word 'experience' to processes which influence the mind by the front-door-way of simple habits and association." With this characteristically popular form of expression James introduced his most recondite doctrine, namely, the description of the "back-door-effects." The need for this distinction is found in two characteristics of mental life. First is the fact that mental construction does not come in by the front door and is not to be regarded as an inevitable and universal product of the mere accumulation of data. The second is that there are levels of mental activity which can only be accounted for, if at all, by supposing that the differences in the types of response are due to some kind of evolutionary process. James is obviously unwilling to be dogmatic on this point, but he is concerned to give due recognition to the inescapable fact that there has been a development of the brain in the history of the animal organism and that these changes are correlated with the appearance of the higher thought processes. "We ought," he says, "to know a little better just what the molecular changes in the brain are on which thought depends, before we talk so confidently about what the effect can be of their possible variations." However, that there have occurred variations and that these are the physiological basis of higher functions he does not ultimately doubt; moreover, he is careful to say that if they

enable us "to take cognizance of objects" this must be understood to mean that "they steer us in our active dealings" with those objects. Having, so to speak, protected himself from attack by consideration of the physiological aspect and also by providing a pragmatic justification for the more complex mental processes, James proceeds to elaborate what is in effect an interpretation of the a priori forms of judgment and in general that whole structure of scientific thought which enables us to anticipate experience. To do this it is necessary to follow the middle path between Spencer and Kant. James defines this path by asserting that it is possible to go beyond the limits of traditional naturalism without taking refuge in the supernatural, by which he means the kind of rationalism expressed in phrases such as "pure activity" and "transcendent modes of thought." The exact problem with which James is struggling at this point is the nature of scientific thought. He says, "Nowhere does the account of inner relations produced by outer ones in proportion to the frequency with which the latter have been met, more egregiously break down than in the case of scientific conceptions." There is here a real and decisive break between action and reaction, between stimuli and response. "What we experience," says James, "what comes before us, is a chaos of fragmentary impressions interrupting each other; what we think is an abstract system of hypothetical data and laws." That statement sets the issue squarely before the psychologist: he must either account for this difference or stand convicted of distorting experience. Without following the argument in all its details, we may record the conclusion as stated in these words: "There are then ideal and inward relations amongst the objects of our thought which can in no intelligible sense whatever be interpreted as reproductions of the order of outer experience."

"Readers of John Locke's Essay are often left in doubt whether that astute thinker should be classed as a sensationalist or a cautious rationalist. James, who so often quotes Locke at important points in his argument, may also leave us in some doubt whether in the end he did not concede to the idealist many essential positions. In both cases the reason would be the same, for both were honest thinkers, more concerned to establish truth than to defend paradoxes. For Locke, the most urgent need was to eliminate such false pretensions as were concealed under the rubric of innate ideas; his followers showed more zeal than discretion in the business of cleaning the slate, and

consequently James had to consider rather seriously whether the slate itself was not being annihilated as well. Hence the curious spectacle of an empiricism that was not true to experience; an empiricism that was not 'radical,' because it retained prejudices no less undesirable than those which it rejected; and empiricism, in short, which had to be reconstructed in order to take in much that had been ejected and so become again a faithful interpreter of the variety and fullness of life.

"This, I suggest is the significance of that final topic in The Principles of Psychology, the chapter on 'Necessary Truths and the Effects of Experience.' If it were not probably an anacronism, I should like to say that the key to this chapter is the doctrine of emergent evolution. By the time James has finished balancing his accounts, we are conscious that his theme is the meeting of two worlds--the world of sense and the world of reason. But this is not a union of things opposed by nature or an uneasy alliance of the earthly and the heavenly faculties. It is a matter of distinctions rather than essential differences, and as such it does not require us to go beyond the limits of psychogenesis, so long as we remember that this must be the genesis of capacities that are literally new and higher. These, we are told, have not 'entered the mind' at all; they 'got surreptitiously born in the house.' The pure sciences 'form a body of propositions with whose genesis experience has nothing to do.' These are bold words. Reduced to factual terms they mean that the functions of comparison, judging, predicating, or subsuming are not deposits in the mind precipitated out of the stream of sense experiences like a residual sediment. Somewhere in that primary stage of growth the mind began to feel its own activity; it turned about to face the incoherent mass and demanded as much order and system as would make life more efficient and more desirable. The reduction of chaos to order begins with comparison; from comparison it goes on to classification. Things as they exist are always different, but not incommensurably different; the mind can manipulate them sufficiently to make them 'mean the same.' Granted this elementary principle of grouping, we can go a step further by selecting more comprehensive and therefore more abstract features of the groups; finally we arrive at those formulae for relationships in Nature which we call 'laws.' Here James has to remind us that he is not speaking of those 'classifications which were supposed to be ultimate insights into God's mind'; he is not even

asserting that we have any right to expect Nature to be rational and inherently capable of being ordered. On the contrary, experience teaches us that sometimes we succeed and sometimes fail which means that Nature sometimes tolerates reason and at other times is simply irrational."

"This subject has peculiar interest for anyone who tries to define the exact relation in which James stands to the major divisions of philosophy, to empiricism, rationalism, or realism. But we must now leave it, with one more quotation as summary: 'the mind is filled with necessary and eternal relations which it finds between certain of its ideal conceptions.' James confesses that only their bad repute keeps him from using the words intuitive, innate, or a priori; these terms do indeed seem very suitable, but we are not allowed to forget that these eternal and self-evident truths are never necessarily existent; they persist only as 'mental truths,' hypothetical constructions, empty forms waiting to be filled by that ultimate irrationality which is the world of real events."<sup>151</sup>

#### 8. THE PSYCHOLOGICAL ANTECEDENT - FINAL DISCUSSION

That grace has been given to man by God is a claim that is studied in theology, but some points concerning the relation of human nature to grace can be studied in philosophy. The difficulty which arises from the discussion of this relation in a purely philosophical way cannot be oversimplified. James himself was in this predicament as a psychologist, and I, as a critic of James, find myself for a double reason in his predicament.

Starting first as a critic of James, I say that there should have been made by him a preparatory theological formulation about the nature and effects of grace. This is so much so that the basic question of whether it is grace

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"The Psychology of William James in Relation to Philosophy" from In Commemoration of William James, Columbia University Press, New York, 1942, p.84-33.

which is operative in a particular instance cannot be answered on psychological grounds only. I am working on the principle that "grace must perfect nature, not destroy it." Thus, I assume a psychological impact. But when it comes to the formulation of such impact, the difficulty arises, specifically if "the effects of grace may mirror the effects of other influences on psychic mechanisms."<sup>152</sup>

This difficulty is increased by James' exclusive interest in the psychological relevance of the issue as revealed in his words:

"to find religion is only one of many ways of reaching unity; and the process of remedying inner incompleteness and reducing inner discord is a general psychological process, which may take place with any sort of mental material and need not necessarily assume the religious form."<sup>153</sup>

As a conclusion then we say that we might find psychological dynamisms independent from grace that are parallel to that of the psychological effect of grace in human nature.

On the other hand, while it remains true that the psychological effects of grace on human nature cannot be determined by psychological methods alone, one can hardly doubt (based again upon the principle that grace must perfect nature) that this psychological effect has to be one benefiting the personality of the individual. As Father Meissner puts it: "The answer that James proposes is that religious experience produces a psychological process

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<sup>152</sup>

William W. Meissner, "Foundation for a Psychology of Grace," Paulist Press-Glen Rock, New Jersey, 1966, p. 35

<sup>153</sup>

V.R.E., p. 172

which issues in unification of the self."<sup>154</sup>

Thus, the intervention of God in human beings leaves a psychological mark in the opinion of James,<sup>155</sup> and he expresses it in terms of a unification that overcomes the traumatic condition of the twice-born or a disintegrated personality. How this process of unification can be achieved through the subconscious is something that James would have to endeavor to clarify inasmuch as the identification of the psychological ego with the ego more-vast implies the confrontation of the two different levels, the conscious and the subconscious.

In Lecture VIII of his Varieties, James discusses fully "The Divided Self, and the process of its unification". It is in this place where James presents "the two ways of looking at life which are characteristic respectively of what we called the healthy-minded, who need to be born only once, and the sick souls, who must be twice-born in order to be happy. The result is two different conceptions of the universe of our experience."<sup>156</sup>

The relevance, in psychological terms of the twice-born is thus described:

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V.R.J., p. 32

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He also plays up the reverse: the psychological make-up of the individual also makes a difference. Thus the process of unification has considerable variations, depending upon the "mental material". We noticed before that James falls into psychological determinism as he restricts the flowing of grace to the capacity of the human channel.

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V.R.E., p. 163

"The psychological basis of the twice-born character seems to be a certain discordancy or heterogeneity in the native temperament of the subject, an incompletely unified moral and intellectual constitution."<sup>157</sup>

James refers to the "discordancy",<sup>158</sup> "inconsistency",<sup>159</sup> and "zig-zags" of this heterogeneous personality that culminates in the "psychotic temperament".<sup>160</sup> "His feelings and impulses are too keen and too discrepant mutually"<sup>161</sup> and "the phenomenon connects itself with the life of the subconscious."

Perhaps when James was describing this heterogeneity that popular expression of Auden of "the age of anxiety" was not as popular as it is the human fragmented nature which it describes. This paradox of the self turned against the self is described thus by James:

"The man's interior is a battleground for what he feels to be two deadly hostile selves, one actual, the other ideal."<sup>162</sup>

This special kind of struggle has been described already and in a very forceful way at that by Saint Paul, and James quotes him. Of course, James refers to the "classic example" of St. Augustine for his "psychological

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<sup>157</sup>  
V.R.E., p. 164

<sup>158</sup>  
Ibid., p. 165

<sup>159</sup>  
Ibid., p. 166

<sup>160</sup>  
Ibid., p. 166

<sup>161</sup>  
Ibid., p. 167

<sup>162</sup>  
Ibid., p. 168

genius has given an account of the trouble of having a divided self which has never been surpassed."<sup>163</sup>

We may conclude by saying that "as far as James the psychologist was concerned, the inquiry into the religious experience would have been just as valid and as interesting if there were no such thing as grace"<sup>164</sup> or God. He was working on a "strictly empirical basis" and, of course, he had to forget about theological realities that from the traditional Christian point of view make the whole difference in the world. You cannot discuss religion or grace from an exclusively experimental point of view.

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<sup>163</sup>

V.R.E., p. 169

<sup>164</sup>

"Foundations for a Psychology of Grace," p. 31

CHAPTER III. JAMES' HYPOTHESIS FOR THE EXPLANATION  
OF THE RELIGIOUS ACT

1. Marechal's opinion.
2. The frame for the theory of the subconscious -  
The Religious Conception of James.
3. Discussion.
4. Final criticism.

1. MARECHAL'S OPINION

We cannot think of a better introduction to this chapter than to bring two quotes of Father Marechal's which are going to be the basis of our discussion.

"Professor Leuba is hard on William James, whose religious psychology seems to him to lead to a 'fiasco'.<sup>1</sup> Perhaps it does, but we nevertheless find it superior to Professor Leuba's theory. Of James's Lectures on 'Religious Experience' certain results will no doubt remain, such as the discredit thrown on a purely medical psychologism, and the feeling of the necessity of a more careful and more sympathetic study of the religious fact. As for the theory of the subliminal adapted from Myers which crowns James's studies, if it has the merit--for Professor Leuba it is a weakness--of leaving a door open to metaphysics and thus implicitly recognising the impossibility for empirical determinism of reaching the fond of the real, it is, from a scientific point of view, nothing but a rather vague hypothesis, more an interesting point of view than an instrument of methodical investigation. The subconscious of James complaisantly opens its vaults to all the explanatory elements that one may wish to bury in them so as to bring them out to the light of day at the convenient moment. Such a hypothesis necessarily adapts itself to the facts--it is so plastic: but it does not constitute what is called, in the strict sense, a scientific theory. It may perhaps become that when the uncertain zone of the subconscious has been completely defined and delimited. In the present state of affairs nothing is harder to define psychologically than a 'subconscious element', and, as will be readily understood, no agreement reigns

<sup>1</sup> P. Deussen, Allgemeine Geschichte der Philosophie, I, 3; Die nachvedische Philosophie der Inder (Leipzig, 1903), p. 536

on this point between specialists who are keener about things themselves than about the fictitious unity of a word."<sup>2</sup>

"William James, after remarking that the mystical experience, though it may be authoritative for the subject favoured with it, offers no reasonable guarantee to unbelievers, professes none the less that the simple existence of this subjective experience breaks down the authority of the non-mystical or rationalistic consciousness, based upon the understanding and the senses alone,<sup>3</sup> to represent the totality of possible modes of knowledge. Later,<sup>4</sup> he proposes an hypothesis which seems to him to express the common nucleus of the most diverse forms of mysticism, and to connect this latter with experimental psychology without cutting it off from the contact which it perhaps has with an ulterior reality. Our conscious self is in continuity with a subconscious self (the equivalent of Myers' 'subliminal self'), which is not a degradation of the conscious Ego, but a profound region of still unexplored treasures in which both the intuitions of genius and the mystical intuitions are elaborated in silence. Ignorance of this subterranean working causes its effects to be attributed to a cause foreign to it--and herein, he thinks, we are only partially wrong, for the subconscious, which on one side emerges from the clear consciousness, is on the other side continuous with a vaster world which surpasses and constantly influences it. This transsubliminal Reality will, however, receive diverse determinations in the diverse systems of metaphysics. For a Christian this Reality will be God, whose grace, the source of light and lever of action, bases itself upon the human subconscious to put in motion as a consequence the higher faculties of intellect and will."<sup>5</sup>

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Joseph Marechal, "Studies in the Psychology of the Mystics," first published by Burns, Oates and Washbourne, Ltd., C. Burns & Oates Ltd., 1927, 1964; reprinted by Magi Books, Inc., by special arrangement with Burns & Oates, Ltd., p. 37-38

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V.R.E, p. 422-423

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Ibid., p. 512 ff.

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Cf. an idea of the same kind in A. Godfernaux, "Psychologie du mysticisme," Revue Philos., Paris, 1902 (t. 54), p. 169, n. I. According to this psychologist, who has, however, no authority in theology, "the point of application" of (actual) grace is "in the kenesthesia," in the general sensibility, and not in the higher faculties.

## 2. THE FRAME FOR THE THEORY OF THE SUBCONSCIOUS - THE RELIGIOUS CONCEPTION OF JAMES

We think that before we go into the discussion of the hypothesis of the subconscious as the explanation of the religious act, we should present the frame for the theory of the subconscious - the religious conception of James.

After examining the Varieties of Religious Experience, James finds that at least three elements are present in all religions: (1) The belief 'that the visible world is part of a more spiritual universe from which it draws its chief significance'; (2) the belief 'that union or harmonious relation with that higher universe is our true end'; and (3) the conviction 'that prayer or inner communion with the spirit' of the universe--be that spirit 'God' or 'law'--'is a process wherein work is really done, and spiritual energy flows in and produces effects, psychological or material, within the phenomenal world.'<sup>6</sup> Religion also adds 'a new zest' to life.<sup>7</sup> It gives to the believer 'an assurance of safety,' 'a temper of peace,' and 'a preponderance of loving affections' in his relation to others.<sup>8</sup>

Religion also is for James a personal matter. It is an individual's specific adjustment to the universe; and we

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<sup>6</sup> I.R.E., p. 475

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., p. 475

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., p. 475

have no right to assume that in all men 'the mixture of religion with other elements' is the same, or that the lives of all men 'show identical religious elements'.<sup>9</sup>

'No two of us have identical difficulties, nor should we be expected to work out identical solutions. Each, from his peculiar angle of observation, takes in a certain sphere of fact and trouble, which each must deal with in a unique manner.'<sup>10</sup> It follows from this experimental individualism that the 'divine' cannot be a single quality but must be a 'group of qualities'--each quality providing an object of worship for different and differently constituted men. 'A "god of battles" must be allowed to be the god for one kind of person, a god of peace and heaven and home, the god for another.' 'If we are peevish and jealous, destruction of the self must be an element of our religion.' But why should it be one if we are good and sympathetic to begin with? 'If we are sick souls, we require a religion of deliverance.' But when we are 'healthy-minded,' the need of salvation is not so great. The nature and quality of our religion depends thus on the type of person we are.<sup>11</sup> Thus, James, in religious matters, is a follower of Protagoras' dictum: "Man is the measure of all things." James' statements here are clear proof of his subjectivism. The qualification of this subjectivism is that of a "psychological determinism" as was explained in Chapter II.

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<sup>9</sup> J.R.E., p. 476-477

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., p. 477

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., p. 477

And the pivot round which the religious life revolves is 'the interest of the individual in his private personal destiny.'<sup>12</sup> This is true in the case of 'intellectually disciplined' men no less than in the case of 'crude savages.'<sup>13</sup>

If an individual acknowledges his deeds as wrong and if he condemns them, he has to that extent risen above those deeds and is in 'at least possible touch with something higher, if anything higher exists.'<sup>14</sup> There is within him, 'along with the wrong part,' something 'better'; and with this better part of himself the individual may now identify himself. (Notice how James extends the meaning of the expression--"better part of himself"--going from a moral situation of recognition of his wrong deeds (with a potentiality of goodness) to the point of making that possibility an existing fact.)<sup>15</sup>

James has given in Varieties of Religious Experience, pages 498-499, a moral connotation to the word "higher" being made equivalent to "better" (future part of ourselves). At the same time this "better" is made equivalent or of the same quality with a "More" outside of the person.

<sup>12</sup>  
V.R.E., p. 480

<sup>13</sup>  
Ibid., p. 481

<sup>14</sup>  
Ibid., p. 493

<sup>15</sup>  
This is a passage from the moral to the ontological.

This More seems to be also an "altogether other dimension of existence from the sensible and merely "understandable world,"<sup>16</sup> but is still a "more of the Same." James also speaks of the More in a psychological sense as the sub-conscious: "My present field of consciousness is a center surrounded by a fringe that shades insensibly into a sub-conscious more."<sup>17</sup>

I want to notice that in Varieties of Religious Experience, page 373, James speaks of "potential forms of consciousness" but which "are so discontinuous with ordinary consciousness."<sup>18</sup> This seems to contradict his statement in Varieties of Religious Experience, page 506 or page 503, although he qualifies his statement in Varieties of Religious Experience, page 509, restricting this continuity to certain points.

That is, he may see in his "better part" his real and true being. And thus he may come to look upon this better or higher part of himself as "conterminous and continuous with a more of the same quality, which is operative with universe outside of him,"--a "more" with which he can keep in working touch" or to which he can cleave "when all his lower being has gone to pieces in the wreck".<sup>19</sup>

The important questions, of course, are (1) "Is such a 'more' merely our own notion, or does it really exist?"

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<sup>16</sup>

V.R.E., p. 506

<sup>17</sup> P.U., p. 283

<sup>18</sup> V.R.E., p. 379

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., p. 499. For James what is "more" is "more of the same", no superiority in quality. Then where is the possibility for progress and perfection of the ideal order?

- (2) If it exists, "Does it act, as well as exist?" And  
 (3) "In what form should we conceive of that 'union' with it of which religious geniuses are so convinced."<sup>20</sup>

To answer these questions the theologians give their specific answers. They all agree that the "more" really exists, although they differ widely in their conceptions of its true nature. Some conceive it "in the shape of a personal god or gods," whereas others think of it as "a stream of ideal tendency embedded in the eternal structure of the world."<sup>21</sup> The theologians also agree in maintaining that the "more" acts as well as exists, and that "something really is effected for the better when you throw your life into its hands".<sup>22</sup>

On the third question, however, no such uniformity of the opinion prevails. The "union" of the individual with the "more" is conceived in a bewildering variety of ways. "Over this point pantheism and theism, nature and second birth, works and grace and karma, immortality and reincarnation, rationalism and mysticism, carry on inveterate disputes."<sup>23</sup>

While trying to answer the third question, James cannot rest satisfied with the one given by "Christian theology"; for "that would be unfair to other religions" and would constitute an "overbelief."<sup>24</sup> Philosophy must be broader than

<sup>20</sup> V.R.E., p. 500

<sup>21</sup> Ibid., p. 500

<sup>22</sup> Ibid., p. 500

<sup>23</sup> Ibid., p. 500

<sup>24</sup> Ibid., p. 501

any given theology. James, therefore, proposes "as an hypothesis" that "whatever it may be on its farther side, the "more" with which in religious experience we feel ourselves connected is on its nither side the subconscious continuation of our conscious life."<sup>25</sup> Through our unconscious we are in direct contact and in "union" with the "more" of the universe--"continuous with a wider self through which saving experiences come." And this fact, James believes, gives "a positive content" to religious experience.<sup>26</sup>

The "further limits of our being" reach out into an "altogether other dimension of existence from the sensible and merely 'understandable' world".<sup>27\*</sup> We may call it the mystic or supernatural region; but regardless of the name we apply to it, it is the region from which most of our "ideal impulses" originate. And in so far as this is true, "we belong to it in a more intimate sense than that in which we belong to the visible world; for we belong in the most intimate sense wherever our ideals belong".<sup>28</sup>

This "unseen region" with which we are ultimately at one is not "merely ideal." It is real, for it "produces effects in this world." "When we commune with it, work is actually done upon our finite personality, for we are

<sup>25</sup>  
V.R.E., p. 503

<sup>26</sup>  
Ibid., p. 505

<sup>27\*</sup>  
Ibid., p. 506 \*Note: Relate this to Note 18.

<sup>28</sup>  
Ibid., p. 506

turned into new men, and consequences in the way of conduct follow in the natural world upon our regenerative change."<sup>29</sup> If we now call this "higher part of the universe" by the traditional name of God, then God is real and "we and God have business with each other; and in opening ourselves to his influence our deepest destiny is fulfilled".<sup>30</sup>

That this God is also the "absolute world-ruler" is, of course, "a very considerable over-belief"; but almost everyone accepts it. Most of us regard it as in some way derived from our philosophy. In reality, however, it is our philosophy that is "propped upon this faith"--which is another way of saying that "religion, in her fullest exercise of function, is not a mere illumination of facts already elsewhere given, not a mere passion, like love, which views things in a rosier light." It is all this, to be sure.

"But it is something more, namely a postulator of new facts."

"The world interpreted religiously is not the materialistic world over again, with an altered expression; it must have, over and above the altered expression, a natural constitution different at some point from that which a materialistic world would have. It must be such that different events can be expected in it, different conduct must be required."<sup>31</sup>

In the "faith-state" and the "prayer-state," James contends, energy actually flows into our lives; but

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V.R.B., p. 505

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Ibid., p. 507

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Ibid., p. 503

what the future characteristics of this divine force are, James does not know. "The whole drift" of his education, he confesses, persuades him "that the world of our present consciousness is only one out of many worlds of consciousness that exist; and that those other worlds must contain experiences which have a meaning for our life also."

Although in the main the experiences of the other worlds and the experiences of our world "keep discrete," they do become "continuous at certain points and higher energies filter in".<sup>32</sup> This is, admittedly, an over-belief. But by adhering to it and remaining "faithful" to it, James feels he himself feels "more sane and true."<sup>33</sup>

Faith in God inescapably alters a man's life. That no alteration should take place is, to James, an "incredible proposition".<sup>34</sup> However, when asked, "just where the differences in fact which are due to God's existence come in," James has no hypothesis to offer beyond "what the phenomenon of 'prayerful communion'..immediately suggests."<sup>35</sup> And this phenomenon suggests that in the prayer-state "something ideal, which in one sense is part of ourselves and in another sense is not ourselves, actually exerts

<sup>32</sup> V.R.E., p. 509 (The underlining is ours.)

<sup>33</sup>

Ibid., p. 509

<sup>34</sup>

Ibid., p. 512

<sup>35</sup>

Ibid., p. 513

an influence, raises our center of personal energy, and produces regenerative effects unattainable in other ways."<sup>36</sup> James is so impressed by the importance of these effects produced by prayer that he adopts "the hypothesis which they so naturally suggest"<sup>37</sup>--the hypothesis, namely, that beyond ourselves there exists something ideal both other and larger than our conscious selves, but friendly to us and to our ideals. This power need not be infinite, nor need it be "solitary." "It 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".<sup>38</sup> James is convinced that a "final philosophy of religion" must at any rate "consider the pluralistic hypothesis more seriously than it has hitherto been willing to consider it."<sup>39\*</sup>

### 3. DISCUSSION

Having destroyed the theodicy of scholastic philosophy<sup>40</sup> and the notion of a transcendent God, James seeks out an

<sup>36</sup>

V.R.E., p. 513

<sup>37</sup>

Ibid., p. 513

<sup>38</sup>

Ibid., p. 515

<sup>39</sup>

Ibid., p. 576. \*Note: This is the "brevis Summa Fidei" of William James, which we consider necessary to bear in mind at the moment of discussing the final metaphysical conception of James in the next chapter V.

<sup>40</sup>

His arguments against scholastic philosophy are presented in Lecture XVIII of his Varieties.

immanent way of explaining religious experience satisfying both his pluralistic metaphysics of experience<sup>41</sup> and the pragmatic demands of man.<sup>42</sup> This experience must avoid the activity of the intellect, or, if you will, of its abstractive function,<sup>43</sup> and thus could rightfully claim to have surpassed Kantism inasmuch as the German philosopher declared impossible an empirical approach to God. After having noted that the mystical experience although carries authority only for him who has it, lacks it for someone else, nevertheless it breaks down the exclusive authority of rationalism.<sup>44</sup>

James offers an "hypothesis" which might serve as a "common nucleus" to this sublime religious experience in conformity with the science of religions.<sup>45</sup> "Man identifies his real being with the germinal higher part of himself,"<sup>46</sup> and thus "he becomes conscious that this higher part is conterminous and continuous with a WORD of the same quality, which is operative in the universe outside of him."<sup>47</sup> "Let me then propose, as an hypothesis, that whatever it may be on its farther side, the "more" with which in religious experience we feel ourselves connected is on its hither

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P.U., p. 303

42

"Is life worth living"

43

P.U., p. 360

44

V.R.E., p. 414

45

Ibid., p. 501

46

Ibid., p. 493. Note: Man identifies his real being with the germinal higher part of himself--Question: How can he if the higher part is subconscious?

47 V.R.E., p. 493. This paragraph for the manner of its expression is rather obscure in what it refers to the WORD

side the subconscious continuation of our conscious life. Starting thus with a recognized psychological fact as our basis, we seem to preserve a contact with "science" which the ordinary theologian lacks. 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 mind which are controlling, the sense of union with the power beyond us is a sense of something, not merely apparently, but literally true.<sup>43</sup>

We can say then that our conscious ego is in continuity with a subconscious ego (subliminal), a region where the intuitions of the geniuses and the mystical ones are elaborated in silence. Thus, this continuity seems to be for James a natural fact present in every individual, flows also from the fact that James explains the extraordinary cases as a result of having a superdeveloped subconscious life.

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<sup>47</sup> (cf.) of the same quality of the higher part of the self. James clarifies that the more whatever it may be outside of us is the subconscious inside of us or the higher part which controls during the religious operation and gives the impression of being higher. (V.R.E., 502-503)

<sup>48</sup>

V.R.E., p. 502-503

He also expressed his point in *Pluralistic Universe*, page 238, in these terms: "My present field of consciousness is a center surrounded by a fringe that shades insensibly into a subconscious more."

This region shall be called with different names, but for a Christian it will be God who works through the subconscious to set our faculties of intellect and will operation. James shall insist (and we shall show) that it is legitimate to attribute psychological antecedents to a series of consequents of superior character (as if he were implying that one doesn't have to explain with superior causes what could be with inferior) provided that one does not introduce other elements than those verifiable by experience. As we shall see James implies that what is not beyond our psychological forces is explainable within psychological realms. Thus, his explanation of the phenomenon, is purely "quoad se".

What is the "superior" for James?

For James the "more" is a more "of the same quality".<sup>49</sup> I think we should analyze carefully the implications of this concept.

We noticed already the moral connotation to the word "higher" and how James makes a passage from the moral to the ontological. Now we want to consider what it means to be

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<sup>49</sup>

V.R.E., p. 498-499

more of the same quality. We will see that for James there is a more intricate structure to this world than that of its physical aspects. This complexity of this world in which the ideal<sup>50</sup> and the real are mixed together is termed by James "piecemeal supernaturalism". In this conception our present consciousness is only one out of many worlds of consciousness that exist. They get in touch, however, at certain points. This is evidenced with prayerful communion, fact that is presented by James as a support for his hypothesis of the subconscious as a meeting point for these two realities "of the same quality." Before we present the convincing text, we should make these important considerations. We should notice that James, properly speaking, never answers our question of what is really superior. On the contrary, he puts everything on the same level of this world, and in his Pluralistic Universe he will grant a unique substance to this universe. Thus for James, what is "more" is "more of the same quality". Thus there is no difference in quality, unless the passage from the moral to the real is accepted.

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<sup>50</sup> Note: In order to fully understand the meaning of the "ideal" order to which James refers himself here, one has to place this notion within the perspective of his pragmatism as a system geared toward the future as to a final cause. Only with this in mind can we understand what James means by "differences" that the belief in God (as a postulator of facts) bring into the structure of this world. James is referring to the practical differences which are the empirical verification of the satisfactory leading of the idea of God "in the direction of a perceptual conjunction with the object." (Collins, *God in Modern Philosophy*, p. 302)

Thus a critic of James should never restrict his notion of causality to efficient causality alone. Within his pragmatic conception of the idea (of God) for instance leads in the direction of the object (God). Thus the ideal is a final

Then it goes without saying that James is caught in a tremendous dilemma, for how can he really surpass naturalism without supernaturalism? And how can something be more than natural if it is not supernatural?

These are the relevant texts of James:

"A MORE of the same quality."<sup>51</sup>

"The world interpreted religiously is not the materialistic world over again, with an altered expression; it must have, over and above the altered expression, a natural constitution different at some point from that which a materialistic world would have. It must be such that different events can be expected in it, different conduct must be required."<sup>52</sup>

This is what James calls "a postulator of new facts"<sup>53</sup> or a "thoroughly pragmatic view of religion."<sup>54</sup>

"It makes it claim, as everything real must claim, some characteristic realm of fact as its very own. What the more characteristically divine facts are, apart from the actual inflow of energy in the faith-state and the prayer-state, I know not. But the over-belief on which I am ready to make my personal venture is that they exist. The whole drift of my education goes to persuade me that the world of our present consciousness is only one out of many worlds of consciousness that exist, and that those other worlds must contain experiences which have a meaning for our life also."<sup>55</sup>

"Assuredly, the real world is of a different temperament, more intricately built than physical science allows."<sup>56</sup>

50 (cf.) cause for the individual and James verifies the satisfactory leading of this idea (its truth) in the demands of our experience (if it answers our need for action, and if it is coherent with our views about the world). (V.R.E., p. 18)

51 V.R.E., p. 499

52 Ibid., p. 503

53 Ibid., p. 508

54 Ibid., p. 500

55 Ibid., p. 509

56 Ibid., p. 509

"If one should make a division of all thinkers into naturalists and supernaturalists, I should undoubtedly have to go...into the supernaturalist branch."<sup>57</sup>

"But there is a crasser and more refined super-naturalism". James includes himself with the crasser variety which he qualifies as "piecemeal" super-naturalism."<sup>58</sup>

"It admits miracles and providential leadings and finds 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."<sup>59</sup>

Referring himself to the "refined supernaturalism,"

James adds:

"For them the world of the ideal has no efficient causality..the ideal world for them, is not a world of facts, but only of the meaning of facts...<sup>60</sup>

"I find it hard to believe that principles can exist which make no difference in facts...That no concrete particular of experience should alter its complexion in consequence of a God being there seems to me an incredible position."<sup>61</sup>

The difference in fact referred by James is that of "prayerful communion" and James adopts "the hypothesis which it naturally suggests"<sup>62</sup> or the existence of "something ideal."<sup>63</sup>

Let's then make a critical test of this famous hypothesis. The use of the rule seems to be exclusive by James. "Wherever we meet with a phenomenon of automatism,

57

V.R.E., p. 510

58

Ibid., p. 510

59

Ibid., p. 511

60

Ibid., p. 511

61 Ibid., p. 512

62 Ibid., p. 513

63 Ibid., p. 513

we should look for its source in the subject's subconscious life."<sup>64</sup>

We know already that for James there is "under all the discrepancies of the creeds, a common nucleus"<sup>65</sup> which consists in a certain mechanism or polarity, if you will, between a feeling that there is something wrong about us and that we are saved from that wrongness. Thus the tension of this polarity is overcome as long as we contact the supreme saving power.<sup>66</sup> Analyzing his very statement James proposes a dualism of different qualities - "wrongness takes a moral character" - "salvation takes a mystical tinge".<sup>67</sup> However, as we noted above, James has to overcome the difficulty implied in his progressive dualism which begins with one quality and ends with another. Are the forces to complete the process already in the mind? (And we argue so on the basis of James' declaration that the more. (suprapyschological, is of the same quality.) Accordingly, how is the conversion going to jump from the psychological level to the theological one? Why something that belongs to the subconscious, for the mere fact, ex sui iure, is going to become capable to produce or to condition what the conscious cannot? Whence the superiority of the subconscious?

<sup>64</sup>  
V.R.E., p. 230

<sup>65</sup>  
Ibid., p. 493

<sup>66</sup>  
Ibid., p. 493

<sup>67</sup>  
Ibid., p. 493

As to its moral point, James stresses that in conversion<sup>68</sup> there is rather a recoiling from sin than an approach to God. While one wonders of the typical reaction of the prodigal son missing the crumbs from his father's servant's table - as to its psychological features one wonders of a big inconsistency implied in James' statement that man "becomes conscious" that his subconscious is conterminous and continuous with a More of the same quality.<sup>69</sup> Conscious and subconscious are terms that exclude each other. This has to be taken into consideration in relation both to his conception of the divided self in which the moral process seems to be once and the same time to be developed on the level of consciousness ("moral remorse and compunction") and, according to James' theory or hypothesis, by "becoming conscious of the subconscious". James also has to keep in mind (or he should have) that the mystical acts in themselves are fully conscious and aware of the divine. Consequently, they are out of the proper field of the subconscious. For James, however, in spite of calling the mystical intuition "a great extension of the ordinary field of consciousness,"<sup>70</sup> he insists on offering the subconscious as the proper center of the mystical facts. James himself saw the limitations of his psychological reductionism and confesses:

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<sup>68</sup>

V.R.J., p. 205-206

<sup>69</sup>

Ibid., p. 498

<sup>70</sup>

"Collected Essays and Reviews," p. 500

"It thus is 'scientific' to interpret all otherwise unaccountable invasive alterations of consciousness as results of the tensions of subliminal memories reaching the bursting point. But candor obliges me to confess that there are occasional bursts into consciousness of results of which it is not easy to demonstrate, any prolonged subconscious incubation. Some of the cases I used to illustrate the sense of presence of the unseen were of this order; and we shall see other experience of the kind when we come to the subject of mysticism" - and he adds later "I make this remark in order that the reader may realize that the subject is really complex."<sup>71</sup>

And indeed it is, especially when James does not give the necessary distinctions and makes one wonder whether he was aware of them. Where, for instance, do we see in James a reference to the distinction between reason and the intellect? Just because the last root of our soul is so deep is it going to be relegated to the realm of the subconscious? Later, as we shall see, James is going to stress the "ineffability" of the mystical acts. But this feature is not due to the fact of their being subconscious but to the superiority of the mystical experience which cannot be translated in our language, all soaked up in the sensible, nor with ideas of reason that abstract after experience. During the ecstasy the conscience of the mystic is not sleepy, on the contrary, it is experiencing clarities that only the mind can reach and taste. The senses are indeed sleepy, reason is blind, and its potences are stuck, but the mind, the active intellect, and its properties are alert with conscience and activity.

<sup>71</sup>

"Collected Essays and Reviews", p. 231

We should also submit to analysis the implications of that "germinal higher part of himself" around which hinges the mechanism of conversion. To our questioning James replies that "the individual, so far as he suffers from his wrongness and criticises it, is to that extent consciously beyond it, and in at least possible touch with something higher. Along with the wrong part there is thus a better part of him, even though it may be but a most helpless germ --- and when salvation arrives the man identifies his real being with the germinal higher part of himself."<sup>72</sup> This type of reasoning could be acceptable insofar as it is evident that goodness antecedes evil. But that the goodness is of itself implies that the process does not exceed the psychological level or does not enter into the theological. While the distinction between the two levels of conversion is not given, conversion as something supernatural does not make sense.

If we keep in mind that whatever goes from potency into act is because of an act, we have the right to ask who activates this potential ego (in potential to be higher). James replies that it is the conscience of solidarity with the more. Hence, solidarity and the superior ego spring out simultaneously. This line of reasoning should be rephrased in this fashion rather - Any man is a holy man

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<sup>72</sup>

V.R.S., p. 498

in potency, but man as an activated potency is a substance that becomes saint. The saint that man becomes is, of course, identified with that man that was not a saint, but the transition from potency into act is not due to the fact that the same man becomes saint. This is as ridiculous as to say that the iron rod becomes hot because the iron identifies itself with the heat. If man "really" identifies himself with a real More, that is a real and distinct cause from the effect, could make it a philosophical explanation. But nothing gives what it does not have. However, James says that the theological demand of a real distinct cause is satisfied with this felt sense of higher control which coincides with our higher faculties. How much more realistic do you want to be? seems to say James. Conclusion - "the sense of union with the power beyond us is a sense of something, not merely apparently, but literally true."<sup>73</sup>

There are two premises in the reasoning of James - 1) "Starting with a recognized psychological fact as our basis"<sup>74</sup>

2) "The control is felt as higher," and provided that by hypothesis, our subliminal is higher and in control ("since on our hidden mind which are controlling").<sup>75</sup> The conclusion of James is existent "literally true" - or that "man is moved by an external power."

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<sup>73</sup>

V.I.E., p. 503

<sup>74</sup>

Ibid., p. 502

<sup>75</sup>

Ibid., p. 502

James suggests an overlapping of the fields of the More and of the subconscious, and as a psychologist he seems to be satisfied, having beside the additional guarantee of the testimony of the mystic. James takes it as evident the existence of the More following all theologians and theologies, and the existence of some kind of a union, but, "it is when they treat of the experience of union," James says, "that their speculative differences appear more clearly".<sup>76</sup> Thus he thinks that in the "well-accredited psychological entity" of the subconscious he has "exactly the mediating term required."<sup>77</sup> James refers to it as a "doorway"<sup>78</sup> which is the meeting point of - over-beliefs - mysticism - conversion - rapture - vendantism - transcendental idealism - and the visions, voices and raptures of all different religions.<sup>79</sup>

The existence of the More is evident to James inasmuch as "that which produces effects within another reality must be termed a reality itself,"<sup>80</sup> and James seems to point out that the More brings a new dimension and a guarantee of an ideal order<sup>81</sup> into men. God then becomes "a postulator of

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76

V.R.L., p. 500

77

Ibid., p. 501

78

Ibid., p. 503

79

Ibid., p. 503-504

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Ibid., p. 506

81

Ibid., p. 507

new facts"<sup>82</sup> like "that the world of our present consciousness is only one out of many worlds of consciousness that exist"<sup>83</sup> "yet they become continuous at certain points and higher energies filter in". This is what James terms as "overbelief" rooted on the particular function of religion.<sup>84</sup>

#### 4. FINAL CRITICISM

James, among the different hypothesis that are presented about the subconscious phenomena, prefers that of Myers and the experiences of the psychological automatism of Binet and Janet. But this is far from explaining the origin of religion, the normal religious facts and the conversions, both the fast and the slow ones. The religious facts (especially conversion with its hesitant parts and repeated falls) are opposed to the untamable facts of automatism. The converted man is fully conscious, the saint examines his conscience in the style of St. Ignatius and analyzes the motivations that lead him to God and can fully accept them or reject them. In those fast conversions there is an illumination to which the will surrenders itself, but this is not the case of the pathological cases or in the automatisms. But the book of James, "The Varieties" is a Museum of Neurotics and the cases related in their religious field belong to the abnormal kind, never presenting a description of the religious fact made, let's say, by Saint Thomas. More even, by confession of James and the criticism of his contemporaneous, the cases recorded

82  
V.R.E., p. 503

83  
Ibid., p. 509

84  
Ibid., p. 508

in the Varieties are morbid in most of cases.

The hypothesis of James is not clear and by his own opinion is ambivalent, ambiguous and inconclusive. (seraph and snake abide there side by side.) Therefore, James cannot offer security or guarantee that it is God or the Devil the superior force that only needs the proper receptive organ. The religious experience forbids us to leave the subconscious ego and although the religious sentiment could give motivation to reason to deduce the existence of a More, it is also true that the sentiment is not formally a form of knowledge but presupposes it (*Nihil volitum quin praecognitum*). And James, upon insisting so much on the subjective exclusiveness of this sentiment (without previous knowledge), seems to force upon us the wonder of the existence of something divine in our soul as capable of that product by its own psychic force. This is indeed a pantheism "de facto et de iure".

James groups such different cases as the influence of drugs and the rapt of Saint Theresa, the sentiment of the divine presence and the hallucination or the sentiment of the unreal, the pathological melancholy and the religious one. It is utterly against the scientific spirit to affirm a fundamental identity of compared cases based upon a certain number of apparent similarities. Indeed, one cannot say that it is utterly impossible to conceive a sum of consequent phenomena depending upon antecedent of a psychological kind similar (in a descriptive fashion) to those of the mystical union. But although the subconscious could generate this tremendous illusion it never could do it without a coordination of ele-

ments of consciousness. The psychological subconscious depends upon the data of the senses and thus, for instance, it is a fact that the mystical intuition lacks both image and specialization. Thus, upon forgetting James (as we shall see in its proper place) that the mystical intuition is not based upon any psychological act whose object has been abstracted from the senses, indeed he has to start the wonder whether the phenomenon was produced by the angel or by the devil! Indeed this mystical intuition has to be performed by a spiritual power that within man's power implies a previous act of an object abstracted from the senses. This direct operation or contact with a spiritual power is exclusively within the reach of God and forbidden land for angels or devils unless they take the road of the senses.

We do not deny that there are expressions of James that imply the exclusion of the Suprapsychological More, but this is a question or matter of emphasis on the part of James as he always plays up the psychological antecedent, the proximate cause not the remote. The inconsequence of James would be to assign or show an immediate cause insufficient for his purpose, which would create for James at the same time the paradox of an inferior but sufficient cause eliminating the superior one. This is, however, the cause of his "natural supernaturalism."

But the eternal question that one can ask James (and to all those contradicting the "nemo dat quod non habet") is why something that is pushed back to the sub-conscious has to be endowed by this very reason with the power of producing or conditioning what the conscient is incapable of doing? And

this insufficiency is so much the worse when we try to explain the mystical intuition that by its very nature is strictly spiritual and without image. Upon restricting the mystical intuition to the subconscious level James contradicts the fact that the mystical intuition is the plenitude of consciousness, although the external senses become impeded. Although, let's repeat it again, the theory of the subconscious contradicts his hypothesis that makes religion spring out of a "conscience" of identity between the personal ego and the wider Ego.

The emphasis of James on psychologism carries him to the extreme of abstracting the psychological act from the religious one. As a matter of fact James himself accuses Leuba of reducing the phenomena of conversion to moral cases "when we have cases of conversion into atheism". The influence of the psychological school, as Butler tells us in "Western Mysticism"<sup>35</sup> is this: its method is totally eternal - it is a science of the origin and not of the validity of the facts and upon limiting itself to consider the investigation into the mystical vision as a state of consciousness, excludes all consideration of the relation that the vision could have to the objective truth. Indeed, we add, if it is true that the faculties are specified by their objects, then the fault committed by James in the case of Mysticism is superlative...We could also add that in the analysis of the religious experience (besides being complete) alters the

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<sup>35</sup>

V.R.E., p. 343

order and starts (and stays there) with sentiment...But we should remember that also here, not only in Arithmetics the order of the factors alters the product...

There is in James the most tremendous inconsequence upon distinguishing the mystic and the neurotic when in his system one could provoke the religious experience by a drug! Besides this big inconsequence, the explanation of mysticism of James embraces a wide range of experiences that differ only quantitatively...The difference between the natural and infused contemplation is not there in his writings. Intuition and mysticism are identical. And even in the mystical vision he doesn't make the necessary distinctions.

A discussion of the "hypothesis" of the subconscious could be presented in the traditional fashion of an analysis of the conditions which a good hypothesis can be expected to fulfill. We could investigate its relevance to the facts, its testability, its compatibility with previous well-established hypothesis, its explanatory power and its simplicity. But we rather prefer to consider its lack of arguments both positive and negative. (Note that the positive argument should go first.) James gets rid of the proof of the existence of God, the power of abstraction and the scholastic method. Giving a good retort to the arguments of James against Scholasticism we should rather expect from this hypothesis of the subconscious: 1) something that it is universally convincing, and so much so that it could safely endure the surgical hand of Kant..2) Due to the incapacity of our mind, the formula of James is subjected to all the

limitations or nullity of "the things in themselves," for why should he admit this truth while we deny others? 3) and upon insisting upon the phenomenal aspect (counterpoint to the noumenal). James has to take refuge in the experience if he wants to talk of the existence of God, but he forgets that his reasoning implies a logical and a metaphysical order (not the less than the first cartesian truth),<sup>36</sup> for there is acceptance of the natural certainty, of the principle of causality, of the psychological laws and their ontological implications.

How easy it would have been for James to depart from the meaning of the "a posteriori" experience of conscience! Perhaps his problem was that of restricting the term experience to conscience, forgetting the physical, metaphysical and moral order. Indeed, we don't naturally experience God as we don't either the intelligence of James, although both realities can be concluded for the "a posteriori" effects.

The testimony of the reflection upon our own intellectual acts shows that the judgments in which we affirm the existence of those very acts are based upon an intuition or direct knowledge and are truly objective. This objective criterium of certainty determines the firmity of the assent and extends to whatever is objective!

Perhaps the great confusion of James was this: What happens "in" the conscience with what happens "on account of the conscience" in the same guise that some confuse in Ethics

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<sup>36</sup>

A priorism common to all subjectivistic systems!

the deed done in ignorance with those because of ignorance. Thus Saint Thomas hit the nail right on its head when he said: "Cognitio existendi Deum dicitur omnibus naturaliter inserta, quia omnibus naturaliter insertum est aliquid, unde potest perveniri ad cognoscendum Deum esse".<sup>87</sup> That these words are not tinged or tarnished at all with innatism becomes evident from this other testimonial: "Non aliter Deum notum habere possumus nisi ex creaturis ad eius notitiam veniamus".<sup>88</sup>

#### The Immanentism of James

True concept of immanence: Immanent action is that one whose term is received in the agent. Thus contemplation remains in the one who contemplates. Transitive action is that one whose term is received outside of the agent or in a different subject. Thus heat comes from the heater and it is received in the heated. This action, says Saint Thomas "est potius perfectio patientis, illa vero ipsius operantis."<sup>89</sup>

The Jamesian concept: To find out some bodily (somatic) antecedent or psychic accident which can become the cause or "conditio sine qua non" of the effect. This is what he terms "natural supernaturalism" or provoked mysticism. Thus the action of God is one with the action of the creature or of nature, wrecking the superior order inasmuch as the determinate factor of the supernatural action resides in the subject. Thus also, in another sense of immanent, conversion is ex-

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<sup>87</sup>

De Veritate, q. 10 a 12 ad 1

<sup>88</sup>

Aq. dd. de Veritate 18-a2

<sup>89</sup>

I-II q. XXXI a5 c)

plained by the subject's own energy as if the forces for the solution of the conflict of the heterogeneous personality had been precontained in the "germinal ego". Note besides that James calls the More "of the same quality" of the human ego.

Refutation of the Jamesian immanence: The determinate factor of the supernatural action is in the subject.

If operation follows being and such is the way of the operation as it is the being, then it follows that the divine being is not distinguished from man.

Also: The supernatural effect is a product of the natural order. Indeed, James talks as if the conditions of the subject were an "exigentia divini".

Is the religious sense cause or effect?

Having established that according to James we are united to the divine by means of a natural request or "exigentia divini," then we have to clarify that if we do not want to make man the creator of religion then we should make of that "exigentia" an effect of God. Then it is not the thirst the one that creates the goodness of the water, rather because there is water we can quench our thirst. This goes to clarify that in the very concept of religion or "vinculation to God," there is an Object of worship, a man who worships and a reason for the worship or the dependance on a Superior Being. Hence, it follows that the virtue of religion belongs within the cardinal virtue of justice and the "suum cuique" of justice is determined here by the "object" as it is the general case of justice.

The ultimate root of the Jamesian immanence: For James "the religious question is primarily a question of life."<sup>90</sup> Indeed, since religion is a form of life, hence it should be found in the life of man. This is the principle of religious immanence or the positive side of a philosophy that began with being agnostic and denied the knowledge of a transcendent God.

I have criticized James from the point of view of metaphysical pluralism. However, to be fair to him, it is necessary to investigate his theory also from the point of view of metaphysical monism. Thus, I want to present the reasons that persuade us that James is a monist:

First of all, I understand his theory of a 'pure experience' as a metaphysical conception and I think that James wanted in this case to transpose his stream of consciousness into a conception of reality. Perry says in this respect: "Radical empiricism consists essentially in converting to the uses of metaphysics that "stream of consciousness" which was designed originally for psychology. Some alterations were necessary, and it was for a long time doubtful whether these were possible. The 'Pluralistic Universe' announces that the doubt is dispelled. The result is to silence those qualms of his intellectual conscience which had hitherto prevented a step to which his speculative passion had impelled him--the adoption, namely, of the Fechnerian hierarchy of souls."<sup>90a</sup>

Second, the continuity between his early position in

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<sup>90</sup> V.I.E.

<sup>90a</sup> Perry, *The Thought and Character*, Briefer Version, p. 330-331

his Psychology and the metaphysical conception of Pluralistic Universe was sharply described by Lowe and summarized by us in Chapter I.

Third, all in all, his metaphysics is that of a neutral monism which reduces the body-soul issue to neutral entities, neither mental nor physical.

Fourth, this theory is qualitatively monistic in its admission of an ultimate reality.<sup>91</sup> James first calls this ultimate reality "pure experience" or the neutral element, denying the existence of substance of any kind,<sup>92</sup> but finally he comes around to accept a universal substance of some kind.

Fifth, since the term experience is somehow left behind without a definitive meaning unless it is that of a base for ulterior constructions, the qualification of James' neutral monism as numerically 'pluralistic' renders his distinction<sup>93</sup> between the form and the content of that universal substance as merely verbal.

Sixth, based upon the distinction of form and content, James strikes an unstable balance between his constant rejection of absolutism and an acceptance of some form of pantheism. In P.U., pages 23-35, James divides the philosophical systems in "less" and "more" intimate. The personal Creator God

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<sup>91</sup>  
P.U., p. 34

<sup>92</sup>  
E.R.E., p. 3

<sup>93</sup>  
P.U., p. 319

belongs to the less intimate system of dualism, while he includes himself (as a finite) pluralist) along with absolutism within the pantheistic 'more intimate' systems.

Wanting to preserve the unity of all things along with the integrity of the individuals he preferred to accept some monism before sacrificing some integrity. And here is precisely the point that Collins has stressed so remarkably well: "James wrestled with the ancient problem of the one and the many throughout his life, but he could never reconcile his pluralism completely with either creator-theism or absolutism. The difficulty was that he hinged his entire case against a logically coercive absolutism upon showing that we are not formal, consistent parts of a universal self. To reach this conclusion, however, he made not being a part of the equivalent of not being caused by and derived from. The theistic view that God is the infinite first cause and creator of things would then seem to him to entail, as a logical consequence, the further admission that finite things are entitative parts of the cosmic self. James could discover no way of avoiding the latter conclusion except by denying creative causality to God and locating Him within some limiting environment of hostile forces."<sup>94</sup>

As a conclusion then of his acceptance of a universal substance and of his acceptance of a finite God identified with it just as well as other finite beings James definitely expressed his position: "We are internal parts of God and not external creations".<sup>95</sup> Creation in James' mind would

<sup>94</sup> God in Modern Philosophy, p. 314

<sup>95</sup> UNIVERSITY OF OTTAWA SCHOOL OF GRADUATE STUDIES

imply alienation, while on the other hand us being parts would not imply that "co-implication" of the absolute that it also happens in creation. Indeed, James plays up these seemingly contradictory positions - the alienation of creation and the co-implication. Thus of absolutism James finally takes its intimate nature (versus its alienation,) <sup>96</sup> but he always rejects its co-implication that he always finds in creation.

Now, just in case, someone wants to be so extremely fair to James and pretends to excuse his 'monistic pantheism' as a result of a logical error, I want to present his idealistic monism in another light.

In his essay "Does Consciousness Exist," consciousness is described as a relational function of parts of experience to another. This was indeed a psychical monism inasmuch as consciousness as a function of knowing is responsible both for the physical <sup>97</sup> and the spiritual. However, if the only thing is knowing, who knows and what is knower?

Consciousness besides is not related to a person as it should have been since its most destructive note is its personal quality. It cannot be then something existing by itself but it has to inhere in somebody. The necessity of substance is evident. However in this neutral monism of

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<sup>95</sup>

P.U., p. 44

<sup>97</sup>

This is some kind of epiphenomenalism in reverse.

James the material and the self do not exist per se but they are simply the 'pure experience' taken in different sequences. The 'ego' is nothing for James but a 'co-conscious transition' of the same experiences, while one wonders what is in there that renders it possible that I call these experiences "mine" to the point that it becomes impossible that they become yours?

Experience is, I repeat, left behind without a definitive meaning, the notion of the "ego" fits very well in an idealistic frame work, and one wonders about the personal subject of that personal interest that determines pragmatism and sets it into motion.

His concept of the ego as a "co-conscious transition" involves another monistic problem. Indeed, if it is true that I am a series and you another we should never get involved. But James came with the solution of space as a "nucleus of common perception" forgetting the implication that if our minds end in the very same percept and if mind and matter are nothing but different aspects, it follows then that there is only one mind--This is sneer monistic idealism!

Other idealistic implications of James are presented in our final criticism.

Now, as a monist, the main criticism we can direct at James (within the context of the religious experience) is that a monistic conception restricts and narrows the relation of the more and the human self to the point of identification. If there is not a personal God different from this world, then this world is God. This then would be the basis for a

pantheistic theodicy, if such a thing could be possible. However, pantheism is a very recurrent manifestation, and it has its religious tinge, no matter how contradictory are its philosophical implications. James himself did consider the monistic vision a "religious one"<sup>98</sup> and he describes this monistic vision in these terms: "a monistic insight, in which, the other in its various forms appear absorbed into the One".<sup>99</sup>

Now, we have to keep in mind that if James opposed absolutism at the time of his controversy with Royce and Bradley, "he always qualified his attacks on the monistic absolutism by noting that he objected to their doctrine precisely as pretending to be a logically coercive, necessary demonstration".<sup>100</sup>

But James finally became more hospitable toward absolutism to the point of including himself among the "more intimate" philosophies of pantheism which included in its ranks both absolutism and pluralism.

The ultimate reason for this decision was the element of intimacy which he saw in pantheism, which element contrasts with the alienation found both in the idea of creation and in the idea of absolutism.

First, in the idea of creation James finds a lack of "intimacy".<sup>101</sup>

<sup>98</sup> V.R.E., p. 381

<sup>99</sup> Ibid., p. 379 (The underlining is ours)

<sup>100</sup> Collins, God in Modern Philosophy, p. 313

<sup>101</sup> P.U., p. 44

In "Pluralistic Universe", pages 25-26, James talks with scorn of the scholastic manuals that try to prove in vain that God is involved with creation in his creative act. Precisely because of this he objects again to that "character of externality" of our theism<sup>102</sup> and its lack of intimacy.<sup>103</sup>

James imposes upon us the authority of Hinduism to establish "the puenlity of the dogma of creation."<sup>104</sup>

Second, in relation to the co-implication of absolutism, Collins says "he hinged his entire case against a logically coercive absolutism upon showing that we are not formal constituent parts of a universal self".<sup>105</sup>

As a matter of fact, Royce in "The Conception of God"<sup>106</sup> defines the absolute as "One self, organically, reflective, consciously inclusive of all selves."

To finish, let us say what is most significant what a monist like James says against monism in Pluralistic Universe, page 110, that the absolute contradicts our experience since our being is different from being parts of a whole and that if we could not think for ourselves our freedom would be destroyed and evil would remain as an unexplainable phenomenon!! Actually, these were the very same arguments that I was getting ready to direct against James.

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102

P.U., p. 27

103

Ibid., p. 28

104

Ibid., p. 29

105

God in Modern Philosophy, p. 314

CHAPTER IV. THE AGREEMENT OF JAMES' THEORY WITH THE  
PSYCHOLOGICAL DYNAMISM DEVELOPED BY  
PROTESTANT THEOLOGIANS

1. Attitude of James to theology in general.
2. Thesis.
3. Theory of James.
4. The Protestant Theology. A necessary background.
5. Discussion.

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1. ATTITUDE OF JAMES TO THEOLOGY IN GENERAL

In the Preface of his Varieties, James tells us of his original plan for the Gifford Lectures at the University of Edinburgh in 1901-1902:

"In casting about me for subjects of the two courses of ten lectures each for which I thus became responsible, it seemed to me that the first course might as well be a descriptive one on "Man's Religious Appetites," and the second a metaphysical one on "Their Satisfaction Through Philosophy". But the unexpected growth of the psychological matter as I came to write it out has resulted in the second subject being postponed entirely, and the description of man's religious constitution now fills the twenty lectures. In Lecture XX I have suggested rather than stated my own philosophic conclusions."<sup>1</sup> (V.R.E. XVII Preface)

That the first part so grew in his hands to the point of reducing the second to some brief indications is not something totally incidental in James. Evidences to this point are two facts: First, that the blow he delivered in Lecture XVIII to scholastic philosophy leaves for James the door entirely open to a subjective and experimental religion. Second, his intentions, as formally expressed in a letter to Frances Morse:

1. We have made a synthesis of them in Chapter III.

"first, to defend....experience against philosophy as being the real backbone of the world's religious life....and second to make the hearer or reader believe, what I myself do invincibly do believe, that, although all the special manifestations of religion may have been absurd (I mean its creeds and theories), yet the life of it as a whole is mankind's most important function."<sup>2</sup>

For James, religion means "the feelings, acts, and experiences of individual men in their Solitude, so far as they apprehend themselves to stand in relation to whatever they may consider the divine".<sup>3</sup> James qualifies this relation as "either moral, physical, or ritual."<sup>4</sup> James tells us that religion defined in this sense may give rise to "theologies, philosophies and ecclesiastical organizations" but he considers these derivative and therefore secondary.<sup>5</sup> The purpose of the plan of James is clear "to confine myself as far as I can to personal religion pure and simple."<sup>6</sup> In other words "that personal attitude which the individual finds himself impelled to take up towards what he apprehends to be the divine."<sup>7</sup> And the value of religion strives upon the fact it "makes easy and felicitous what in any case is necessary,"<sup>8</sup> rendering our sacrifices and surrender endurable. Religion, thus, for James becomes "an essential organ of our life, performing a function which no other portion of our nature can so successfully fulfill."<sup>9</sup> This is the conclusion

<sup>2</sup> Perry, Vol. II, p. 326-327. The underlining is ours.

<sup>3</sup> V.R.E., p. 31-32

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., p. 31-32

<sup>5</sup> V.R.E., p. 32

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., p. 30

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., p. 51

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., p. 51

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., p. 51

to which James is led, having taken, he says, "the merely biological point of view" and the "purely empirical method of demonstration."<sup>10</sup>

In the first lecture of the "Varieties" James takes the position of a psychologist: "as a psychologist, the natural thing for me would be to invite you to a descriptive survey of those religious propensities."<sup>11</sup> "If the inquiry be psychological, not religious institutions, but rather religious feelings and religious impulses must be its subject, and I must confine myself to those more developed subjective phenomena recorded in literature."<sup>12</sup> James tells us that these "document humains"<sup>13</sup> suits his "lack of special theological learning."<sup>14</sup>

The point of view that James is taking in the analysis of the human documents of religious experience is termed by him "purely existential point of view"<sup>15</sup> which he contrasts with the "spiritual judgment" or a "proposition of value".<sup>15</sup> The questions asked by these two orders of inquiry are thus presented by James: "First, what is the nature of it? How did it come about? What is its constitution, origin and history? And second, what is its importance, meaning or significance, now that it is once here? The answer to the one question is given in an existential judgment or proposition.

<sup>10</sup> V.R.E., p. 51-52

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., p. 4

<sup>12</sup> Ibid., p. 4

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., p. 5

<sup>14</sup> Ibid., p. 5

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., p. 6

<sup>16</sup> Ibid., p. 6

The answer to the other is a proposition of value, what the Germans call a Werthurtheil or what we may, if we like, denominate a spiritual judgment. Neither judgment can be deduced immediately from the other. They proceed from diverse intellectual preoccupations, and the mind combines them only by making them first separately, and then adding them together."<sup>17</sup>

This fundamental division of James sheds light upon his attitude to theology in general. For James then, the phenomena of religious experience are handled "biologically and psychologically as if they were curious facts of individual history."<sup>18</sup> James mentions some elements of this existential point of view as applied to the Bible: "biographic conditions" of the writer, "what had they exactly in their several individual minds" when they spoke.<sup>19</sup> These "questions of historical fact" do not bear any relation to their use as "a guide to life and revelation" because this would imply "in our mind some sort of a general theory as to what the peculiarities in a thing should be which give it value for purposes of revelation; and this theory itself would be what I just called a spiritual judgment."<sup>20</sup>

Whether James' dichotomy between existential and value judgments corresponds somehow to his other most drastic division between the Science of Religions and scholastic theodicy is rather difficult to determine, but the point to be

<sup>17</sup> V.R.E., p. 6

<sup>18</sup> Ibid., p. 7

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., p. 6

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., p. 5

stressed now is the strict correlation obtainin<sub>g</sub> between the existential judgment and the Science of Religions which James will oppose to scholastic philosophy. Herein is where perfect antagonism reigns and not between psychology and theology inasmuch as for James theology could be a derivative but accepted product of the religious feelings. "When I call theological formulas secondary products I mean that in a world in which no religious feelings had ever existed, I doubt whether any philosophic theology could ever have been framed."<sup>21</sup>

James believes that "feeling is the deeper source of religion and that philosophic and theological formulas are secondary products, like translations of a text into another tongue."<sup>22</sup>

"Feeling is private and dumb and unable to give an account of itself...to redeem religion from unwholesome privacy and to give public status and universal right of way to its deliverances, has been reason's task."<sup>23</sup>

"Religious experience, in other words, spontaneously and inevitably engenders myths, superstitions, dogmas, creeds and metaphysical theologies, and criticisms... We have the beginnings of a "Science of Religions" so called..."<sup>24</sup>

Considering then the possibility of theology within the essential point of view, James is going to now establish his radical antagonism with scholastic theology:

"The intellectualism in religion which I wish to discredit pretends to be something altogether

<sup>21</sup> V.R.E., p. 422

<sup>22</sup> Ibid., p. 422

<sup>23</sup> Ibid., p. 422-423

<sup>24</sup> Ibid., p. 423-424

different from this. It assumes to construct religious objects out of the resources of logical reason alone, or of logical reason drawing rigorous inference from non-subjective facts. It calls its conclusions dogmatic theology, or philosophy of the absolute, as the case may be; it does not call them science of religions. It reaches them in a a priori way, and warrants their veracity." 25

Before entering into the discredit of scholastic theology as portrayed by James, we have to make some important considerations:

First, James has made a dichotomy between existential theology and "intellectualism in religion" for the purposes of his study. If later on he is going to introduce some theological points as the conclusions of his Varieties<sup>26</sup> either they are enclosed totally within the existential or psychological frame of reference or they are in contradiction with his system.

Second, James' system in what concerns religion rests on a twofold option that precedes all his investigations. He starts by accepting the existential point of view and by rejecting intellectualism on religion, and on these two underpinnings rests his entire system of thought. Actually they are mutually strengthening foundations inasmuch as without the rejection of scholastic theology he could not confidently restrict religion to psychology or the existential point of view, and without this latter he could not find a self-sufficient system.

#### The Rejection of Scholastic Theology

The argumentation used by James in his "discredit" of

25 Ibid., p. 424

26 Ibid., p. 501-509

scholastic theology can be easily reduced to some fundamental points.

First, a contrast between feelings and philosophy, subjectivism and objectivism with a preference for the descriptive or existential viewpoint of the Science of Religions.<sup>27</sup>

Second, scholastic philosophy fails to convince everybody;<sup>28</sup> underlying this reasoning of James are the convictions that the capacity for truth implies the incapacity for error, or that the scholastic reasoning eliminates other cognitive accesses to God.

Third, as a consequence of the first and second points, James presents the pragmatic method or the conception of the practical consequences as the whole of the conception of the object-method that it is so evidently by lacking in scholastic theology.<sup>29</sup>

Fourth, a total reliance upon the Kantian and post-Kantian repudiation of the scholastic proofs, dispensing with an historical analysis of the background of such a repudiation.

We have to keep in mind that the confusion of rationalism with scholasticism seems to have been accepted in James' time as it is evidenced in those memorable pages 47-74 in "Some Problems of Philosophy" in which he gives a criticism to the rationalistic interpretation of the universals.

James also identifies the conception of God gained by Scholasticism with that of Absolutism<sup>30</sup>...a conception of God

27 V.R.E., p. 421-424; 433; 437- 445-447

28 Ibid., p. 426; 428-429

29 Ibid., p. 433-437

30 Ibid., p. 129

that contrasts with popular theism or the pluralistic God.<sup>31</sup>

We are never to forget either his constant rejection of the notion of Creation<sup>32</sup> which makes us a part of God.

All in all, these are the fundamental points for James' rejection of Scholastic Theology. On the other hand, as we mentioned already, James accepts a "Science of Religions" with existential judgments which "presuppose immediate experiences as their subject-matter."<sup>33</sup> These "operations after the fact, consequent upon religious feeling"<sup>34</sup> are then for James terminus ad quem of his study of the Varieties and never point of departure for his reflections.

Let us keep in mind also that the theological ideas of James discussed in this chapter just happen to agree with the psychological dynamism implied or developed by Protestant Theologians.

## 2. THEORY OF JAMES

The theory of psychological dynamism developed by protestant theologians of a process of identification with a higher self, suits perfectly with the theory of James of the subliminal self acting as an alien power and control over conscious life. (This provides for a natural psychological explanation of the religious act in which "a higher control is felt".<sup>35</sup>)

<sup>31</sup> P.U., p. 110-111  
Pragmatism, p. 299

<sup>32</sup> P.U., p. 23-29

<sup>33</sup> V.R.L., p. 424

<sup>34</sup> Ibid., p. 424

<sup>35</sup> Ibid., p. 502-503

In Lecture VIII or Conclusions of a Pluralistic Universe, James wants to refer to religious experiences of a specific nature which he describes as "experiences of a life that supervenes upon despair (which) seem to have played no great part in official theology til Luther's time".<sup>36</sup> As James investigates the nature of these experiences he notes that "religious experience of the Lutheran type brings all our naturalistic standards to bankruptcy"<sup>37</sup> inasmuch as "Luther was the first moralist who broke with any effectiveness through the crust of all this naturalistic self-sufficiency, thinking (and possibly he was right) that Saint Paul had done it already."<sup>38</sup>

James describes it in short terms: "You are strong only by being weak"<sup>39</sup> or "the phenomenon is that of new ranges of life succeeding on our most despairing moments"<sup>40</sup> "giving up our own will and letting something higher work for us."<sup>41</sup>

For James, these experiences corroborate the notion of a larger life of which we are part and "the sort of belief that religious experience of this type naturally engenders in those who have it is fully in accord with Fechner's theories."<sup>42</sup> James accepted as probable Fechner's doctrine of a super-human consciousness, compounded of the experiences of human

36 P.U., p. 303

37 Ibid., p. 304

38 Ibid., p. 304

39 Ibid., p. 305

40 Ibid., p. 305

41 Ibid., p. 305

42 Ibid., p. 307

and infrahuman minds. For James, this hypothesis acquires plausibility from the "abnormal and supernormal phenomena" of multiple personality, automatic writing and mediumship, but above all from the "religious experience" with its conviction "that we inhabit an invisible spiritual environment from which help comes, our soul being mysteriously one with a larger soul whose instruments we are."<sup>43</sup> The metaphysical issue involved in this "Cosmic Conception" is the final synthesis of the philosophical conception of James and shall be studied in detail in the next chapter. The point to play up now is that one which is relevant to the religious experience of the Lutheran type which James describes in these terms: "the believer finds that the tenderer parts of his personal life are continuous with a more of the same quality which is operative in the universe outside of him and which he can keep in working touch with, and in a fashion get on board on and save himself, when all his lower being has gone to pieces in the wreck. In a word, the believer is continuous, to his own consciousness, at any rate, with a wider self from which saving experiences flow in".<sup>44</sup>

It is evident that James refers here to a Suprapyschological Ego. However, the natural psychological explanation of the religious act in which "a higher control is felt" is and shall always be for James the subliminal. Just inasmuch as there is an identification with a higher self from which

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<sup>43</sup>

V.L.I., Lecture XX

<sup>44</sup>

P.U., p. 307

saving experiences come. James thinks that the Protestant or Lutheran conception lends itself more aptly and is more psychologically dynamic than that of Catholicism. Let's investigate why.

### 3. THE PROTESTANT THEOLOGY - A NECESSARY BACKGROUND

A necessary background is taken from Möhller to understand James' presentation of Protestantism as more consonant with his psychological system.

Möhller was careful to base his study "Symbolism" of comparative theology on the best sources then available.<sup>45</sup>

In the opinion of Möhller, the really basic differences between the doctrines of Catholicism and Protestantism are attributable to their respective views of human nature and its condition of free will, a question that is in turn tied to a consideration of original sin.<sup>46</sup> Catholics urge that man is free and therefore culpable for the first sin. Luther, on the other hand, tended to reject man's free will and was forced to conclude that God caused the first sin.

Möhller also examined the different views with respect to the effects of original sin. According to Catholic doctrine,<sup>47</sup> man lost both his original justice and holiness and incurred the penalty of death, and he was rendered totally

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45. "Symbolism or Exposition of the Doctrinal Differences between Catholics and Protestants, as evidenced by their symbolical writings" by John Adam Möhller, D.D. Translated from the German, by James Burton Robertson. Two volumes of the London edition in one, New York, published by Edward Dunigan, 1844.

46 Ibid., p. 114-121

47 Ibid., p. 134-143

corrupt. But for Luther<sup>43</sup> man lost both his fear of God and his confidence in Him, as a result, was rendered totally corrupt, unable to cooperate in his own salvation.

The different doctrines of justification<sup>49</sup> logically flowed from the position taken with respect to the effects of original sin. In the teaching of the Catholic Church, man retains his free will and the image of God. Thus, while justification comes only from the merits earned by Christ, man's salvation also requires free human cooperation with the grace of God. For Luther, man's role in salvation is purely passive; he can only accept the merits won by Christ which release him from the punishment, but not the guilt of sin.<sup>50</sup>

Möhlner realized that both Catholics and Protestants believed in salvation by faith but he was much more aware that the two sides regarded faith in different ways.<sup>51</sup> For the Catholic, faith is not merely an empty connection of ideas, for faith must be vivified by charity before man can earn salvation.<sup>52</sup> For the Protestant, however, the mere acceptance of Christ's salvation is enough.<sup>53</sup> So as to support his doctrine of faith, Möhlner considered the question of good works.<sup>54</sup> The Catholic doctrine understands by good works the

<sup>43</sup> Symbolism or Exposition of the Doctrinal Differences Between Catholics and Protestants, as evidenced by their symbolical writings, p. 142-154

<sup>49</sup> Ibid., p. 136

<sup>50</sup> Ibid., p. 197-200

<sup>51</sup> Ibid., p. 201-203

<sup>52</sup> Ibid., p. 204

<sup>53</sup> Ibid., p. 207-208, 210

<sup>54</sup> Ibid., p. 214

moral acts and sufferings of man justified in Christ. Man is in need of these good works. Luther, on the other hand, denied them inasmuch as man is totally corrupt, his every act is sin.<sup>55</sup>

Some important conclusions are drawn by Möhller from his inquiry of the different doctrines related to original sin and justification. While the Catholic sees Christ both as Redeemer and Teacher,<sup>56</sup> the Reformers (based upon man's inability to obey God's law) neglect His role as a teacher. The culminating point of inquiry is achieved by Möhller in the relationship between religion and morality. "Luther, says M. maintains an inward and essential opposition between religion and morality, and assigns to the former an eternal, to the latter a mere temporal value".<sup>57</sup>

While lamenting the errors of Protestantism Möhller realized at the point of departure some basic good motives. While trying to play up the power of God, Luther emphasized man's impotence and decadence. Of course Möhller was well aware that his comparative study had stressed the point of divergence rather than those of agreement. He thought it necessary at the time. As for us, it serves our purpose of a proper perspective of the nature of man and its relation to grace. As far as we know we don't know of a better presentation that suits the discussion of James.

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Symbolism or Exposition of the Doctrinal Differences between Catholics and Protestants, as evidenced by their symbolical writings, p. 242

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Ibid., p. 261

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Ibid., p. 262

## 4. DISCUSSION

Now let's investigate "the sense of higher control" which James puts in such a great harmony with Protestant theology - "the admirable congruity of Protestant theology with the structure of the mind as shown in such experiences. In the extreme of melancholy the self that consciously is can do absolutely nothing. It is completely bankrupt and without resource, and no works it can accomplish will avail. Redemption from such subjective conditions must be a free gift or nothing, and grace through Christ's accomplished sacrifice is such a gift.<sup>58</sup> James quotes Luther's Commentary on Galatians to clarify the meaning of that individual bankruptcy and the absolute need of justification over and beyond the individual's work. We should underline that "extreme of melancholy" in which "the self that consciously is can do absolutely nothing" inasmuch as this description of James tries to break down the psychological structure of the Protestant conception of faith.

We know that the Protestant justifying faith is not an intellectual act but an act of the will through which assurance is acquired that the merits of Christ will avoid that man could be blamed for his sins. The Protestant, of course, will distinguish between dogmatic faith and faith of promises. Dogmatic faith is only intellectual and not justifying. Is not an assent. The most interesting distinctions in this respect that could be read are those of

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<sup>58</sup>

V.R.S., p. 239

Cardinal Bellarmine in De Justificatione.<sup>59</sup> Justifying faith is not the assurance of mercy but a firm assent on what God has revealed. The role of the will is to move the intellect in an "effective" manner to put the act but it cannot "elicit" the act of the intellect which is a faculty moved by the truth.<sup>60</sup> Bellarmine in the quoted passage, referring to the famous definition of faith by Saint Paul "est autem fides sperandarum substantia rerum, argumentum, non apparentium" with "non apparentium" noting that "fidei officium non esse, efficere ut res obscurae fiant perspicuae, sed ut credantur etiam si non appareant - Mirè enim coniunxit apostolus "argumentum" cum "non apparentium", ut significaret fidem id facere quod faciunt argumenta, sed aliomodo. Non argumenta, et maxime demonstrationes faciunt ut intellectus omnino assentatur, sed hoc faciunt per evidentiam rei, intellectum convincendo, dum causas ipsas et proprietates apperunt - Ad fides facit quidem ut intellectus omnino assentiatur, sed non per evidentiam rei et notitiam causae et proprietatum, sed credendo auctoritate discentis - "NON igitur fides proprie loquendo est noticia (simplex), sed assensus".

However, we see as properly stressed by James the following concepts: "the assurance that all is well with one", to which (Luther) "would give the name of faith par excel-

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See Saint Thomas 1-9 82 a4

lence:"<sup>61</sup> 2) The qualification added by James himself of "not intellectual but immediate and intuitive"<sup>62</sup> - and "affective experience"<sup>63</sup> with 3) adding features of "loss of all worry"<sup>64</sup> "sense of perceiving truths not known before,"<sup>65</sup> a change in the world that appears with "beautiful newness."<sup>66</sup>

The moral condition previous to the conversion or faith (for James these terms are used interchangeably) is described by James as "extreme of melancholy," a situation which should be understood within the framework of reference used by James in his study of conversion, the sick soul and the divided self.<sup>66</sup> In the first place, there is a very interesting distinction made by James between "two ways of looking at life which are characteristic respectively of what we called the healthy-minded, who need to be born only once, and the sick souls, who must be twice born in order to be happy."<sup>67</sup> Now, for James, Christianity, along with Buddhism, are "essentially religions of deliverance - the men must die to an unreal life before he can be born into the real life".<sup>68</sup> Thus, there is "heterogeneity" in the personality,<sup>69</sup> and in proportion to

<sup>61</sup>  
V.R.E., p. 241

<sup>62</sup>  
Ibid., p. 241

<sup>63</sup>  
Ibid., p. 242

<sup>64</sup>  
Ibid., p. 242

<sup>65</sup>  
Ibid., p. 243

<sup>66</sup>  
Ibid., p. 243

<sup>67</sup>  
Ibid., p. 163

<sup>68</sup>  
Ibid., p. 162

<sup>69</sup>Ibid., p. 164

our psychopathic conditions, "does the normal evolution of character chiefly consist in the straightening out and unifying of the inner self"<sup>70</sup> "forming a stable system of functions in right subordination" taking "the form of moral remorse and compunction." "This is the religious 'melancholy' and 'conviction of sin' that have played so large a part in the history of Protestant Christianity. The man's interior is a battleground for what he feels to be two deadly hostile selves, one actual, the other ideal".<sup>71</sup> Augustine's psychological genius has given an account of the trouble of having a divided self, which has never been surpassed."<sup>72</sup> The unity of the self is achieved by "a general psychological process, which may take place with any sort of mental material and need not necessarily assume the religious form."<sup>73</sup> This is so much so that "the new birth may be away from religion into incredulity"<sup>74</sup> but "in all these instances we have precisely the same psychological form of event - a firmness, stability and equilibrium."<sup>75</sup> Now this equilibrium is achieved when the center of energy has been established, as we described already. We insist on underlining the remark of James that the process may take place with any sort of mental material, implying by that the strictly psychological condition that he is stressing. However, in that indifferent psychological content there might be certain ingredients which much likely will determine the

70 V.R.E., p. 167

71 Ibid., p. 167-168

72 Ibid., p. 169

73 Ibid., p. 172

74 Ibid., p. 172

75 Ibid., p. 172

event. Thus, in his first lecture on Religion and Neurology we are told that "when a superior intellect and a psychopathic temperament coalesce, we have the best possible condition for the kind of effective genius"<sup>76</sup> which for James in the religious and moral field provides for the "conditions sine qua non" of the requisite receptivity "if there were such a thing as inspiration from a higher realm."<sup>77</sup> Of course, we do not doubt that "quidquid recipitur" is received "according" to the condition of the receiver" but James makes it equivalent that "according" to a cause, as we shall see later in the case of the mystic. At any event, James now stresses the fact that "religious geniuses have often shown symptoms of nervous instability"<sup>78</sup> - and that "the psychopathic temperament, often brings with it ardor and excitability of character - emotional susceptibility - liability to fixed ideas which tend to pass into action."<sup>79</sup> And if one takes into consideration the physiological interpretation given to emotions by James and how our effective life rules our intellectual, once rightfully wonder about the extent of this "condition" - "instinct leads, intelligence does but follow".<sup>80</sup>

76

V.R.L., p. 24

77

Ibid., p. 26

78

Ibid., p. 3

79

Ibid., p. 24

80 Ibid., p. 73

CHAPTER V. THE MORE SUPRAPSYCHOLOGICAL - OUR UNION WITH  
IT - FINAL METAPHYSICAL CONCEPTION OF JAMES -  
THE MYSTICAL INTUITION

- 1) The More Suprap psychological.
- 2) The relational or functional theory of consciousness.
- 3) The way of union.
- 4) The last metaphysical conception of James.
- 5) The mystical intuition.
- 6) Final Remarks.

1. THE MORE SUPRAPSYCHOLOGICAL

"We inhabit an invisible spiritual environment from which help comes, our soul being mysteriously one with a larger soul whose instruments we are."<sup>1</sup>

While in his *Varieties* James plays up the psychological aspect of the religious experience with a theory of the Subliminal self acting as an alien power and control over conscious life so as to provide for a natural psychological explanation of the religious act, in which a "higher control is felt",<sup>2</sup> in the Pluralistic Universe he advances as probable Fechner's doctrine of a superhuman consciousness, compounded of the experiences of human and infrahuman minds, and plays up a Suprap psychological More, perhaps with a secret desire to overcome the insufficiency of his naturalism. This doesn't mean that in Pluralistic Universe he abandons the theory of the subliminal self that was just played up in his *Varieties*.

<sup>1</sup>  
P.U., p. 308. On the possibility of a universe containing the possibility of a higher form of consciousness, see p. 93-94, Chapter 2.

<sup>2</sup>  
V.R.E., p. 502-503

The Hibbert Lectures which constitute "A Pluralistic Universe" were delivered in 1909 while the Gifford lectures, which constitute "The Varieties" were delivered in 1901-1902. The difference is just a matter of emphasis on either point during these lectures. However, in the Pluralistic Universe, James takes a more embracing attitude, trying to compromise the psychological view of the subliminal with the suprapsychological More of Fechner, using the brain as a transmissive function. In his Pluralistic Universe, James seems to take things into a wider perspective, including the psychological within the suprapsychological. As a matter of fact, the very religious experience is the strong argument along with "the drift of all the evidence we have"<sup>3</sup> used by James "towards the belief in some form of superhuman life with which we may, unknown to ourselves, be co-consciousness".<sup>4</sup>

But there is no inconsistency between the two positions because in the Varieties James is rather interested in the proximate cause while in the Pluralistic Universe he is in the remote. The inconsequence of James would be, as we noted already, in assigning a sufficient proximate cause so as to render the remote obsolete. That James never did exclude the More Suprapsychological is evidenced by the fact that in the Varieties<sup>5</sup> he himself clarifies that it is not in the existence of the More but in the way or union with it that the big differences come. Now well, James establishes a zone of contact between the More and the Ego in the subconscious.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>3</sup> P.U., p. 309

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., p. 309

<sup>5</sup> V.R.E., p. 500

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., p. 505

This fact, James believes, gives a positive content<sup>7</sup> to the religious experience.<sup>8</sup> The mystical intuition would then be "only very sudden and great extensions of the ordinary field of consciousness" - "an immense spreading of the margin of the field."<sup>9</sup>

## 2. THE RELATIONAL OR FUNCTIONAL THEORY OF CONSCIOUSNESS

We have made reference several times in the past to the relational or functional theory of knowledge that was mainly expounded by James in his famous article, "Does Consciousness Exist", published in 1904.<sup>10</sup>

Ferry sums up James' purpose and achievement with these words:

Searching for a meaning in terms of experience he found consciousness, like the knowing subject, to consist in a peculiar relationship among the terms of experience."<sup>11</sup>

<sup>7</sup> Actually, if we keep in mind James' statement that what is "more" is "more of the same" (V.R.L., p. 499). Thus the difference is merely quantitative, but the content is the same in quality. Where is then the progress? Where the superiority of the ideal? Let us hear the words of James: "We have in the fact that the conscious person is continuous with a wider self through which saving experiences come, a positive content of religious experience which, it seems to me, is literally and objectively true as far as it goes." (V.R.L., p. 505)

In a note, James quotes W. C. Brownell, comparing the reality of the influence of the Holy Spirit to that of electro-magnetism. Now well, if electro-magnetism is "more of the same", where from did this "same" come in the effect (taken into consideration that the cause is distinct from the effect)? I ask this just in case someone pretends to be fair to James arguing that according to him it is only the better part of ourselves (potential only and with a moral tinge) is the one that is continuous or of the same quality with the more. See V.R.L. p. 493. James goes as far as granting a germinal potentiality in the effect.

<sup>8</sup> V.R.L., p. 505

<sup>9</sup> Collected Essays and Reviews, 1920, p. 500.

<sup>10</sup> Journal of Phil., Psych., and Sc. Methods, Vol. I., 1904, p. 477. The Article has been reprinted in Essays in Radical Empiricism I.

<sup>11</sup> "In the Spirit of William James", by Ralph Barton Perry, UNIVERSITY OF OTTAWA - SCHOOL OF GRADUATE STUDIES, Indiana University Press, 1953, p. 94. The underlining is ours.

Thus, for James, consciousness is a particular structure of neutral elements...that "theatre of simultaneous possibilities"<sup>12</sup> which is the mind has also the power to "carve out" its own worlds by conveying different arrangements to those neutral possibilities.

If James' pragmatism had been restricted to this description of the methods of scientific research of his time, it would not have provoked such storms of protests as it did. Perhaps the only doubt that it suggested was how come from such a subjective construction science could have derived the successful results of modern times. However, James saw something else in his Pragmatism: a way of conceiving this universe that denies the truth of materialism. James thought that the individual man had a place in this universe now. Paradoxically, James, by the implications of his own neutral system of reality, left man more isolated and insignificant than before, and what is more tragic, while trying to prove the existence of God, he was defeated by his own theory from proving the objective reality of anything.

The only thing that is necessary to admit is that:

"every smallest bit of experience is a multum in parvo plurally related, that each relation is one aspect, character or function, way of its being taken, or way of its taking something else; and that a bit of reality when actively engaged in one of these relations is not by that very fact engaged in all the other relations simultaneously. The relations are not all what the French call solidaires with one another. Without losing its identity a thing can either take up or drop another thing, like the log . . . which by taking up new carriers and dropping old ones can travel anywhere with a light escort."<sup>13</sup>

<sup>12</sup> Psychology I, p. 283

<sup>13</sup> P.U., p. 322-323. Cf. Essays in Radical Empiricism,

But we have to do here only with the application of this theory of compenetration to the question of consciousness. The elements or terms which enter into consciousness and become its content may now be regarded as the same elements which, in so far as otherwise related, compose physical nature. The elements themselves, the "materia prima" or "stuff of pure experience," are neither psychical or physical.<sup>14</sup> A certain spatial and dynamic system of such elements constitutes physical nature; taken in other relations they constitute "ideal" systems, such as logic and mathematics; while in still another grouping, is the grouping or pattern which is most characteristic of the individual consciousness as such, and is best described in connection with "the experience of activity" as we saw before.

Now it is important to call attention to a further corollary which is capable of a very wide application. The common or "neutral elements of pure experience serve not only to connect consciousness with the various objective orders of being, but also to connect different units of conscious with another. Two or more minds become co-terminous and commutable although containing the same elements. We can thus understand "how two minds can know one thing".<sup>15</sup> In precisely the same way the same mind may know the same thing at different times. The different pulses of one consciousness may thus overlap and interpenetrate. And where these pulses are successive,

<sup>14</sup> D.R.J., p. 26-27; The underlining is ours.

<sup>15</sup> Op. Cit., pp. 123 sq.

the persistence of these common factors, marginal in one and focal in the next, gives to consciousness its peculiar connectedness and continuity. There is no need, therefore, of a synthesis ab extra; there is sameness and permanence and universality within the content itself. Finally, just as several minds, and the several moments of one individual mind, are "co-conscious," so there is no reason why human minds should not be "confluent in a higher consciousness."<sup>16</sup>

The way of union.

Now James is going to explain the particular way in which the subconscious operates in relation to the More - as a physiological condition using the brain as a channel.

In his "Human Immortality - Two supposed objections to the Doctrine,"<sup>17</sup> James argues that, though there is overwhelming evidence for the functional dependance of mind and brain, such dependance does not necessarily imply that the brain "generates" consciousness - it may merely "transmit" it. Behind the material world there may be a "continuum of cosmic consciousness," which is transmitted through material brains in a sense analogous to that in which light is transmitted through colored glass. The concluding chapters of the Varieties, as we said already, can be fully understood only in the light of this hypothesis:<sup>18</sup>

<sup>16</sup> P.U., p. 290, cf. Lecture VII, passim. For the development of James' view concerning the "compounding of consciousness," cf. Principles of Psychology, Vol. I, 160, 161; "The Knowing of Things Together," Psych. Rev., Vol. II, 1895, P.U., Lecture V. Note: We already referred to the relational or functional theory of consciousness on Chapters I and II.

<sup>17</sup> Published in 1898.

<sup>18</sup> Which goes to prove that James at this time had more than an inkling of his future conception.

"In the case of a coloured glass, a prism or a refracting lense, we have transmissive function. The energy of light, no matter how produced, is by the glass sifted and limited in colour, and by the lens or prism determined to a certain pattern and shape. Similarly the keys of an organ have only a transmissive function. They open successively the various pipes and let the wind in the air-chest escape in various ways. The voices of the various pipes are constituted by the columns of air trembling as they emerge. But the air is not engendered in the organ. The organ proper, as distinguished from its air-chest, is only an apparatus for letting portions of it loose upon the world in these peculiarly limited shapes. My thesis now is this - that, when we think of the law that thought is a function of the brain, we are not required to think of productive function only; we are entitled also to consider permissive or transmissive function."<sup>19</sup>

Ferry says:

"This idea that the brain, instead of creating mind, merely strains and canalizes it was an idea that James had long entertained, and an idea which seemed to him entirely congruent with the alleged phenomena of psychical research. It was here formulated in dualistic terms, as though body and mind were different stuffs or substances. He was still holding in reserve that "phenomenonism" in which the dualism was to be overcome. But the transmission theory was clearly an anticipation of the hypothesis developed in his later metaphysics and philosophy of religion, in which the mystical and similar experiences were interpreted as an overflow of supernuman mentality through a lowering of the normal threshold. In 1893, as later, James was influenced by Mechner and quoted him at length."<sup>20</sup>

<sup>19</sup> Page 291 of the reprint of the article by Gardner Murphy in the book William James on Psychical Research, Viking Press, New York, 1960. The underlining is James'.

In a letter to H.C.S. Schiller in 1897, James asks him to furnish some forerunners in this matter of the transmissive function of the brain. In this letter James refers to his theory in these terms: "the brain acting not as producer of consciousness but as sifter, limiter and individualizer thereof". As possible forerunners, James himself mentions Kant: "Kant somewhere in the latter part of the 'Kritik der reinen Vernunft' expresses the hypothesis very clearly, but gives no references to previous opinion." Then James tells the author of the "Riddles of the Sphinx", "for several years past I have defended the view to my students, and was accordingly pleased to find it in your book, and last year in Kant. I supposed myself to have had the thought spontaneously, but

<sup>20</sup> Ferry, The Thought and Character II, p. 52 Underlining

Now James is aware that differences in individuals will depend on differences in the transmittin, media - "in all sorts of restricted forms, and with all the imperfections and queeresses that characterize our future individualities here below."<sup>21</sup>

These individual differences have been always played up by James to the point of becoming determining factors. Thus, for instance, in a letter to his sister, Alice, a few months before her death, James states:

"one must believe (as now in these neurotic cases) that some infernality in the body prevents really existin; parts of the mind from coming to their effective rights at all, suppresses them and blots them out from participation in the world's experiences, although, they are there all the time. When that which is you passes out of the body, I am sure that there will be an explosion of liberated force and life till then eclipsed and kept down."<sup>22</sup>

While James in this letter to his sister was referring to the individual soul ("existing; parts of the mind"), James refers time and again to some form of collective consciousness channeled to the individual by his peculiar temperament or physiological condition:

"But the final consciousness which each type reaches of union with the divine has the same practical significance for the individual; and the individuals may well be allowed to get to it by the channels which lie most open to their several temperaments."<sup>23</sup>

<sup>19</sup> cf. it may have been sown in my mind by past years ago, and then became subliminal. Do you know any forerunners? If, without research, you merely name them, I shall be obliged." (Perry, The Thought and Character II, p. 134)

<sup>21</sup> Page 292, reprint of article by Gardner Murphy in book, William James on Psychical Research.

<sup>22</sup> William James, Letters of William James, edited by his son, Henry James, Boston, 1920, I, 310-1; underlining is ours. Further referred to as L.J.J.

<sup>23</sup> V.L.E., p. 473

There is an ambiguity in James' reference to the so-called today, phenomenon of "expansion of consciousness," for James does not clarify whether he is speaking of subconscious elements (as he says "existing parts of the mind") or of a Mother-Sea reservoir of collective consciousness,<sup>24</sup> higher than the individual. But in either case James applies the rule:

"Apply the requisite stimulus, and at a touch they are there in all their completeness."<sup>25</sup>

Perhaps James took it for granted that if there are levels of consciousness below the level on which we spend most of our time during our waking hours, surely it is reasonable to suppose that there are also levels above it. The "potential forms of consciousness"<sup>26</sup> is then ambivalent in James' terms.

Anyhow, it is interesting to note that the features of the individual contribute to the total message of this universe:

"Each attitude being a syllable in human nature's total message, it takes the whole of us to spell the meaning out completely. So a 'god of battles' must be allowed to be the god for one kind of person, a god of peace and heaven and home, the god for another. We must frankly recognize the fact that we live in partial systems, and that parts are not interchangeable in the spiritual life."<sup>27</sup>

Always interested in the preservation of the integrity of the individual and always trying to avoid the co-implication of things into a unity, James plays up the concept that "the divine has the same practical significance for the

<sup>24</sup> V.R.E., p. 509

<sup>25</sup> Ibid., p. 379

<sup>26</sup> Ibid., p. 379

<sup>27</sup> Ibid., p. 477

individual."<sup>28</sup> In other words, the divine is a source of spiritual energy that it is differently used by the individual, otherwise "the total human consciousness of the individual would suffer," says James. In order to avoid that, James describes the processes of the mind as "matters of degree":

"How long one shall continue to drink the consciousness of evil, and when one shall begin to short-circuit and get rid of it, are also matters of amount and degree, so that in many instances it is quite arbitrary whether we class the individuals as a once-born or a twice-born subject."<sup>29</sup>

Thus, in this way, even the psychological make-up of the individual enters into a form of a neutral quantitative arrangement.

Now, in the concept of James, "the divine can mean no single quality, it must mean a group of qualities",<sup>30</sup> but it seems rather evident that the determination of those qualities hinges greatly upon the individual needs or individual predicaments. These features of the individual channels render possible that communication "at certain points"<sup>31</sup> of which James speaks, of those "potential forms of consciousness"<sup>32</sup> in spite of the fact that "they are so discontinuous with ordinary consciousness."<sup>33</sup>

The individual channels as we know can be provoked by drugs so that the "threshold" is opened or lowered, and higher energies filter in.

As James says:

<sup>28</sup> V.R.J., p. 473

<sup>29</sup> Ibid., p. 478

<sup>30</sup> Ibid., p. 477

<sup>31</sup> Ibid., p. 509

<sup>32</sup> Ibid., p. 373

<sup>33</sup> Ibid., p. 379

"according to the state in which the brain finds itself, the barrier of its obstructiveness may also be supposed to rise or fall. It sinks so low, when the brain is in full activity, that a comparative flood of spiritual energy pours over. At other times, only such occasional waves of thought as heavy sleep permits get by - and when finally a brain stops acting altogether, or decays, that special stream of consciousness which it subserved will vanish entirely from this natural world. But the sphere of being that supplied the consciousness would still be intact; and that more real world with which, even whilst here, it was continuous, the consciousness might, in ways unknown to us, continue still."<sup>34</sup>

Thus James faces the unavoidable conclusion, "You see that, on all these suppositions, our soul's life, as we here know it, would none-the-less in literal strictness be the function of the brain. The brain would be the independent variable, the mind would vary dependently on it."<sup>35</sup>

From the point of view of positive science as interpreted by an empiricist, James realizes that "function can mean nothing more than bare concomitant variation" "and all talk about either production or transmission, as the mode of taking place, is pure superadded hypothesis, and metaphysical hypothesis at that, for we can frame no more notion of the details on the one alternative than on the other. Ask for any indication of the exact process either of transmission or of production, and science confesses her imagination to be bankrupt."<sup>36</sup>

However, in spite of the fact of having put both hypothesis on a par James adds:

<sup>34</sup> Page 292 of the reprint of the article by Gardner Murphy in the book William James on Psychological Research.

<sup>35</sup> See P.U. "When one of us dies, it is as if an eye of the world were closed" - Lecture IV - Concerning Fechner.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid., p. 294

"but if we consider the theory of transmission in a wider way, we see that it has certain positive superiorities -- Just how the process of transmission may be carried on, is indeed, unimaginable; but the outer relations, so to speak, of the process encourage one belief. Consciousness in this process does not have to be generated de novo in a vast number of places. It exists already, behind the scenes, coeval with the world. The transmission theory not only avoids in this way multiplying miracles, but it puts itself in touch with general idealistic philosophy better than the production theory does. It should be always reckoned a good thing when science and philosophy thus meet."<sup>37</sup>

This cosmic conception is the final statement of the Conclusions of his Varieties where he establishes that "the world of our present consciousness is only one out of many worlds of consciousness that exist".<sup>38</sup> And in the chapter of mysticism, referring to nitrous oxide intoxication, he says that a truth was forced upon his mind - "that our 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 lies 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,<sup>39</sup> definite types of mentality which probably somewhere have their field of application and adaptation. No account of the universe with totality can be final which leaves these other forms of consciousness quite disregarded. How to regard them is the question - for they are so discontinuous with ordinary consciousness. Yet they may determine attitudes though they cannot furnish formulas, and open a region though they fail to give a map. At any rate, they forbid a premature closing of our accounts with reality. Looking back on my own experiences, they all converge towards a kind of insight to which I cannot help ascribing some metaphysical significance. The keynote of it is invariably a reconciliation. It is as if the opposites of the world, whose contradictoriness and conflict make all our difficulties and troubles, were melted

<sup>37</sup> P.U., Lecture IV, Concerning Pechner, p. 294-295

<sup>38</sup> V.R.E., p. 509

<sup>39</sup> This is the text that links James with the L.S.D. generation. (The underlining is ours.)

into unity. Not only do they, as contrasted species, belong to the one and the same genius, but one of the species, the nobler and better one, is itself the genius, and so soaks up and absorbs its opposite into itself.<sup>40</sup> This is a dark saying, I know, when thus expressed in terms of common logic, but I cannot wholly escape from its authority. I feel as if it must mean something; something like what the Hegelian philosophy means, if one could only lay hold of it more clearly. Those who have ears to hear, let them hear; to me the living sense of its reality only comes in the artificial mystic state of mind."<sup>41</sup> And in a note to this paragraph James declares that the insight of Hegel is truly mystic. A declaration that is confirmed by Radhakrishnan in his book "An Idealist View of Life".<sup>42</sup>

And we might as well note that notorious flirting with Hegel comes from the staunchest enemy of Idealism at the turn of the century -- at least of its philosophical bases.

### 3. THE FINAL METAPHYSICAL CONCEPTION OF JAMES

In his "Pluralistic Universe," James offers his last, chronologically speaking, synthesis of his philosophical conception. He shows the bankruptcy of absolutism in their argumentation.<sup>43</sup> But to reject absolutism does not imply rejection of the hypothesis of a "superhuman consciousness," and instead of the dialectical method of the Hegelians,<sup>44</sup> James preferred the empirical analogy and free speculation of Fechner<sup>45</sup> in order to establish it. Instead of a superhuman consciousness that is "all-embracing," James proposes one that is limited as to the human consciousness.<sup>46</sup> This way it could

<sup>40</sup> The underlining is James.

<sup>41</sup> V.R.J., p. 373-379

<sup>42</sup> P. 135, London Unwin Books, 1961. See contradictory expression in F.U., p. 211

<sup>43</sup> F.U., p. 31-204

<sup>44</sup> Ibid., p. 49-114

<sup>45</sup> Ibid., p. 137-151

<sup>46</sup> Ibid., p. 134

be related to an environment different from itself and be free from evil. James never wanted to separate man from God. Man is a part of a more enveloping spiritual life different from his only in degree, but not in kind. The probability of such an hypothesis is confirmed by the mystical intuition,<sup>47</sup> by the abnormal and supranormal experiences and by the satisfaction of our emotional demands. James never arrived to these conclusions by assault or all of a sudden. He went through a tremendous intellectual crisis<sup>48</sup> in order to solve the logical difficulties involved.<sup>49</sup> As he was struggling with this problem, James received the sufficient encouragement from the reading of Bergson to break for good with the traditional logic and accept as probable the Pechner's hypothesis of a compounding consciousness. Bergson, as well as James in his chapter of the "stream of consciousness," had played up the continuity of living experience. The several units of experience have both their differences and their sameness and they may be considered in either aspect - "Every smallest bit of experience is a "multium in parvo" plurally related".<sup>50</sup> There is an interpenetration of relations but not interdependence. As the one and very same point can be at the intersection of so many different lines<sup>51</sup> but it doesn't belong to the essence of that point to keep forever those relations.

47 P.U., p. 303

48 See his Diary in Perry.

49 For How the identity of the individual consciences be saved in view of the superior unity?

50 P.U., p. 322-323

51 E.R.L., p. 126

James concludes that there are two ways of considering reality"- The "all form" of universal co-implication and the "each form" or "distributive theory of reality" without that co-implication.<sup>52</sup> Now James is coming back to the striking psychological theory of the "stream of consciousness" where he insists that experience is not composed of separate units somehow imbedded in "consciousness," but "the confluences of every passing movement of concretely felt experience with its immediately next neighbours."<sup>53</sup> Now, these common or "neutral" elements of experience can form different groupings or patterns - but at the same time it could happen that two different minds can contain the same element. It will be like the crossing of two lines at the same point.<sup>54</sup> By the same token, there is no reason why human minds should not be "confluent in a higher consciousness."<sup>55</sup>

In his Pluralistic Universe, James ends in this fashion his Lecture VII on the Continuity of Experience:

"The numerous facts of divided or split human personality which the genius of certain medical men as Janet, Freud, Prince, Sides and others, have unearthed were unknown in Fechner's time and neither the phenomenon of automatic writing and speech, nor the mediumship and "possession" generally, had been recognized or studied as we now study them, so Fechner's stock of analogies is scant compared with our present one. He did the best with what he had, however. For my own part, I find in some of these abnormal or supernormal facts the strongest suggestions in favor of a superior co-consciousness being possible. 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,

<sup>52</sup> P.U., p. 34-325

<sup>53</sup> Ibid., p. 325

<sup>54</sup> P.U., p. 12

<sup>55</sup> Ibid., p. 123

when the threshold lowers or the valve opens, information ordinarily shut out leaks into the mind of exceptional individuals among us. But those regions of inquiry are perhaps too spook-haunted to interest an academic audience, and the only evidence I feel it now decorous to bring to the support of Fechner is drawn from ordinary 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.<sup>56</sup>

The relation of the reservoir of consciousness to the individual ones prompted the criticism of Ward:

"The question, What is the relation of the 'White radiance' or, maybe, its source, 'the super-solar blaze' to the subjects that receive it as a kaleidoscopic show - this, the main point, as it seems to me - does not come clearly to the fore."<sup>57</sup>

<sup>56</sup> P.U., p. 298-300. In relation to this communication of conscience of man with the soul of the universe, Father Maher says in his Psychology, "The hypothesis which interprets our conscious existence as merely a fragment of a universal mind, would seem to be a formal acceptance of Pantheism. It implies that our individuality is only apparent. It would logically be forced to transfer to this universal soul the responsibility for all our thoughts and volitions. Indeed, in this theory we would seem to have little more reality or personality of our own than the modes of the Divine Substance of Spinoza. But we must not be unjust to Professor James. We feel sure from his other writings that he would repudiate these conclusions. He believes in the freedom of the will; and in his essay on Human Immortality, he seeks to find place for a future life; though we fancy few will be satisfied with the metaphysical speculations by which it is supported.

"His view, as expressed in that work, seems to be that there exists throughout the universe, or rather behind the veil of matter, a reservoir of universal consciousness, which trickles or streams through the brain into living beings, somewhat as water through a tap, or light through a half-transparent lens. Each tap, or lens, shapes or colours the incoming flow of thought with its various individualistic peculiarities, "and when finally a brain stops acting altogether or decays, that special stream of consciousness which it subserved will vanish entirely from this natural world. But the sphere of being that supplied the consciousness would still

<sup>57</sup> Perry, The Thought and Character I, p. 135

James replied with a provision for a more "individualistic" form of the mother-sea reservoir. ("The individual consciousness may survive the brain, for in the mother-sea the scars of cerebral operations may remain as records of the transaction, like stubs in a check book, and form the basis of an eternally remembered account. I should have said more explicitly that there is no objection to considering the mother-sea in as individualistic form as you like".)<sup>58</sup>

James, in the second edition of "Human Immortality," revised his hypothesis, making the mother-sea consist of a collection of individual spirits existing in a complete form.

And considering those experiences and the metaphysical implication of the same, James concludes his pluralistic Universe.

also, at the end of his varieties<sup>59</sup> James speaks of "many worlds of consciousness that exist" of which our present consciousness is one. James writes: "The world of our present consciousness is only one out of many worlds of consciousness that exist."<sup>60</sup>

<sup>58</sup> be intact; and in that more real world with which even whilst here it was continuous, the consciousness might, in ways unknown to us, continue still." (Ibid., p. 37-38) In addition to the difficulties above, indicated in regard to the absence of evidence, and the incoherence of the notion of such a universal consciousness, it is sufficient here to repeat Mr. James' complaint against the doctrine of his opponents that "It guarantees no immortality of a sort we care for." It is in the perpetuity of our own personal individual consciousness that each of us is primarily interested, not in that of "the sphere of being" which originally provided the supply". (H. Haver "Psychology", Longmans, 1930, p. 456-457)

<sup>58</sup> Perry, The Thought and Character I, p. 130

<sup>59</sup> .U., p. 509

<sup>60</sup> V. .U., p. 500

In his chapter of mysticism, James qualifies what he means by present consciousness:

"Our 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."<sup>61</sup>

But as he says in the chapter on mysticism - "apply the requisite stimulus and a touch they are there".<sup>62</sup> And to say it in Fechner's terminology we just need to lower the threshold or open the valve. In order to do that James admits the efficiency of nitrous oxide intoxication of ether or alcohol. James says that "from the point of view of their psychological mechanism, the classic mysticism and these lower mysticisms spring from the same mental level, from the great subliminal."<sup>63</sup>

Thus the proper stimulus is "quod requiritur et sufficit" for the production of mysticism. This opening of our eyes to see the light seems to be an outstanding Jamesian formula according to Pratt in his book "The Religious Consciousness"<sup>64</sup> and Ducasse sums it up<sup>65</sup> by saying that we can assume the existence of an environment different from that given to us by the senses, and that by provoking certain abnormal states, such as the mystic trance, we hit with the act that renders the mind capable of reaching that environment.

This conception of a provoked mysticism would really endanger the supernatural order.

<sup>61</sup> V.R.E., p. 378

<sup>62</sup> P.U., p. 379

<sup>63</sup> Ibid., p. 417

<sup>64</sup> New York - MacMillan, 1943, p. 442-45

<sup>65</sup> "A philosophical scrutiny of religion," p. 316

## 4. THE MYSTICAL INTUITION

"Our normal waking consciousness, rational consciousness as we call it, is out 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."<sup>66</sup>

This provoked mystical intuition would then be "only very sudden and great extensions of the ordinary "field of consciousness" "an immense spreading of the margin of the field."<sup>67</sup>

James distinguishes four essential marks of this phenomenon:

1) "Ineffability"<sup>68</sup> or that it "defies expression"<sup>69</sup> "more like states of feeling than like states of intellect"<sup>70</sup>

2) "Noetic quality"<sup>71</sup> or "states of insight into depths of truth unplumbed by the discursive intellect."<sup>72</sup>

3) "Transiency"<sup>73</sup> or that "cannot be sustained for long."<sup>74</sup>

4) "Passivity" or "held by a superior power".<sup>75</sup>

James studies these phenomena within a wide range<sup>76</sup> which James calls a "mystical ladder"<sup>77</sup> in which he distinguishes five steps:

1) "Rudiment of mystical experience" or "that deepened sense of significance of a maxim"<sup>78</sup> or "strangely moving power of passages in certain poems"<sup>79</sup> - James feels that lyric

66 V.R.E., p. 378-379

67 Collected Essays and Reviews, 1920, p. 500

68 V.R.E., p. 371

69 Ibid., p. 371

70 Ibid., p. 371

71 Ibid., p. 371

72 Ibid., p. 371

73 Ibid., p. 372

74 V.R.E., p. 372

75 Ibid., p. 373

76 V.R.E., p. 372

77 Ibid., p. 373

78 Ibid., p. 374

79 Ibid., p. 373

80 Ibid., p. 374

poetry and music are significant only in proportion to this mystical susceptibility.

Our opinion is that this is a natural form of mental contemplation with affective consequences that implies or not previous reasoning.

2) "Sudden invasions of vaguely reminiscent consciousness"<sup>30</sup> which James explains as "an extremely frequent phenomenon, that sudden feeling, namely, which sometimes sweeps over us, of having "been here before."<sup>31</sup>

In our opinion, this is just as the previous case, only that the previous elaboration rests on the subconscious and the traces of memory. It could be also a not totally clear institution of the mind.

3) "Deeper plunges into mystical consciousness"<sup>32</sup> which Kingsley defines as "an innate feeling that everything I see has a meaning"<sup>33</sup> or the perception of your own soul.<sup>34</sup> Somehow deeper is "the sense that I had followed the last thread of being" as Symonds describes it, adding a note of distrust to the world of senses as if there remains something not yet seen and to be seen.

It is evident that this also is a not totally clear intuition of the mind.

4) "Consciousness produced by intoxicants and anaesthet-

<sup>30</sup> V.R.E., p. 375

<sup>31</sup> Ibid., p. 374

<sup>32</sup> Ibid., p. 375

<sup>33</sup> Ibid., p. 375

<sup>34</sup> Ibid., p. 376

ics, especially by alcohol."<sup>35</sup> Alcohol for James "stimulates the mystical faculties of human nature".<sup>36</sup> The same goes for "nitrous oxide and ether."<sup>37</sup> Content of this intuition:

"A kind of insight to which I cannot help ascribing some metaphysical significance." "They keynote of it is invariably a reconciliation." "As if the opposites of the world...were melted into unity"..<sup>38</sup> "Something like what the hegelian philosophy means."<sup>38</sup>

One should compare this text with the final note in the essay of James, "On some Hegelianisms" in the *Will to Believe* pages 294-298, where he tells us of his own experiments with ether during which he could perceive words in slow-motion.

James considers a typical feature of this consciousness "the monistic penetration" or reconciliation, and tries to reinforce his experience with that of Symonds who also presents his affair with chloroform, his soul becoming aware with God but waking up with the fear that he had been tricked by the abnormal excitement of the brain but also with a suspicion if he had felt that very same feeling of God that the saints had.<sup>89</sup>

James considers the monistic vision a religious one and a mystic one. "This has the genuine religious mystic ring."<sup>90</sup> At the same time he considers that the feeling of the presence of God borders with the fifth case of the mystical ladder.

5) "A sudden realization of the immediate presence of

<sup>35</sup> V.R.E., p. 377

<sup>36</sup> Ibid., p. 377

<sup>37</sup> Ibid., p. 375

<sup>38</sup> Ibid., p. 379

<sup>39</sup> See pages 382 and 383 of the *Varieties*.

<sup>90</sup> V.R.E., p. 381

God,"<sup>91</sup> and if nature can awaken such mystical moods, then it is called "Cosmic Consciousness" by Dr. Bucke: "All at once, without warning of any kind, I found myself wrapped in a flame-colored cloud...next, I knew the fire was within myself. There came upon me a sense of exultation...followed by an intellectual illumination impossible to describe...I saw that the universe is not composed of dead matter..on the contrary, a living Presence...I became conscious of eternal life...that all men are immortal".<sup>92</sup> This and other recorded phenomena "have occurred out of doors".<sup>93</sup>

Explanation of the fifth step by James:

There is something we must clarify before we go into his most representative texts:

In our opinion James tries to explain this supreme mystical stage in terms that do not surpass the contemplation with image, no matter how hard he tries to disassociate it from sensitive impressions. The immediacy of the divine object is precluded from the very moment that James refers at least to a localization in space and other reminiscences of the intellectual, affective or volitive natural order. We all know that in the mystical intuition the mind must rest immediately on the object and not upon the cognitive act as such whose object has been derived or abstracted from the sensibles. The fact that the mystic lacks of non-sensible means in order to express his immediate experience (and thus he has to get help from the analogies of the spiritual senses,

91 V.R.E., p. 384

92 Ibid., p. 390-391

93 Ibid., p. 386

is not enough to justify James' restrictions to the level of what is analogically sensible.

Already since he wrote his *Principles* James began to refer himself to feelings of presence disassociated from sensitive impressions. The case is that of a blind man (since he was two years old) who could capture the presence of the phantasm of a dead friend in his room. James insists on the lack of visual imagination on the one side, and on the other, on the existence of a "conception to which the feeling of present reality was attached".<sup>94</sup>

The cases analyzed by James later on in his *Varieties*, Lecture III, are further confirmation for us that James is talking of hallucinatory protections and this is so much more because he himself uses these experiences of hallucination<sup>95</sup> as the "proof" "of the existence of such an undifferentiated sense of reality"<sup>96</sup> "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."<sup>97</sup>

The example used by James is underlined by him as "indefinitely localized"<sup>98</sup> and "facing in one particular way" only different from the religious phenomenon in that "it was not filled with a quality of Joy".<sup>99</sup>

Thus James adds that "it would clearly not have been unnatural to interpret them as a revelation of the deity's

94 *Principles* II, p. 322-324

95 *V.R.E.*, p. 53

96 *Ibid.*, p. 58

97 *Ibid.*, p. 58

98 *Ibid.*, p. 53

99 *Ibid.*, p. 60

existence."<sup>100</sup>

In justice to James we might point out his insistence and persistence in playing up first the "abstract conception". However, James at once qualifies it as spatialized: "With the feelings of reality and spatial outwardness directly attached to it"<sup>101</sup> which James calls, paradoxically "a fully objectified and exteriorized idea".<sup>102</sup>

The case of the blind man "entirely without internal visual imaginary"<sup>103</sup> demands some qualifications that are not present in James' presentation. As far as we are concerned, we think that the process could be described thus: We protect whatever we have in the imagination into space inasmuch as this corresponds somehow to something previously perceived, and for this would be enough even the connection with an idea (Thus the idea of the friend of the blind man came to excite again the spatial image of the dead friend, although in this case could not be related to any of the five external senses.

Thus, this is all an associative process of empiricism. Besides, why should we insist upon the ideal or abstract part when James himself states "that the feeling of reality may be something more like a sensation than an intellectual operation properly so-called"?<sup>104</sup> Let's bear in mind that one of the four elements of mysticism is immediately related to the immediacy of the senses, although James insists more now on the element of conviction. This "genuine perception of

<sup>100</sup> V.R.L., p. 60

<sup>101</sup> Ibid., p. 62

<sup>102</sup> Ibid., p. 62

<sup>103</sup> Ibid., p. 62

<sup>104</sup> Ibid., p. 64

truth"<sup>105</sup> "as convincing; to those who have then as any sensible experience can be" is played up by James over against the "results established by logic" of "rationalism"<sup>106</sup> which is relatively superficial" in "we look on man's whole mental life." Rationalism is too exclusive, says James, when it assumes to establish the basis of our belief in abstract principles, sensations, hypothesis and logical inferences. However this "prestige" "will fail to convince or convert you all the same".<sup>107</sup> However, "if you have intuitions at all, they come from a deeper level of your nature than the loquacious level which rationalism inhabits. Your whole subconscious life, your impulses, your faiths, your needs, your divinations, have prepared the premises, of which your consciousness now feels the weight of the result; and something in you absolutely knows that that result must be truer than any logic-chopping, rationalistic talk."<sup>108</sup> And then after establishing the "inferiority of rationalism in founding belief" and on mocking at the proofs of the existence of God drawn from the order of nature, James concludes "that in the metaphysical and religious sphere, articulate reason are cogent for us only when our inarticulate feelings of reality have already been impressed in favor of the same conclusion"<sup>109</sup> being "our impulsive belief...what...always sets up the original body of truth"..After all, "instinct leads, intelligence does but follow."<sup>110</sup>

<sup>105</sup> V.R.L., p. 72

<sup>106</sup> Ibid., p. 72

<sup>107</sup> Ibid., p. 72

<sup>108</sup> Ibid., p. 73

<sup>109</sup> Ibid., p. 73

<sup>110</sup> Ibid., p. 73

Now we can ask: What is the main consequence we can gather from the presentation given by James of the feeling of presence. Not other than that James starts with the affective element for getting the explanation of that very element which seems to be "self-explanatory" and it is going to perform whatever reason cannot do. This is just for the sake of opposing rationalism. In this manner: "incidit in Scyllam, cupiens vitare Charibdym" and from the extreme of not granting to rationalism the power of establishing faith (who said it does?) he goes to the other extreme of a blind fideism. In one word Subjectivism. This is the determining factor of his mysticism. Let's see how.

Could we gather the main elements of the analysis made by James of the mystical experience? Indeed, if we keep constantly in mind a duality of elements, the objective and the subjective, when he comes to explain both presence and meaning.

In the case of "Presence:" Let's give an instance that will clarify our thought: Whenever you confuse somebody with a friend of yours, In this case, the object is present (visual) but the meaning is absent, for he is a stranger to you.

On the other hand, the blind man (the mystic) can talk of presence of something not seen, and this is due to his subjective feeling (meaning). The implication is then that for James the subjective feeling or presence produces the sensation, instead of sensation producing presence. We think that the produced visions or the utilization of vestiges found in our faculties from previous natural knowledge do influence

in the mystical knowledge "quoad modum" but not "quoad rem" (which has to be the divine object). This we think tends to happen in the cases of affective links with the object (as the blind man who knew his friend).

In the case of "Meaning:" Let's give an instance that will clarify our thought:

James talks of the meaning found in a verse of lyrical poetry or a deeper sense of penetration. James talks of something perceived in "slow-motion". Sticking to the analogy of the friend: I like somebody because he looks like somebody I like.

Thus there is an objective element (seen by the senses) but there is a subjective element of penetration. The possibility of illusion is evident inasmuch as for instance a Catholic could adore a non-consacrated Host. We underline this element inasmuch as one of the features of hallucination is this note of conviction. (But this is in itself a great tribute to the accuracy of the imagination and its remarkable capacity to coincide with physical presence. Thus I can make with my imagination a dead person noetically present to me, who is not physically present at all.) Thus we have a subjective condition that accompanies always the perception of the real, but while sense perception has a feeling of present reality we find this very same feeling in psychological states other than sense perception.

Conclusion: In all the cases analyzed by James there is an unbalanced preference toward the subjective element. The meaning or penetration is extended to something present.

and "presence" to something unseen. Let's keep in mind that famous text of James: "In its inner nature, belief, or the sense of reality, is a sort of feeling more allied to the emotions than to anything else."<sup>111</sup>

Now let's bear in mind that, as we said on page 144, "The psychological subconscious depends upon the data of the senses and thus, for instance, it is a fact that the mystical intuition lacks both image and specialization." Thus whatever illusion could be manufactured by the subconscious has to be done with the elements of ordinary conscience. Now, if James is working toward some kind of analogy, then we can surely apply to him the sharp criticism of Father Marechal to the mysticism of Delacroix: "It is based on partial analogies between mystical intuition and the synthetic product, which as a clever psychologist he mentally builds up by means of common data. But are these common data, however cleverly synthesised they may be supposed to be, of such a nature as to cause the objective birth of, I do not say the true mystical fact, but merely a state which has all the appearance of it? What psychologist would venture to reply in the affirmative, since the hypothesis of M. Delacroix compels the correction and transposition, on a point of the highest importance, of what the Christian mystics constantly present as an immediate datum of mysticism."<sup>112</sup>

<sup>111</sup> Psychology, Vol. II, p. 263

<sup>112</sup> Studies in the psychology of the mystics, p. 131

### Mysticism as the Climax of the Religious Act

We have studied before (Chapter I, pages 53-59) how the emotional excitement alters the center of our dynamic energy. The emotional element characterizes also the religious feelings of the "faith-state" and the "prayer state" in which, James contends, energy actually flows into our lives. "The whole drift" of his education, he confesses, persuades him "that the world of our present consciousness is only one out of many worlds of our consciousness that exist; and that those other worlds must contain experiences which have a meaning for our life also." Although in the main the experiences of the other worlds and the experiences of our world "keep discrete," they do become "continuous at certain points, and higher energies filter in."<sup>113</sup>

In this prayer-state "something ideal....actually exerts an influence, raises our center of personal energy, and produces regenerative effects unattainable in other ways."<sup>114</sup>

Keeping in mind these effects, James adopts "the hypothesis which they so naturally suggest"<sup>115</sup> of the existence of a power beyond our selves. Thus in the total vision of the

<sup>113</sup> V.R.E., p. 509

<sup>114</sup> Ibid., p. 513 \*Note: Let's recall some of these fruits:

"The great Spanish mystics, who carried the habit of ecstasy as far as it has often been carried, appear for the most part to have shown indomitable spirit and energy, and all the more so for the trances in which they indulged." (V.R.E., 404)

"Saint Ignatius was a mystic, but his mysticism made him assuredly one of the most powerfully practical human engines that ever lived," (V.R.E. 404) and on Saint Theresa: "Where in literature is a more evidently veracious account of the formation of a new center of spiritual energy, than is given in her description of the effects of certain ecstasies which in reporting leave the soul upon a higher level of emotional excitement? (V.R.E. 405)

<sup>115</sup> V.R.E., p. 513

religious act in James there is a polarity: the higher control and ourselves. Through a simple mechanism of equilibrium (described on page 57), the psychology of self-surrender becomes the "vital turning point of the religious life".<sup>116</sup>

The release of this tension is performed via the subconscious with the final result in the formation of a center of energy. But, can the release of a tension result in a center of energy. It seems that for James the answer is in the affirmative. As a matter of fact for him, the mystical intuition is an invasion from our spiritual environment via the subconscious - "very sudden and great extensions of the ordinary field of consciousness."<sup>117</sup>

The mystical phenomena "from the point of view of their psychological mechanism...spring from the same mental level, from that great subliminal or transmarginal region."<sup>118</sup>

James considers them as "windows through which the mind looks out upon a more extensive and inclusive world."<sup>119</sup>

The description of this more extensive and inclusive world was advanced at the very end of the Varieties:

"It 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."<sup>120\*</sup>

<sup>116</sup> V.R.E., p. 513

<sup>117</sup> Collected Essays and Reviews, 1920, p. 500

<sup>118</sup> V.R.E., p. 417

<sup>119</sup> Ibid., p. 419

<sup>120\*</sup> Ibid., p. 515 \*Note: The attacks of James against the monistic absolutism are centered around the lack of logical coerciveness in that system. (P.U., p. 31) But his main interest is to find a compromising formula out of the extremes of the absolutist position. (Loc. cit.) James, of his own choice, includes himself among the more intimate pantheistic

## 5. FINAL REMARKS

When one takes in consideration that the stuff of pure

120\* (cf) philosophies. (P.U., p. 23-25) James admits an identity of material content between his pluralism and his absolutism, a spiritual substance. (P.U., p. 34) Then he introduces a distinction between the form and the content of that universal substance. (Ibid., p. 319) This universal substance is not a creation of God since God is a part of this substance if the system is conceived pluralistically. (Ibid., p. 313)

Then it follows that if the system were conceived absolutistically we are a part. A Creator God would imply an absolute. Then the only alternative would be to deprive him of His creative function, for James wants to have the intimacy of pantheism without destroying his pluralism. "We are indeed internal parts of God and not external creations." (Loc. cit.)

"Today, his standpoint would perhaps be catalogued as an instance of "panentheism" or the presence of everything in God. When he tried to describe the immanence of finite things in God, James conceded that "we are indeed internal parts of God and not external creations." (P.U., p. 313). Creation always meant to him a magic ejection and alienation of things from God. To save the unity and intimacy of the universe, therefore, he felt compelled to be sympathetic toward panpsychism and pantheism. Yet these views led back to a partitive relation of other things to God and thus posed a threat to James' pluralism, even when he denied that there was a unique cosmic unity of self or subjective synthesis. The term "panentheism" is meant to signify a medium between theism and pantheism. But the theism in question is still the exaggerated transcendence-ejection conception of God, and the panentheist solution still makes finite things to be components of the one divine self under one of its relational forms. Cf. Charles Hartshorne, *The Divine Relativity*, and R. C. Whittemore, "Prolegomena to a Modern Philosophical Theism," *Pulane Studies in Philosophy*, 5 (1956), 87-93, for a panentheistic finitism." (God in Modern Philosophy, p. 440-441)

In a letter from Dr. James Collins to myself, dated August 16, 1962, Dr. Collins states: "He was able to reform many concepts and give them a non-monistic sense (insofar as he opposed monism). Could substance somehow be saved? At least one can say that the passages in *Pluralistic Universe* on the self-compounding function of mind are still open to a need for substance, if the latter could be detached from identification with the absolute. Here again, we have to rely on the drift of James' thinking and some of his last lectures on metaphysics. He did not live to think out the problem of a continued need for substance of some sort."

experience is "neither psysical or psysical"<sup>121</sup> for James or that the material object and the self do not exist per se, one really wonders if James with this neutral system has shaken the foundations of the meaning from notions such as 'presence', 'conscious' and 'subconscious', etc., that he pretends to use within the context of his pragmatism. There seems to be a gross inconsistency in this endeavor.

At first sight it seems that the neutrality of this universe offers the loose element that is best for the pragmatic constructions of the mind. However, who is the self behind those constructions? Another construction?

How or why these contexts occur, James doesn't know: "How or why the experiences ever get themselves made or why their characters and relations are just such as appear, we cannot begin to understand."<sup>122</sup>

We cannot either begin to understand the real significance of a world totally deprived of objectivity. Once "experience" becomes an empty word, those constructions of James out of neutral elements strike us as a music without notes.

In James' mind, however, his neutral monism was the greatest contribution, for besides eliminating the mind-body problem, it did offer the epistemological advantage of a free and smooth motion of the knower to the object bridging the gap between the idea and the object that the distinction of mind and body implied. This made his "ambulatory" process of knowledge fully possible, a process in which the concepts lead into a perceptual conjunction with the object. Pragmatism

<sup>121</sup> E.R.J., p. 26-27

<sup>122</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 133. The underlining is James'

besides strived upon the fact of the real relations among things, otherwise there would not be a connection between our idea and its real consequences.

To make ideas run parallel but independent from reality, James had to idealize things and at the same time had to retain for them this ideal qualification independent from the mind. In doing this he had to avoid the mind-body problem. Matter could not exist as an independent entity, nor could the mind, which was now considered as a function.

The solution of James was a neutral entity, a solution that might have served for him the purposes of solving the mind-body problem, but that represents unsurmountable problems when one wants to criticize issues discussed by James in an apparent realistic context but to which he pretends to apply his pragmatic method (rooted in neutral monism).

Subjectivism is, for instance, the determining factor of James' description of "presence" in the mystical experience. But where does subjectivism fit in a neutral system?

Consciousness is a particular arrangement of those neutral elements, but what makes it mine or yours? And what makes the "potential forms of consciousness"<sup>123</sup> to have that potentiality or what does reduce them to their actuality?

But the worst difficulty against James comes from the contradiction offered by the formulation of a theory (the transmissive function of the brain) with a dualistic background and the use of that theory in a context of neutrality.

Marl, in 1891, upon receiving the lecture, "Human

<sup>123</sup> V.R.S., p. 373

Immortality," had written to James on this very point:

"For the nonce you seem, more than you have done elsewhere, to admit the validity of the Cartesian dualism that still possesses the scientific mind, and of 'psycho-physical parallelism,' the logical outcome of that dualism."<sup>124</sup>

But James is going to stick to this dualism even when he has admitted a neutral monism. More even, he is going to pretend to compromise them in his theory of the subconscious acting as a gate through which the higher energies filter in. Indeed this is a dualistic conception, while our "confluence in a higher consciousness"<sup>125</sup> is based upon the premise of a neutrality of elements that renders possible the co-consciousness.<sup>126</sup>

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124

Perry, *The Thought and Character* II, p. 135

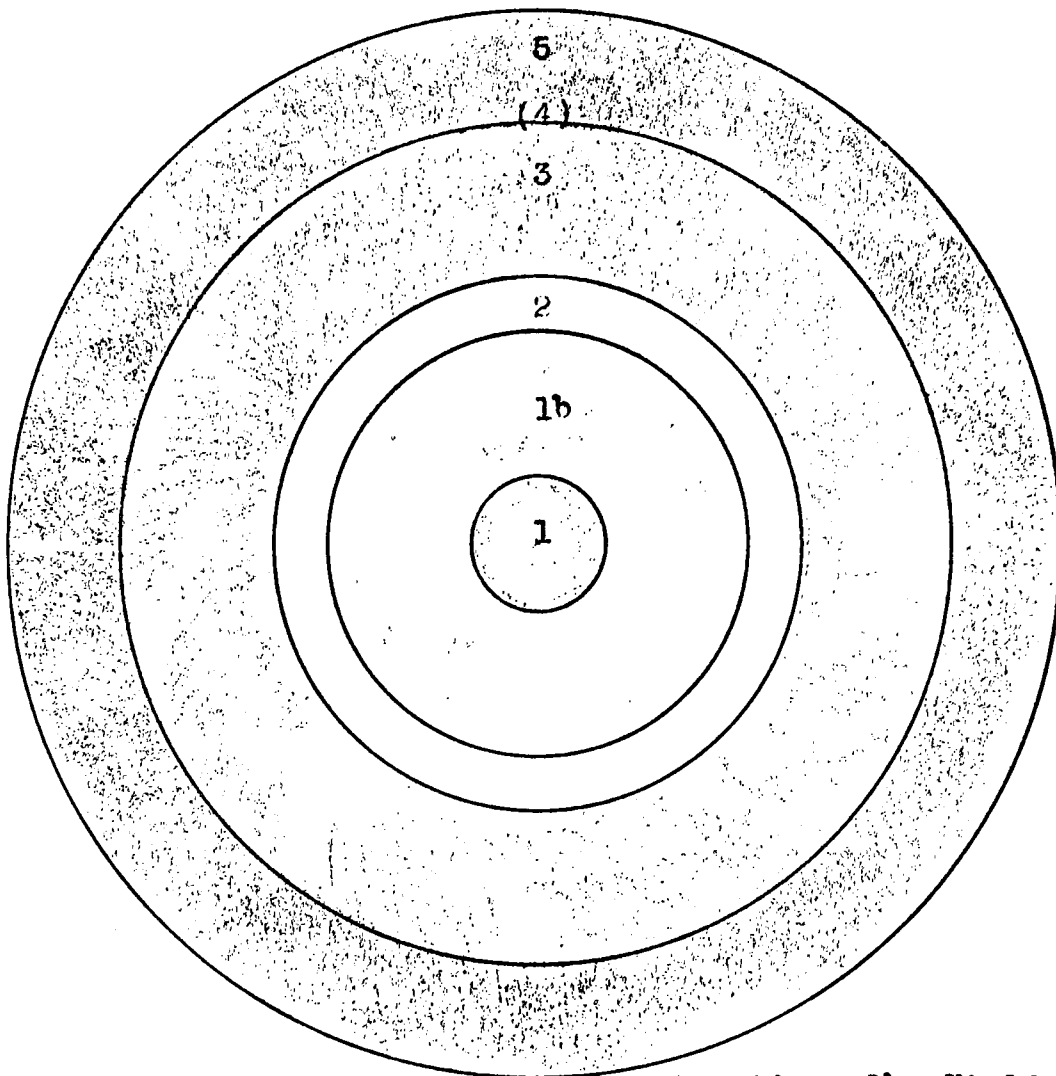
125

P.U., p. 290

126

E.A.S., p. 123

VI. Topographical Map of James' psychological and supra-psychological conception.



- 1-1b: Consciousness. 1: Center of attention, 1b: Field of consciousness  
 2: Margin-"magnetic field".  
 3: Subconscious region: "conditio sine qua non" or psych.antecedent.  
 4: The Valve.Contact zone. "transmissive function of brain"  
 5: The More

## VII. "FINAL CRITICISM"

There is no doubt that James was on the right track when he related his theory of the subconscious to that of attention, but he left this conception somehow undeveloped in his *The Varieties of Religious Experience*.<sup>1</sup> The implications of this doctrine were already in the chapter of "Attention" of his *Principles* when he tried to explain the phenomenon of "the narrowness of consciousness"<sup>2</sup> as depending on the fact that the activity of the hemispheres "tends at all times to be a consolidated and unified affair"<sup>3</sup> but, if "the consolidation is seldom quite complete, the excluded currents are not wholly abortive, their presence affects the 'fringe' and margin of our thought."<sup>4</sup> Thus, the main thought of James is that "when an incoming current thus occupies the hemispheres with its consequences, other currents are for the time kept out."<sup>5</sup> While James stresses the unity of the total activity of the hemispheres, he also refers to its negative or privative element. This is the implication that was left undeveloped by James. Indeed, the elements of the subconscious are nothing but the faculties of the soul, as far as they operate without the clear attention of the psychological ego.

For James the subconscious level is considered "higher!"

"On our hypothesis it is primarily the higher faculties of our own hidden mind which are controlling."<sup>6</sup>

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1 V.R.E., p. 225

2 P.B.C., p. 217

3 Loc. cit.

4 Ibid., p. 218

5 Ibid., p. 217

6 V.R.E., p. 503

We could compare, then, attention to the light of the sun on the earth. On the very same earth we do have nights, dawn and twilight, and a clear day. The difference is in the light or in the lack or gradual lack of it.

The subconscious is, then, nothing but the soul with its sensitive and spiritual faculties, as far as they are the deposit and activity of the psychic acts which either are not perceived by the clear conscience or not retained by it, and even lost to the personal synthesis of the normal psychological ego. The wealth or lack of the subconscious, and the organization or dispersion of its contents depends in every individual on the amplitude, intensity, or wealth of his psychic life. There is a parallel level in the subconscious to the conscious psychic life. Both conscious and subconscious are normal levels of human activity. The activities of the subconscious are directly dependant upon the capacity and activity of conscious life, for the same human faculties and identical operations are operating in the conscious or subconscious life. The difference is a matter of degree or way of attention or, as far as they are incorporated or not to the psychological ego. Let us state, then, that these two regions, conscience and subconscious, are not two water-tight compartments, but they are permeable. The interchange could go softly (confused feelings, vague ideas, loose imagination) or openly (as a solution, long sought), or violently (rarely in healthy human beings), or overflowing and taking over conscience (psychopaths, hypnotism, hysterics, somnambulism); but, whatever is the way of the interpenetration, it will

always be recognized by the normal psychological ego and it will be incorporated to its synthesis. Very often, there can be an element of surprise and shock until recognition is achieved and it takes an amount of examination.

We do have a subconscious because we need it, inasmuch as we are limited in our organic potential (we get tired), as well as in the concentration of our attention. (Bifocal attention is almost impossible if not headsplitting.) Our habits rely upon our subconscious so that we can concentrate our attention on something else.

Basically, I believe, James had this conception of the subconscious, but, while he did not develop it to its ultimate consequences, he also took a fancy for psychical research and parapsychology and began to talk of a force of a suprapyschological character from which saving energies flew in to us through our subconscious. It was precisely at this moment that he began to stretch out his realistic conception of the subconscious and he somehow forgot that direct dependance of the subconscious from the conscious life. He also tried to explain some facts of the conscious life by invoking the unnecessary aid of a subconscious hypothesis. I am referring to his explanation of conversion and mysticism. I think we have to refer to this "stretching out" of the concept of subconscious by James.

Since we establish a proportionality between the conscious and the subconscious life, it is evident that the passivity and the activity of the subconscious is extended to all the psychical life, whether sensitive or intellectual or spiritual, in the field of knowledge as well as in the affective or voli-

tional one; in the moral, religious and mystic life. Precisely because of this extension we have to carefully state which is its proper territory, its proper form of activities, its relations with the conscience.

A good way to determine the proper field of the subconscious would be just to reduce the exaggerations of those authors who pretend to make a surprise box of the subconscious. For instance, they exaggerate the power of the subconscious in superior men and geniuses. However, this is pure mirage and lack of objective analysis. The power of the subconscious is always proportional to the conscience since fools do not make discoveries. Most of the investigations are achieved after wondering and hard trying; after a hard work of organization, tempting the form of unity. It is just natural that in this hard and lasting work very often the solution does not appear very clear, or that the formula of the law, or the point that gives the unity to the whole complex remains hidden because we are just ending up a conscient work, physically tired, exhausted by the effort. In these cases, the ripe fruit, the formulation, the genial discovery, comes suddenly and unexpectedly--when you are relaxed or tying your shoes or just walking. It comes always when you are rested and the organic forces have been repaired and you feel full of energy. The subconscious did nothing but keep on working with its hidden attention on the work of the conscient. Nor is the primary work that played by the subconscious in the great moral resolutions of saints and heroes. Heroic resolutions are not made but in full conscience. Let us say that the subconscious

does not bring out anything that did not enter in it before.

The mystical acts in themselves are fully conscious and aware of the divine. Consequently, they are out of the proper field of the subconscious. The "ineffability" of the mystical acts is not due to the fact that they are subconscious, but to the superiority of the mystical experience, which cannot be translated in our language (all soaked up in the sensible), nor with ideas of reason (that abstract after experience). Since the psychological subconscious depends upon the data of the senses, it can never be accepted as explanatory hypothesis for mysticism, for it is a fact that the mystical intuition lacks both image and specialization. Thus the mystical intuition is not based upon any psychological act whose object has been abstracted from the senses.

"Man identifies his real being with the germinal higher part of himself."<sup>7</sup> According to this very statement, the theory of the subconscious contradicts James' basic conception of religion as that of a "conscience" of identity between the personal ego and the wider ego, one in the conscious level, the other in the subconscious. This basic criticism renders obsolete his theory for the unification of the divided ego, although this conception of unification could remain totally unchallenged and very inspiring.

The whole theory of the psychogenesis of the religious act hinges upon the performance of the subconscious. For this reason we have focused our basic criticism on that conception.

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<sup>7</sup>  
J. ... , p. 400

to render it obsolete.

to be endowed with this or that type of subconscious makes the psycho-physiological idiosyncrasy of the individual which constitutes the psychological antecedent of the religious act. The term psychological is understood by James as psychophysiological, inasmuch as the "transmissive" function of the brain and its particular structure constitutes the "conditio sine qua non" of the performance of the act. There is no doubt a psychological determinism implied in this conception and an evident confusion of the terms condition and cause. This puts James in an odd predicament, inasmuch as he presents an explanation that eliminates that superior core and thus he is forced to present the real explanation of a psychological effect without the destruction of an external control. I think the compromise is impossible. The final solution of James is that of surpassing naturalism with a natural means. He conceives the dynamism of the religious act as a Polarity and a release of tension through the subconscious. Now, since the release is "determined" by the psychological conditioning, the question arises whether the action of God becomes one with the action of the creature as the first cause with its secondary. This solution given by James was termed by us as "provoked mysticism" and James himself gave us enough evidence when he spoke on the relations of drugs and mysticism.

Indeed, we realize that James' psychological explanation is not intended as a refutation of theism but one that could occur "simultaneously" with the divine reality. Thus, James

is rather aware that the testimony of the subconscious is ambiguous and brings in his pragmatism to provide for a logical entailment to surpass that condition of ambivalence. The pragmatic criterium is, then, for James, the exclusive mark to test the veracity of the subconscious' testimony. We repeat that this "exclusivity" of the pragmatic criterium is not sufficient for the rightful discrimination of spiritism. One has to consider the matter of the experience in itself, and the way it happens. One has to observe the general process, avoiding to confuse the important with the irrelevant. This keenness and perspicacity on the discernment of spirits that we can admire in Saint Ignatius of Loyola is precisely what constitutes the most outstanding missing point of the "Varieties." No wonder he regarded them as a study of morbid psychology!

Considering the religious act as a "higher kind of emotion,"<sup>8</sup> and a feeling of presence,<sup>9</sup> James works on the basis of a polarity with a developed tension between a higher power and the individual. There is a release through the subconscious and a result, the development of a "center of energy" with the consequence of a new vitality. We have tried to present a description of the necessary elements for the production or genesis of the center of activity or attention. We have stressed the copernican attitude, (which has so much in common with Kant and the sophists) of this genuine pragmatist

<sup>8</sup> V.R.C., p. 46

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., p. 43

for whom the data of experience is not injected into the mind, but the mind manipulates the environment. Within the Jamesian conception, the major themes of reality, belief and will are bound up into a perfect unity. This subjective trend is especially true in the theory of the will. It is a pity that, playing up so much the factor of interest, he fails to develop it fully. Nowhere does James offer a theory of the acquired structural units of motivation which his recurrent use of the concept of interest seems to require.

We have worked with considerable effort in presenting the unity of the processes of the mind as they are portrayed by James: hinged around the phenomenon of interest and attention. We have even dared to correlate his conception to the contemporary phenomenological movement, stressing his elements of originality and foresight. The crowning point of the subjectivistic conception of James is achieved in his famous essay, "The Sentiment of Rationality," with the notion of "equilibrium" in knowledge. This essay ties up perfectly with the conception of psychogenesis, displayed in the last chapter of the "Principles," of a genesis through an internal force, as opposed to natural selection, and which James also terms the "back door way." The subjective element of James' religious conception achieves its climatic moment with his notion of mysticism as a feeling of presence.

James' hypothesis, which interprets our conscious existence as merely a fragment of a universal mind, fails to clarify the position of individuality in that conception. While the concluding chapter of the "Varieties" presents a

universe as a "collection of selves,"<sup>10</sup> his famous "Syllabus of Philosophy," published in the very same year, describes the world "as a multitude of moments of experiences."<sup>11</sup> Thus, it goes without saying that the "self" is not the primary brick or element in the Jamesian pluralistic Universe. James lacks in his "Principles" a psychology of personality. Therein he speaks freely of the "self" as a phenomenological concept, but does not objectify it. He wanted, above all, to depict the functional unities of mental life.

In spite of the fact that James, in his later writings, strongly supported the theory of a "continuum of cosmic consciousness," being our lives like islands in this sea of reservoir;<sup>12</sup> in spite of the fact that he remarks that the evidence from normal and abnormal psychology, religious experience and psychical research combine to establish a "formidable probability in favor of a general view of the world almost identical with Fechner's."<sup>13</sup> James, although he was on the verge of panpsychism, was not a panpsychist himself, for nowhere did he maintain that plants and inanimate objects have an inner psychic life, and the reservoir theory by itself does not logically imply panpsychism. On the other hand, if it is true that Fechner held to a theory of a cosmic reservoir of consciousness, regarding God as the universal consciousness in which all lesser souls are contained, it was

<sup>10</sup> *V.R.S.*, p. 25

<sup>11</sup> Perry, The Thought and Character II, p. 755

<sup>12</sup> Memories and Studies, p. 204

<sup>13</sup> *V.R.S.*, p. 511

not the acceptance of this theory that made him a panpsychist. We clarify this because we observe that James himself is responsible for some terminological confusion in this respect. It should also be pointed out that the theory of the world soul is not identical with and does not necessarily follow from panpsychism. It is rather its illegitimate extension. The "moment" of James' panpsychism is rather this: for a radical empiricist like he who had described causality as a perceptual experience in our own personal activity-situations,<sup>14</sup> he had posed himself quite a problem. Indeed, if cause is identified with activity and the latter with the sense of activity, how can we talk of an activity that somehow is not experienced by us? The solution given by James is the closing statement of "Some Problems of Philosophy": "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 "panpsychic philosophy."<sup>15</sup> It is a pity that his last illness forced him to stop work when he was about to discuss panpsychism.

To my taste, James' final metaphysical pluralistic conception has continuity with his early position in his psychology. There is a period of transition, sharply described by Lowe,<sup>16</sup> through which James broadens the concept of

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14 S.P.P., p. 210

15 Ibid., p. 218

16 See Chapter I, p. 23

experience. All in all, his metaphysics is that of a neutral monism which reduced the mental as well as the physical to relations among neutral entities (i.e. entities which are in themselves neither mental nor physical). The theory is qualitatively monistic in its admission of one kind of ultimate reality (neutral or subsistent entities), but it is numerically pluralistic in acknowledging a multiplicity of independent reals which were never necessarily co-implicated.

In his essay "Does Consciousness Exist?", James asked us to assume that there is just one primal stuff out of which everything in the world is made. This "stuff" which he called "pure experience" is not a single entity like the one that was sought out by the pre-socratics, but is rather a collective name for all sensible nature. Thus, the first and main implication of James' philosophy is the denial of substance of any kind. However, in his "Pluralistic Universe," James admits an identity of material content, a universal substance of some kind.<sup>17</sup> At any event, the monism implied in this famous essay is merely formal or rather, it seems to be a basis which must be accepted before any further construction may be attempted. The term "experience" is then left behind without a definitive meaning, and if this is so, what remains then of James' pragmatism? Are we unfair to him by calling him an idealist?

In this very essay the term "consciousness" is described as a relational function of parts of experience to one another.

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<sup>17</sup>

P.U., p. 32, 319

This function abrogates the traditional dualisms because the same isolable part of experience may enter into many and various relations, like a point can be at the intersection of so many different lines. What is subject may also be object and vice versa. We have found James' expounding alternative solutions to the body-mind problem. By turns he is an interactionist who accepts his own inability to resolve the problem, later an epiphenomenalist (the body alone acts) with such a gross materialism that could not be expressed with more forthrightness: "Thoughts in the concrete are made of the same stuff as things are."<sup>13</sup> Thinking is simply the biological functioning of the brain. Finally, he goes back to a modified version of interactionism, proposing the brain as a "mediator" or "transmitter" which operates differently according to the native structure of the brain, noting besides that this structure has not been shaped by external experiences, but "got surrestitiously born in the house."

This modified version of interactionism becomes a psychical monism in its assumption of a stream of cosmic consciousness, of which each individual consciousness is but a tiny point. For James, the more spiritualistic he wanted to become, the more arbitrary he became. Psychical research and para-psychology was possessing him gradually while he was getting away from the arguments of common sense. It is sufficient to say that his propounded form of cosmic consciousness is contrary to the overwhelming evidence of each man's individual consciousness which rebels against this

arbitrary submergence of his personality in an all-embracing collective world-soul. On the other hand, the idea of a world consciousness works against the idea of consciousness being an accident of a person, its personal quality.

But no matter how monistic this theory appears, it still implies a form of parallelism inasmuch as the mental and the spiritual flow along together and seem to have a meeting point determined by the individual structure of the brain. But which world comes first? If James gives preference to the brain, his parallelism is somehow in peril. If he gives primacy to the spiritual then his materialistic conception of the brain somehow collapses. Or is James going to appeal to some "harmonia preestabilita?" How much easier would it have been for James to accept the skeleton key of the hylomorphic conception of Aristotle and Thomas instead of displaying the magnificent tentativeness of his system so abundant in contradictions and paradoxes!

Although James talks of "parts of experience," he never gives to them an atomistic nature. As a matter of fact, we only experience continuities. However, the parts are not necessarily co-implicated in this or that continuity.

It is only within this context that we can take the concept of the "ego" in James' philosophy. Within the concept of "felt relations," the "ego" is nothing but a "co-conscious transition" of the same experience, a concept of the "ego" that fits very well in an idealistic framework. But what is in there that renders it possible that I call these experiences "mine" and makes it impossible that they

become yours? Why should we insist on the personal interests that determine pragmatism if there is not a real person behind them?

If I am a series and you another series, it rather follows that my experience should not get mixed up with yours. James came with the solution of a "nucleus of common perception," which is space, but actually this solution to the problem of communication of different mind practically involves us in a unity. Indeed, if mind and matter, the knower and the known, are nothing but different aspects by which we, through introspection, divide the unity of experience, and, if our minds end in the very same percept, it follows that there is only one mind. Thus I do not see any injustice in blaming James for monism or pantheism, if we want to stick to the consequences of his doctrines.

There is an even more radical difficulty against the conception of "pure experience" when one investigates the initial point of the whole process of knowledge, which is actually the creator of reality. This difficulty, I think, becomes all the worse in a panpsychistic universe in which all reality is mind. James had told us that the conditions of knowledge were a plurality of minds and a common object of perception. The interaction which is going to initiate this process of knowledge is utterly impossible in a universe where there is no causality and where the minds are not capable of self-knowledge. The solution according to which space is a common perception does not help James at all unless he wants to enlist himself among the realists. If James insists

on the distinction between the subjective and the objective perception in order to avoid the identification of the subjects, then we ask: why does James restrict this realistic perception to the perception of space?

James did not fully elaborate his theory of experience "a parte rei" and left us totally in the dark in what it refers to as the "appropriation" that we can make of it, or the transition from the possibility to the actuality.

What James seems to want to say is that these bits of pure experience all possess the possibility of life, but they do not realize this possibility except in the context of a series constituting a conscious being. Then the ultimate question we can address to James is whether reality exists when no individual sentient being is consciously aware of it. If the answer is affirmative, then the term "experience" has been deprived of any meaning.

If we take the other alternative, that of panpsychism, the difficulties could be formulated perhaps in a more pressing manner: the bits of experience, or the minds of that universe, could co-exist together like Leibnitz nomads. Then this "contiguity" would offend the co-penetration theory of James. James could then refer, as he did, to a common perception (space), or to a mortal jump from bit to bit. In what it refers to the common perception we could think of in the alternatives of it being inside or outside of the minds. If outside (so as to avoid the mortal jump), we have to admit a form of realism and interaction. If inside, we cannot avoid monism.

II

When James first conceived his Varieties of Religious Experience, his intentions were rather of writing a descriptive sort of book. Actually, he declares so in his first lecture: "a descriptive survey of man's religious propensities." However, it is beyond doubt that a thesis was developed just as the book developed. In a letter addressed to Frances Morse, James expresses himself in the following terms:

The problem I have set myself is a hard one: first, to defend. . ."experience against 'philosophy' as being the real backbone of the world's religious life. . .and second, to make the hearer or reader believe, what I myself do invincibly do believe, that, although all the special manifestations of religion may have been absurd (I mean its creeds and theories), yet the life of it as a whole is mankind's most important function."<sup>19</sup>

James himself tells us in the forward or preface of his book that his original plan consisted of two parts, the one, descriptive (the religious appetites of man), the other, metaphysical (or the satisfaction of them by philosophy), but the first part so grew in his hands to the point of turning the second into a set of suggestions. However, short and underdeveloped it relies upon the blow given before in Chapter XVIII to scholastic philosophy so as to leave the door open to a subjective and experimental religion, denying a personal God and all the bases for revelation. The analysis of James' critique of scholasticism was done in a definitive way by Collins in his God in Modern Philosophy, and we refer the reader to those pages full of wisdom.

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Ferry, Vol. II, p. 325-327. The underlining is ours.

Upon the destruction of theodicy, James has, as Kant did, only the irrational way to get to God, and whatever James denied to the speculative order he has transferred into the emotional and practical order. There is a way, however, in which James seems to have surpassed Kant. James goes one step beyond Kant inasmuch as James has found an empirical way to God in the mystical experiences, which James establishes against the exclusivism of rationalism. However, being as it is an ambiguous testimony (that of the subconscious), James has to insist upon the complement of the pragmatic method or of the effect that would follow upon the fact of our belief in God. Thus, James stresses the consequences instead of reinforcing the bases. Let alone the fact that James never develops the concept of his finite God, he never describes the intimate web of relations that his God implies with the humans nor the moral implications of this system of revelations.

James, having admitted an identity of material content between pluralism and absolutism, a spiritual substance of some sort, talks of God as a finite part of a finite universe itself. This is indeed a new form of pantheism, no matter how hard James tries to force on us the distinction between form and content. However, since for James the idea of Creation would imply that of an Absolute in which we should be involved as parts, his only alternative would be to deprive Him of His creative functions: "We are indeed internal parts of God and not external creations."<sup>20</sup>

<sup>20</sup> P.U., p. 318

But James is not interested in developing a concept of God or whatever is that reality with which in James' concept we become co-partners. His God is not the personal God or the Christian, Whom we should adore and Whom we should obey. Hence, as it became evident in his appraisal of the saint, the supreme role of perfection is not to follow his will. James' interest is psychological. He constantly transgresses the limits of psychological analysis. Psychology is for James a substitute of metaphysics. I do not deny that the psychological aspect of the religious acts could put us near the knowledge of the nature of the act of religion, but this never implies that we are to make a religion an experimental and biological science. The religious investigator knows that action of God in the soul cannot be captured by a microscope; however, he will be alert to see the impact that the life of grace leaves in the soul and life of man. In this respect I want to give the due credit to James for his description of unity achieved in the person as the psychological effect of that grace. However, we might as well note that in the psychology of the religious act enters the whole man and there is no reason to give a special preference to some faculty as James does with "emotion" (understood it in a subjective fashion). When we mean the "whole man," we imply the normal one. James, however, has made out of his "Varieties" a museum of morbid psychology, a congress of neuropaths. James has established the "caricature" as the proper method to arrive at the true knowledge of the religious act.

There is not a true concept of religion in James. He

is so much involved with the psychological segment of it that everything is reduced to it. James, besides, as a result of his idealism and subjectivism, created a big gap between the speculative and the practical order. In his critique of scholasticism, there is implied the notion (false at that) that the capacity for truth is equivalent to the incapacity for error. He has identified knowledge with infallible knowledge, again, another typical feature of idealism for which there is a univocal concept of knowledge and truth. In his conception, the five proofs of Saint Thomas could not fail to convince everybody on earth! But from the extreme that faith is not the conclusion of a syllogism in barbara, James moves to the other extreme that faith is not a "rationable obsequium." Thus, in matters of faith he is a sheer voluntarist, while in intellectual matters, concerned with religion, he is an agnostic. This could be the negative part of his religious system. The positive parts were developed in the following fashion. Religion needs an explanation, but having destroyed theodicy and the possibility of revelation, there is left only the internal element of man, as an explanation, and an explanation of religion, being as it is a form of life, has to be found in the life of man. This is found in the "emotion" of man, and in the feeling of presence.

James has defined religion as "a higher kind of emotion,"<sup>21</sup> the object of religion is "the divine"<sup>22</sup> or "any object that is god-like, whether it be a concrete deity or

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<sup>21</sup> V.R.E., p. 46

<sup>22</sup> Ibid., p. 32

not,"<sup>23</sup> and the primary relation of this emotion with its object is that of "reality." "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.'"<sup>24</sup> This is proved by the cases of hallucination with their "sense of presence,"<sup>25</sup> the objectivation of an idea in a blind man,<sup>26</sup> the apprehension of a divine reality, "quasi-sensible,"<sup>27</sup> and perhaps the direct perception of the divine existence.<sup>28</sup> This conscience of reality, that James calls mystic,<sup>29</sup> even if it is of short duration, or "ontological imagination,"<sup>30</sup> goes together frequently with an intense joy and with the conviction of possession and experiencing an ineffable good--"a lover has notoriously this sense of the continuous being of his idol, even when his attention is addressed to other matters and he no longer represents her features."<sup>31</sup> "They are as convincing to those who have them as any direct sensible experiences can

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<sup>23</sup> V.R.E., p. 34

<sup>24</sup>

Ibid., p. 58

<sup>25</sup>

Loc. cit.

<sup>26</sup>

Ibid., p. 62

<sup>27</sup>

Ibid., p. 63

<sup>28</sup>

Ibid., p. 65

<sup>29</sup>

Ibid., p. 63

<sup>30</sup>

Ibid., p. 71

<sup>31</sup>

Ibid., p. 71

be."<sup>32</sup> James opposes mysticism to rationalism,<sup>33</sup> which has established its "inferiority in founding belief,"<sup>34</sup> inasmuch as it is "our impulsive belief here always what sets up the original body of truth,"<sup>35</sup> since "instinct leads, intelligence does but follow."<sup>36</sup>

We have seen how James has related in his "Principles" the sense of reality to our emotional life,<sup>37</sup> and how he has established the native realism of the mind.<sup>38</sup> Our sense of reality, allied with the emotions (with its two basic attitudes: pessimist and optimist), is, of course, an entirely personal matter and a personal adjustment to the universe to which each one brings his particular angle of observation.<sup>39</sup> Actually, "the pivot round which the religious life revolves is the interest of the individual in his private personal destiny. Religion, in short, is a monumental chapter in the history of human egotism."<sup>40</sup>

Thus, in conclusion we can say that the emotional life and the subconscious are the two axes of the religious life. James, working on the basis of a polarity with a developed

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V.R.E., p. 72

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Loc. cit.

34

Ibid., p. 73

35

V.R.E., p. 73

36

Loc. cit.

37

Principles II, p. 283

38

Ibid., p. 318

39

V.R.E., p. 477

40 Ibid., p. 480

tension between a higher power and the individual, finds the release of that tension through the subconscious and, as a result, the development of a new center of energy or emotions. The existence of the higher power is not established but only "felt" by the individual who is at the mercy of the invasions from the uncertain zone of the subconscious and of his own irrational emotions. Subjectivism in religion achieved its climax in the Varieties of Religious Experience of William James. His book became the diving board for a deluge of religious literature that plays up the psychological conveniences of the "peace of mind" instead of obeying a Superior Will. Everything will be centered around "the power of positive thinking" the "meaning" and "satisfaction" of religion, or the feeling of "salvation." Religion as such cannot be discussed, for it is a matter of personal experience, but religion certainly is "used" for personal convenience:.

Note the following from James:

"Professor Leuba...goes so far as to say that so long as men can use their God, they care very little who he is, or even whether he is at all. 'The truth of the matter can be put', says Leuba, 'in this way: God is not known, he is understood; he is used.'"<sup>41</sup>

The point that James was interested in stressing with this quote from Leuba is that: "faking creeds and faith-state together, as forming 'religions' and treating these as purely subjective phenomena, without regard to the question of their

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V.R.E., p. 497 (James quoting Leuba from the "Monist" XI, July, 1901)

'truth' we are obliged, on account of their extraordinary influence upon action and endurance to class them amongst the most important biological functions of mankind."<sup>42</sup>

That the stress was put on the beneficent influence of the belief in God and that no question about His objective existence was raised was an accusation directed at James by his contemporary as evidenced by his own testimony in the Preface to "Meaning of Truth". Thus he says:

"One of the accusations which I oftenest have had to meet is that of making the truth of our religious beliefs consist in their 'feeling good' to us, and in nothing else." Then James elaborates (in 'God' - 'Freedom' and 'Design'). "Reducing, by the pragmatic test, the meaning of each of these concepts to its positive experienceable operation, I showed them all to mean the same thing, viz., the presence of 'promise' in the world. 'God or no God?' means 'promise or no promise?' It seems to me that the alternative is objective enough, being a question as to whether the cosmos has one character or another, even though our own provisional answer be made on subjective grounds. Nevertheless, christian and non-christian critics alike accuse me of summoning people to say 'God exists' even when he doesn't exist, because forsooth in my philosophy the 'truth' of the saying doesn't really mean that he exists in any shape whatever, but only that to say so feels good."<sup>43</sup>

James has simply reduced God to a pragmatic test, using as basic assumptions, first that the pragmatic test is itself supreme, and second that God is a beneficent force (being this latter one a theological conception that doesn't belong with its psychological-theological system). We are

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V.R.E., p. 496

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Pragm., p. 309

also aware of the fact that James used his pragmatism in different senses, but no question that the worst of all, the one that really discredited all the others, was that of the creative faith:

"Your belief will help to create the fact."<sup>44</sup>

If we play up the subjective factor in religion as James does to the point of making it a "biological function of mankind," if we stress his anti-institutional bias, and if we finally take into consideration his conception of the deity as a beneficent force (whatever that is for James), I think that the "God is dead" "Theology" can be considered a not too distant consequence of James' theories.

"By its fruits we shall know them" we could retort ironically to James!

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Essays on Faith and Morals, New York, Longmans, Green, 1949, p. 31

VIII. EPILOGUEI. THE PLACE AND THE ROLE OF THE PHILOSOPHY OF JAMES AS A WHOLE OF THE THEORIES WHICH WE HAVE DISCUSSED.A. The philosophy of James as a whole - positive part.

James, in his conception of consciousness as presented in his Psychology, insists upon the features of selection and unity. This is his correction of the British Empiricism.

The selective feature leads to his voluntarism and pragmatism, while the feature of unity leads to his radical-empiricism which is an effort to transpose his theory of consciousness into a metaphysical one. Trying to bypass the body-mind problem, James developed his theory of pure experience which postulates a new basic substance, which was neither mind nor matter. Thus, it became a neutral monism. The neutral elements of experience in which the subject and the object do not exist 'per se,' remain independent although they enter into many different relationships as a point is the intersection of so many different lines. They compenetrates

This flexibility of the unit of experience to enter into many and different relationships without losing its original independence renders possible the pluralistic conception. James equated the "each form" or "distributive theory of reality" with pluralism and radical-empiricism, and opposed it to monism or the "all-form" theory of reality.

Convinced of the self-defeating activities of the conceptualizing faculty,<sup>1</sup> and encouraged by the example of Bergson<sup>2</sup>, James accepted as probable Mechner's hypothesis of

<sup>1</sup> P.U., p. 326

<sup>2</sup> Lecture VI of P.U.

a super-human consciousness. Indeed, for within this pluralistic conception of reality, just as two lines can intersect at a point there is no reason why the human mind should not be "confluent in a higher consciousness,"<sup>3</sup> without losing its original identity.

James, having admitted an identity of content between pluralism and absolutism, a spiritual substance, introduces into it a distinction of form. Within a pluralistic conception God is a part of this substance while "we are indeed internal parts of God and not external creations".<sup>4</sup> Creation for James would imply an absolute of which we should be co-implicated parts, but by depriving God of his creative function, James pretends to retain the intimacy of pantheism without compromising his pluralism. However, James could not avoid pantheism.

#### James' Philosophy - Its Negative Part

The negative part of the philosophy of James is not precisely his opposition to absolutism. As a matter of fact it seems that he rather was fighting its foundations or logical coerciveness as it is evidenced by his polemics with Bradley and Royce in "A Pluralistic Universe". Even more, we have seen James accepting some form of pantheism.

Its negative philosophy was outlined by us in Chapter IV. James insists on the "purely existential point of view" as contrasted with the value judgments a dichotomy that corresponds to his most drastic division between the Science of Religion and Scholastic Theodicy, which he tried with all

<sup>3</sup> E.R.E., p. 125  
<sup>4</sup> P.U., p. 313

vigor to discredit. The whole system of James in what concerns religion rests upon the rejection of scholastic theory so that he can have his way open to the existential point of view. Opting for private feelings and subjectivism, and making religion a matter of life,<sup>5</sup> he goes to the actual life of man to find religion. On the other hand, James will oppose intellectualism under the false assumption that the capacity for truth implies the incapacity for error.

A. Place and Role in this Philosophy of The Ideas We Have Discussed.

We have discussed in our thesis, Chapters III and V, James' theory of the subliminal self acting as an alien power and control over conscious life, which theory is presented by James as a naturalistic explanation of the religious act in which a higher power is felt. This naturalistic explanation is just presented by James as a psychological antecedent "quoad se," which could occur simultaneously with the divine reality operating. Since the testimony of the subconscious is ambiguous and we want more than simultaneity, James offers the pragmatic criterium as the exclusive mark so that "we may be sure they are not possible deceptions of the tempter."

We have studied therefore in Chapter II the implications of the psychological point of view in James and also the complimentary method of pragmatism.

Discussing the subconscious, since the position of James, in spite of its variations, is that the distinction

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<sup>5</sup>  
V.R.E., p. 504

between the different fields (conscious and subconscious) is almost always a matter of degree of attention, we have studied the necessary elements in James' mind for the genesis of a center of attention.

Since we have embarked the subconscious within James' theory of consciousness, we have therefore studied the two main features of selection and unity in his conception of the same. Rooted in these two features are his pragmatism, studied in Chapter II, and his Radical Empiricism or James' effort to transpose his stream of consciousness into a metaphysical doctrine of neutral monism and compenetration of the original elements. This was termed by James, pluralism, which he opposed to monism or absolutism. We have studied this in Chapter II with its due extension.

Unfortunately, James' psychology totally written in a frame of dualism, is placed by James himself into a conception of neutral monism in which the self and the object are nothing per se.

## II. WHETHER JAMES' THEORIES ARE IN HARMONY WITH OTHER PARTS OF HIS PHILOSOPHY

### Positive Part:

James' conception of the subconscious as a doorway through which saving experiences filter in, has dualistic implications. However, he pretends to accommodate this conception with Fechner's theories of a superhuman consciousness, basing himself for this accommodation upon his neutral monism.

Despite the fact that James as the champion of pluralism vigorously opposed all forms of monism, he could not

escape himself from the main objection to monism, namely, that at bottom all things are in some way or another, one and the same. Thus James yielded and conceded to the existence of some identical substance in the universe.

Negative Part:

Having destroyed scholastic theodicy and the intellectual approach to God, James, as a psychologist has its own way open to 'describe' religion. Taking exception to the exclusivism of his psychologism, we cannot nor should belittle the importance of his empirical study of human nature (although we resent his insistence upon so many a morbid case). Perhaps (and without perhaps) were James' intentions to bridge the gap existing in his time between science and religion and thus his emphasis on psychological description and his evident neglect of the dogmatic aspect and the 'pre-ambula fidei'. No wonder that his rejection of intellectualism forced him to take the stand of sheer voluntarism:

"Incidit in scyllam, cupiens vitare caribdym."

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THE SUBCONSCIOUS IN JAMES' EXPLANATION OF RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCE  
by Edward J. Capestany

INTRODUCTION: THE PLACE OF THE SUBCONSCIOUS IN THE PHILOSOPHY OF JAMES. In Lecture XVIII of his *Varieties*, after having destroyed theodicy in his own fashion, James seeks an immanent way of explaining religious experience. Considering it as something strictly personal or as "a higher kind of emotion" and a feeling of presence, James works his system on the basis of a polarity with a developed tension between a higher power and the individual. There is a release to this tension through the subconscious and as a result the development of a center of energy. The position of James regarding the subconscious, in spite of his variations, is expressed in terms of attention. I do not deny that other texts of James suggest something other-wardly, but he never denies the continuity. James accepted as probable Fechner's doctrine of a superhuman consciousness, compounded of the experiences of human and infrahuman minds. There are two issues involved in this conception: the psychological one, centered around the necessary elements for the production or genesis of the center of attention, and the metaphysical one centered around the problem of the one and the many. Unfortunately, James' psychology totally written in a frame of dualism, is placed by him into a conception of neutral monism in which the self and the object are nothing per se.

Chapter One: THE FIELD OF CONSCIOUSNESS AND ATTENTION.

Since the position of James regarding the subconscious is expressed in terms of degrees of attention, we start by investigating the ultimate conditions of attention: native realism, affective order. Then we investigate the psychological and physiological nature of attention, making emphasis upon James' mechanical conception of the act and his lack of development of the concept of interest. Now since for James, physiologically, the activity of the hemispheres tends to be a "consolidated and unified affair" and psychologically, interest is the controlling factor, we proceed to analyze: (1) the phenomenon of selectivity of the mind and the unity of attention; (2), the unity of sense experience, and (3), the transcendental unity of apperception. In number one, we stress the concept of selectivity versus the passivity of English Empiricism as the basis of James' pragmatism. This indeed had a historical relevance as it is portrayed in the antagonism of James and Spencer.

In number two we lay up the psychological theory of James about the Ego or his "stream of thought" in which he is extremely original but very antimetaphysical. His conception of Radical Empiricism is an effort to transpose a psychological theory into a metaphysical one. We study here his relational concept of conscience and the particular problem of comprehension. We agree fully with Lowe in giving a metaphysical reading (rather than epistemological) to James' theory of "pure experience". While we analyze James' radical empiricism we have dared to correlate his conception to the contemporary phenomenological movement and to Gestalt Psychology, stressing James' elements of originality and foresight.

In number three, we go deeper into the investigation of pre-perception, making emphasis upon the concept of "intention" in James, investigating also his nativistic tendencies and arriving to the crowning point of his subjectivism in the notion of mental "equilibrium". Finally we present James' description of the field of consciousness and the mechanism of the center of interest (in which mechanism the subconscious plays a relevant part). Then, we present James' description of the subconscious. No doubt whatsoever that James had established the

existence of the subconscious with the evidence of its effects but he did not establish the necessary parallel level in the subconscious to the conscious psychic life. Calling the subconscious "a place for accumulation" while he indeed makes a reference to its sensitive origin he describes it on the other hand as just a topographical region. It is at this moment when we establish in a categorical manner our definition of the subconscious as nothing but the ordinary faculties of man without the psychological attention.

## Chapter two: STUDY OF THE PRAGMATIC METHOD AND OF THE PSYCHOLOGICAL ANTECEDENT.

In spite of the fact that all the interest of James as a psychologist is centered around the psychological antecedent or the proximate cause (not remote, God, grace), we should bear in mind that all the first lecture of his Varieties is centered around his affirmation that it is not the origin what is important but the results, even though the neurotic temperament be the necessary condition for the production of the effect. This is James' rule: "By their fruits ye shall know them, not by their roots" The pragmatic criterium is then the only and exclusive criterium so that "we may be sure they are not possible deceptions of the tempter". We find this the most outstanding flaw of the Varieties, and here is rooted the "complementary character" of pragmatism. In our analysis of the dynamic structure of the genesis of the religious act according to James, special emphasis is made on the psychological idiosyncrasy of the individual as a psychological antecedent "quoad se" of the religious act. James insists that it is legitimate to attribute "psychological antecedents" to a series of consequents of superior character provided that one does not introduce other elements than those verifiable by experience. James' explanation of the phenomenon is purely psychological "quoad se", the term psychological being understood within the Jamesian frame of reference as psychophysiological or with special emphasis on the brain function. James refers to this antecedent as a "conditio sine qua non" (The point here to determine is whether there is a psychological determinism in this conception). As a result of James' rejection of the Aristotelian notion of substance and that of the substantial unity of man, we will find him expounding alternative solutions to the mind and body problem. First we will find him a self-defeated "interactionist", later an "epiphenomenalist" (the body alone acts) not to call him a gross materialist, finally he proposes a modified version of interactionism presenting the brain as a "transmitter". The worst difficulty that could be leveled against James at this point is that of his evident contradiction. Indeed, the transmissive function theory implies a dualistic background but it is nevertheless presented by James in a context of neutral monism.

In the psychogenesis of the religious act (we keep the meaning given by James to this term of "psychogenesis" as a genesis through an internal force, as opposed to natural selection and also called by him "back door way") we stress the importance of the structure of the mind given by James as the ultimate foundation for the universality of principles and we are also inclined to see in it the ultimate subjective root of his famous pragmatism.

In our final discussion of the "psychological antecedent" I insist that there should have been made by him a preparatory discussion or theological formulation about the nature and effects of grace. This is so much so that the basic question of whether it is grace which is operative in a particular instance cannot be answered on psychological grounds only. However, working on the principle that "grace perfects nature" one has to assume a psychological impact. James has particularly pointed to the unification of the self that overcomes the traumatic condition of the

may mirror the effects of other influences of psychic mechanisms. Thus we cannot discuss religion or grace from an exclusively experimental point of view.

### Chapter three: JAMES' HYPOTHESIS FOR THE EXPLANATION OF THE RELIGIOUS ACT

As an ulterior determination of the "psychological antecedent" in James' theory of the genesis of the religious act, one should study the subliminal self acting as an alien power and control over conscious life as the main hypothesis of explanation given by James. This explanation is not intended as a refutation of theism but one that could occur simultaneously with the divine reality. In his very words "that region (the subliminal) contains every kind of matter: seraph and snake abide there side by side. To come from thence is no infallible credential" (Varieties 417). This goes to prove that James is aware that the testimony of the subconscious is ambiguous and that there is a logical entailment that should be demanded from the given hypothesis and not merely a "simultaneity". And this is the moment for the construction of pragmatism as a "complement" of an insufficiency. In relation to the hypothesis in itself one should keep in mind the limitations imposed already by James to the concept of the subconscious particularly his emphasis upon "automatisms". The religious facts of conversion are fully conscient. The eternal question that James can be asked is why something that is pushed back to the subconscious has to be endowed by this very reasoning with the power of producing what the conscient is incapable of doing. Whence the superiority of the subconscious? This insufficiency of the subconscious is so much the worse when we try to explain the mystical intuition that by its very nature is strictly spiritual and without image. James seems to forget that the psychological subconscious depends upon the data of the senses and that the mystical intuition is not based upon any psychological act whose object has been abstracted from the senses. Also, upon restricting the mystical intuition to the subconscious level James contradicts the fact that the mystical intuition is a plenitude of consciousness.

We have analyzed carefully the "immanentism" of James or: To find out some bodily (somatic) antecedent or psychic accident which can become the cause or "condition sine qua non" of the effect. This is what he terms "natural supernaturalism" or provoked mysticism. Thus the action of God is one with the action of the creature or of nature, wrecking the superior order in as much as the determining factor of the supernatural action resides in the subject. This criticism is leveled at James from a point of view of a metaphysical pluralism. However, if we consider him a neutral monist we have to say that a monistic conception restricts and narrows the relation of the More and the human self to the point of identification destroying among other things our freedom.

### Chapter IV. THE AGREEMENT OF JAMES' THEORY WITH THE PSYCHOLOGICAL DYNAMISM DEVELOPED BY PROTESTANT THEOLOGICIANS.

The theory of psychological dynamism developed by protestant theologians of a process of identification with the higher self, suits perfectly with the theory of James of the subliminal self acting as an alien power and control over conscious life. The fundamental attitude of James toward theology in general is established as a preference for "existential judgments" and the Science of Religions which James opposes to scholastic philosophy. The necessary background of protestant theology is taken from Möeller in as much as it serves our purpose of a proper perspective of the nature of man and its relation to grace. We don't know of a better presentation that suits the discussion of James. The "sense of higher

control" is put by James in great harmony with protestant theology. We know that the protestant justifying faith is not an intellectual act but an act of the will through which assurance is acquired that the merits of Christ will avoid that man could be blamed for his sins. However in the concept of Bellarmine in De Justificatione, justifying faith is not the assurance of mercy but a firm assent on what God has revealed.

#### Chapter V. THE MORE SUPRAPSYCHOLOGICAL. OUR UNION WITH IT. FINAL META-PHYSICAL CONCEPTION OF JAMES. THE MYSTICAL INTUITION.

While in his Varieties James plays up the psychological aspect of the religious experience, in the Pluralistic Universe James plays up a suprapSYCHOLOGICAL More. The difference is just a matter of emphasis. However, in the Pluralistic Universe James tries to compromise the psychological view with the suprapSYCHOLOGICAL using the brain as a transmissive function. The interest in the Varieties is the proximate cause, in the P. U., in the remote. The inconsequence of James would be to assign an immediate cause insufficient for his purpose in as much as James introduces a Superior or mediate one.

James' conception of the sub-conscious as a door-way (using the brain as a valve), has dualistic implications. Still he wants to accommodate it within his neutral monism. The neutral elements of experience in which the subject and the object do not exist "per se", remain independent although they enter into many different relationships as a point is the intersection of so many different lines. This is the flexibility of the unit of experience that "compensates" without losing its original independence. This is the "each form" of reality. Thus, according to James, there is no reason why the human mind should not be confluent in a higher consciousness.

Despite the fact that James as the champion of pluralism vigorously opposed all forms of monism, he could not escape himself from the main objection to monism, namely, that at bottom all things are in some way or another, one and the same. Thus James yielded and conceded to the existence of some identical substance in the universe. James having admitted an identity of content between pluralism and absolutism, introduces into it a distinction of form. Within a pluralistic conception God is a part of this substance. By depriving God of his creative function James pretends to retain the intimacy of pantheism without compromising his pluralism.

According to James, the world of our present consciousness is only one out of many worlds of our consciousness that exist but contain experiences which have a meaning for our life also. "But apply the requisite stimulus and at a touch they are there". Thus the proper stimulus is "quod requiritur et sufficit" for the production of mysticism.

In all the cases analyzed by James (of mystical experiences) there is an unbalance preference toward the subjective element. However, where does subjectivism fit in a neutral system?

#### Chapter VI. Topographical Map.

#### Chapter VII. FINAL CRITICISM.

There is no doubt that James was on the right track when he related his theory of the sub-conscious to that of attention, but he left this conception somehow undeveloped in the Varieties. The implications of this doctrine were already in the chapter of attention of his Principles. There, while James stresses the unity of the total activity of the hemispheres, he also refers to its negative and private element. However, James stops here. In our conception, the elements of the sub-conscious are nothing but the faculties of the soul as far as they operate without the clear attention of the psychological ego. Finally, I believe, James

had this conception, but while he did not develop it to its ultimate consequences, he also took a fancy for psychical research and para-psychology and began to talk of a More of a suprapyschological character from which saving experiences flew in to us via de Su<sup>h</sup>conscious. It was precisely at this moment that he began to stretch out his realistic conception of the su<sup>h</sup>conscious and he somehow forgot that direct dependance of the su<sup>h</sup>conscious from the conscious life. William James uses the su<sup>h</sup>conscious both for the explanation of conversion and of the mystical act. We already mentioned that heroic resolutions are made in full conscience and that the mystical acts in themselves are fully conscious. The psychophysiological idiosyncrasy of the individual is the determining factor in James conception. Psychological determinism. There is also exclusivity in his pragmatic criterium. There is a lack of psychology of personality. Fluctuations in James conception of the body-mind problem. In his Neutral Monism the term experience is left behind meaningless. While the processes of the mind are portrayed by James as hinged around the phenomenon of attention and interest, nowhere he develops the necessary unit of motivation.

Having destroyed scholastic philosophy and the intellectual approach to God, James as a psychologist has its own way open to "describe" religion. There is not a true concept of religion in James. He is so much involved with the the psychological segment of it that everything is reduced to it.

In his critique of scholasticism, there is implied the notion that the capacity for truth is equivalent to the incapacity for error. With this univocal concept of knowledge, James from the extreme that faith is not the conclusion of a syllogism moves to the other extreme that faith is irrational. Thus, in matters of faith he is a sheer voluntarist.

Edward J. Capestany