STALEMATE AT PORT ARTHUR: WILLIAM JAMES ON WAR, VULNERABILITY, AND PLURALIST PERSONALISM

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Using a close reading of a single clause and its context in a section in *A Pluralist Universe*, we see the moral dangers James saw in traditional ontology, in particular its relation to war and peace. This analysis opens up James's combining the personalist philosophy of his friend Borden Bowne (and others) with the pluralism he developed late in his career. This leads, further, to reflection of James's performative philosophizing. Finding in James a theory of "pluralistic personalism" gives us a fresh look at the far-reaching power of his basic concepts of moral philosophy.

"Every problem for James sooner or later becomes a moral question, that is, how would its solution help us?.... His whole system of pragmatism is based on his passionate concern for human need."[2]

Some philosophers are peacemakers, and some are not. Schopenhauer, Kierkegaard, and Nietzsche were not peacemakers—and they were the leading European rebels against the nineteenth century under its sign of reason, arrogant confidence, and conquering power—against the form of Western culture that, broadly speaking, formed itself around G. F. W. Hegel's thought. William James often stood among them: in his opposition to imperialism, credentialization of the academy, and commodified thinking. But, unlike the early existentialists and unlike Arthur Schopenhauer (with whom he shared an interest in will as the non-organic basis of life), James was a peacemaker. Pragmatism includes the ways one could form a world view, hold religious belief, or pursue a good life. James, in seeking freedom for experience as a life-practice, saw the different dispositions of different persons as the freedom of each, if each properly grasped it. His concept supporting these combined parts of the personalism of Borden Bowne and George Howison with his late pluralist ontology. I will explore this through a close reading of metaphor by James that puts the matter in terms of war as opposed to human flourishing, and then turn to James's relations to and form of personalism.

In this way James was like Immanuel Kant, despite their many differences. Both are the sort of philosopher who grabs the two ends of rope that other sorts of thinkers are pulling in opposite directions; and, standing in the middle whilst holding onto both ropes with both hands, they strain to keep upright in the tug of war. James tells us that the two ends are unity and multiplicity on the most technical level; and then stability and change on the most universal level; God and the world in religious terms; and then objective fact and real experience on the human level; at the last, holding together the two ends makes the common bond for all of us, our common life, our communications, the society of others with its moral obligations; and, most intimately, it defines James's own place in the world as he struggled through the great issue of philosophy—all these James

is groaning to keep from snapping away so that meaningfulness does not fly off from us. This is what Kant tried to do, too, having been terrified by the world without value and relationships, for which Hume had almost perfectly argued. Although James believed that Kant had widened, rather than narrowed, the battlefield between anti-theoretical empiricism and anti-empirical theory, it is also historically correct that James stood on a different part off the same battlefield, Kant having moved it at the start of the century to the place at which James found it at century's end. Both James and Kant were trying to make peace between the externality and objectivity of inductive science and the meaning-making moral freedom of the human person. To the moral freedom of the person James, unlike Kant, brought not the domination of reason over other impulses but the full capabilities of life, when he developed his pluralistic personalism.

James saw that lack of peace between the two sides meant war between them. Ontological and military war are deeply interconnected.[3] But James saw a second thing: that the scientific system was the aggressor general in the war, a stimulus perfectly suited to direct into battle the drives that persons normally and with seeming inherence have. And so while Kant hoped that peace comes through developing the reason that our moral lives have in common with our scientific inquiry, James held that spiritual life, exceeding intellection, must come back round to assert its own pacifying power against several of the darker tendencies of the scientific approach.[4] James had to reopen a door Kant had closed. I propose to show that one of the ways in which James accomplished this is to have recognized a darkness in science that makes us more vulnerable to war and to argue that his solution lay in what I will call pluralist personalism.

Past this door an interesting aporia marked the terrain James had to travel. One part of it was the impact upon civilization, society, and collective life that science was guiding. James was more fully aware of mass life than the picture of him as the trust fund genius permits some readers to take in. Because realist ontology was self-augmenting, attached to and supporting the large endeavors it could help grow, the singular person was the counterbalancing actor. But the singular person might be too self-protective, fearful enough to

close herself off from experience. Or, as James saw in his childhood, a very open way of living could become chaotic and unsteady. The open end of the aporia, then, was an act that James the philosopher must himself perform, since, although the philosopher sees no further ahead, he does know "that he must vote always for the richer universe, for the good which seems most organizable, most fit to enter into complex combinations, most apt to be a member of a more inclusive whole."[5] The act of stepping in between as counterweight to warring forces is the dramalogue for part of his performance as a philosopher. The aim of the performance was to create an image or a model of personhood that is pluralistic because it is unbowed by the dynamo of objectivity, keen for experience, and grounded in both the inner and outer worlds.

A passing reference by James to the scene of a war embeds war in his views on epistemology, ontology, and spiritual and moral life. In 1894–1895 the Japanese invaded the Liaodong Peninsula, just west of present-day North Korea in the Yellow Sea (now part of China), and took the newly constructed Russian military harbor at Port Arthur. But France, Germany, and Russia demanded control of the Peninsula; and Japan, threatened by a war with Russia for which it was not prepared, returned the base to China. Russia then leased it from China and added to the fortifications. In all this the Western powers were principally pushed by Kaiser Wilhelm's intense fear of Eastern hoardes, for whenever Wilhelm entered the scene big trouble usually followed.

And so less than a decade later Wilhelm's "cousin Nicky," Czar Nicholas, and all his Russians were fighting the Japanese Empire's attempt to retake Port Arthur. This war was fought for a solid year in an intricate and extremely murderous series of battles on land and sea. With each engagement, the Russians put up more concrete pillboxes and forts and barbed wire; and then when the Japanese took a bit of territory they set out barbed wire and land mines; and at sea each side planted mines and nets, the marine equivalent of barbed wire. Each entanglement of forces multiplied the layers of deadly obstructions, until the whole port and peninsula became ring within ring of hell. This was advance warning of the trench warfare of World War I.

The conflict was very well known in the United States because President Theodore Roosevelt brokered a peace at Portsmouth, New Hampshire, just a couple hours from William's Cambridge theater of operations, partly by plying diplomats from the two empires with a strong cocktail he specially invented for the occasion. James, regarding the Japanese as "little Romans," favored Japan.[6] "The insolence of the white race in Asia deserves a check," he wrote a few months after the war began.[7] In 1907 he wrote to Henri Bergson that the Russo-Japanese War and the publication of Bergson's *L'Évolution créatrice* are "the two great modern turning-points, of history and of thought!"[8]

This important geopolitical event nearly overwhelmed him. He said that the war made him "feel that concrete experience is essential to anyone who will write of war, and I have none."[9] And yet it so strongly stimulated his imagination that he did write about it. In 1908–1909, in Lecture VI of *A Pluralist Universe*, James writes:

> Sensible reality is too concrete to be entirely manageable—look at the narrow range of it which is all that any animal, living in it exclusively as he does, is able to compass. To get from one point in it to another we have to plough or wade through the whole intolerable interval. No detail is spared us; it is as bad as the barbed-wire complications at Port Arthur, and we grow old and die in the process.[10]

The movement that barbed wire makes difficult, by metaphor, is in the first instance the advancement of our comprehension of reality. Its thorns are like the innumerable details of experience of all sorts; its coils are like the snaring, tangling, slowing loops of every element in our experience. James says that conceptual thought gets us out of the barbs that stop us, or, more precisely, confine our mental view of the terrain.[11]

But in the context of the full passage, there is a second meaning.[12] Conceptual thought becomes the barbed wire. In this aspect it is no longer the good and useful thing that produces understanding, for "there is one thing it cannot do." This incapacity doubles its effect. The consequence of the speed that conceptualization gives our accumulation of information is that it

also obscures the ground beneath what it conceptualizes, "the nature of things." It gathers information and fallibly confirms hypotheses, but it abstracts out of nature as it really is a construct in its and our own current image. Whereas barbed wire had been one aspect of "reality's thickness," truly apprehending "reality's thickness" means not going over the barbed wire but going beneath it to the ground it covers up. The conceptual method guides us into the barbed wire, and it can explain the barbed wire but only in a limited way. It produces stalemate. The same object—reality, the barbed wire itself and its ground—is something more various when apprehended in its fullness without the "shortcuts." There is the depth, in the ground to which you must "turn your face," the flux you ought to "dive" into. It is by another means that we "bury ourselves in," or access, "the inner nature of reality or…what really makes it go...." Same ground, same details, same thickness—but different.

"Direct acquaintance and conceptual knowledge are complementary of each other; each remedies the other's defects," James says.[13] But he points to something much, much more: a notion, here but germinal, that when our understanding has not been corseted by concepts but can do all of which it is in the very long run capable, each particular synchronously admits us to the entire diachronesis, as "the solid dimension" of the universe, the real history of its goings-on.

Thus the passage has many ideas involuted into the doubled metaphor, from epistemology, ontology, moral philosophy, and even religion. As epistemology, it reveals the way we trick ourselves when trying to make perceptions yield knowledge. They must be conceptualized in order to be practically available, but this way of gathering knowledge edits out, veils, or suppresses so much that, as a result, we remain liable to be seduced by *sorites* and other puzzles of cognition until intellectualism subverts all "real connexions of any kind."[14] It thus sets "reality" in opposition to "imagination."[15] As ontology, James uses the metaphor to place his finger on the origin of the way in which the distinction between reality and perceptions deprives activity of concrete being and creates thereby a realm of apparently self-standing ideas in which perceptions must be founded.[16]

Its import as to metaphysics follows from the approach to consciousness by both epistemology and ontology. The image is an index of James's fuller acceptance of Bergsonian process.[17] In *Matter and Memory*, Bergson attempts to prove that the human mind includes a "virtual" reality composed of its entire fund of memories, immaterial and undetermined and therefore free.[18] Out of this freedom comes the creativity of mind and of intelligence, into which immediate sensory perception is synthesized in our activity. The empirically real is therefore just a part of the larger reality with "a thousand planes" to which the mind is attached.[19] The relation of consciousness to its objects of every description and category is at the heart of James's pragmatism, and it is this strong demand for integration of subject and object that was among the inspirations for Edmund Husserl's adaptation of intentionality into the defining character of consciousness.[20] In the Jamesian perspective, this freedom, this relationality, this creative flux—the true way in which consciousness operates—comprises every kind of attention as instruments of investigating and responding to the world, including fuzzy, vague, and even involuntary awarenesses.[21] Consciousness as an organ of truthfulness therefore is not restricted to the clear and distinct. James, along with Bergson and Husserl in their different ways, tells us that objects in the world do not demand the "objectivity" of science and that our attention really is and must be free from any such discipline in order to interpret and work in the world as richly as possible. Time and even space do not discipline us in the Kantian or Newtonian manners; relations and transitions are more fundamental than substances. We need not be channeled by walls of barbed wire; that is, dominated by the power of rationalized systems of production.[22] On the "ground" beneath we find that our unstable modern life and the many moving parts of our kinetic selves can freely join in the strength of imagination and constitute our psychic reality.[23] Whereas to the forces of progress and production, any part of the range of consciousness not readily appropriated is a waste that it strives to delegitimize. James says that

> the whole feeling of reality, the whole sting and excitement of our voluntary life, depends on our sense that in it things are really being decided from one moment to another, and that it is not the

> dull rattling off of a chain that was forged innumerable ages ago. This appearance, which makes life and history tingle with such a tragic zest, may not be an illusion. As we grant to the advocate of the mechanical theory that it may be one, so he must grant to us that it may not.[24]

The correct understanding of the constitution of consciousness requires for James our accepting into it that which is not only not "objectively" empirical, and not merely that which is fuzzy, but also even the augmented reality that mystics claim to take in. The "ground" that the battle hides, replacing it with conditions created so as to suppress human flourishing in favor of captivity by masses in hostile action, by technology, and by destructive violence, is a fundamental ground of reality, a metaphysical "location." This well-known interest of James's, as we will see a little later, brings us toward James's pluralist personalism.

As moral philosophy, there are three significant implications in the metaphor. When James writes,

> To deal with moral facts conceptually, we have first to transform them, substitute brain-diagrams or physical metaphors, treat ideas as atoms, interests as mechanical forces, our conscious "selves" as "streams," and the like. Paradoxical effect![25]

we can see the first of these: that James stands against what has become the most common style of meta-ethical philosophy, that of propositionalist ethics. A "moral fact" is evaluated and analyzed as a linear, static propositional claim. It is abstracted from the lives of persons and from the diachronesis in which they feel joy and suffer, face dilemmas, and take decisions, conform to their collectives or resist them, and change through growing or through failing.

Second, the value of particulars—the details specific to each actor and situation—in theorizing ethics is promoted in so far as James regards them to be more concrete and useful than the intellectualist or rationalist approach to moral philosophy does. But also we can detect a reservation about just what we do with particulars that philosophers using an empiricist approach to ethics in conceptualizing the use of genealogy, such as Bernard Williams, did not seem to see or to feel important.

> If what we care most about be the synoptic treatment of phenomena, the vision of the far and the gathering of the scattered like, we must follow the conceptual method. But if, as metaphysicians, we are more curious about the inner nature of reality or about what really makes it go, we must turn our backs upon our winged concepts altogether, and bury ourselves in the thickness of those passing moments over the surface of which they fly, and on particular points of which they occasionally rest and perch.[26]

Here James has got hold of something that he perhaps did not quite bring to consciousness and that might have presented a problem. While "passing moments" are preferable to "our winged concepts," the consequent quality we now call thickness, which means their situatedness and historicity, is a ground for the flying concepts that is not subject to James's critique of abstract ideas. As a ground, it shares the ability to give concepts some stability; and this must mean, further, since James wants to avoid immobilizing life, that the grounding which historical particulars (or the "manifold") gives might reveal something "foundational" in the sense of being universal about moral life. This kind of universality is not eternal or abstract but immanent, connecting generations and cultures. His sense that science is connected to war puts James on the side of the angels in the great debates in contemporary German post-Kantianism as to whether the empathic and hermeneutic elements in history and psychology are legitimate. Perhaps what is revealed in historicity is not conceptualized structure but might instead be something concerning existence itself: "the essence of life" out of which each particular comes to, or perhaps receives, its spatiotemporal specificity.[27]

James's desire to see life as a whole moving through time also appears as a psychological insight when he directly comments on war in "The Moral Equivalent of War."[28] That we keep returning to the same bad habits of conceptualization is akin to our continual return to the same bad moral habits, specifically those of the material gain, social energy, and psychic charges that making war gives us. Writing this essay just a year after the passage under inspection here, James sees the strength of these impulses in Japan as currently

"culminating." Japan is, he thought, reaching the full tide of desire for the "moral fruits" of "the martial virtues." Since we never start from zero but always from dispositions received from a history further back in time than we can reach, we must somehow accommodate the impulses but in a form so purified as to direct their energy toward "better services" that resolve rather than inflame fears for our survival. Even science inherits and then is a slave to our deeper drives. We can look at James's ways of accommodating beliefs that science cannot sustain as a similar attempt to transform deep patterns of behavior or thought in a manner that preserves their benefits, even if merely emotional, in the constitution of our motivations when we are trying to think and to act in better ways than our ancestors.

The third implication is something revealed by the metaphor itself. James writes,

I am quite willing to part company with Professor Bergson, and to ascribe a primarily theoretical function to our intellect, provided you on your part then agree to discriminate "theoretic" or scientific knowledge from the deeper "speculative" knowledge aspired to by most philosophers, and concede that theoretic knowledge, which is knowledge about things, as distinguished from living or sympathetic acquaintance with them, touches only the outer surface of reality. The surface that theoretic knowledge taken in this sense covers may indeed be enormous in extent; it may dot the whole diameter of space and time with its conceptual creations; but it does not penetrate a millimeter into the solid dimension. That inner dimension of reality is occupied by the activities that keep it going.[29]

The contrast between theoretical and speculative knowledge is not simply a matter of epistemology. It is a matter of theory of culture and of philosophical anthropology. "Theoretical or scientific" is based on the Kantian use of theory as observation, as intelligent, tested, finely-tuned sensory inspection of the world, which in turn builds upon the Greek etymology. "Speculative" here comprises a great many things that are other than this kind of knowledge. "Speculative" can cover a lot of ground, but the concept of it requires that there is more than one kind of knowledge—that analyzable or empirically verifiable knowledge is not the only kind of valid knowledge.

Here we are at Vico's claim of the kind of knowledge particular to humankind, the knowledge the maker has of that which she has made. James's imagination amplifies such a notion by contrasting the admittedly "enormous...surface" that conceptualizing speculation can cover with what we have seen "ground" means for him in this aspect of his work: the ground is deep, not merely an epidermis. The way in which conventional empiricism, the ontology of objectivity, and the moral practices of logical and technological warfare construe our ground renders it a mere stage or platform on which such forces conduct their operations and movements. But James says the reality is broader and deeper, that our "ground" has many dimensions, and layers, and realities, that we are in fact capable of encountering through our consciousness and its co-evolutionary (or intentional) connection to the universe. Thus, in the context of his philosophy, "speculative" connotes "creative"—the creativity that in Bergson's thought marks what is reality and that is part of what impels the Jamesian strenuous person to seek new experience, new knowledge, and new expression. This is the breadth and depth of the pluralistic universe in which persons as active forces circulate.

The ongoing creative inquiry and search for experience that consciousness conducts takes humankind beyond that which individuals can achieve but without the deceptive "unity of a stable system."[30] James contends that this pluralism extends across time, following Bergson; and we may see here a glimmer of an historically conscious ethics that is not based on rationalized history but on the molten, mobile reality of our historicity, into which the philosopher "stake[s]...his throw."[31] In an early letter from Berlin, James places intergenerationality into a conception of moral life that seems substantially that of his mature work. You can, he tells his friend,

> contribute your mite in *any* way to the mass of work which each generation subtracts from the task of the next; and you will come into *real* relations with your brothers—with some of them at least.... Our predecessors, even apart from the physical link of generation, have made us what we are.... *Every thing* we know and are is through men. We have no revelation but through man.[32]

Ralph Barton Perry tells us that in the *Pluralist Universe* lectures James "solemnly and publicly renounced logic" as a God's eye view of life.[33] And so he conceived of a kind of rationality that comprehended, rather than elided, both the personalities of actors and thinkers and the vastness of the world we can experience. He embedded such rationality into the world of experience. Based on the implications of the Port Arthur metaphor, we see here a "ground" that projects metaphysics deep into an ethics that develops out of the range of experience of consciousness. In "The Moral Philosopher and the Moral Life" the notion of moral claim is so constituted as to be part of all human action, springing immediately into force along with consciousness and at work in every relation just because persons and their consciousness are part of reality.[34]

The self that is a person is not the Cartesian subject. James has ejected that kind of subjectivity:

> 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.[35]

James's pluralist ontology is profoundly oriented toward our relations with one another and with nature. In this sense, it is an ethical project.[36] It is, furthermore, a moral philosophy centered on the agents of moral action—the full spectrum of consciousness embodied in persons. Each individual adds her own contribution, and the moral philosopher will revise and ameliorate.[37] In the words of John McDermott, in James's view every person "is Promethean and picaresque: a venturesome, risk-oriented prober into the widest and furthest reaches of the flow of experience."[38] A person is the being who "enters into the relational fabric of the world in a participative and liberating way which enables him to become human."[39]

James has a fascinating understanding of what personhood is in the pluralistic framework. The psychologist David E. Leary argues

that pluralism gives an expansive sense of the whole person, which he places in the context of James and later psychology; and that "personality" (or "personhood") for James is therefore not a matter of a jewel box soul but rather of many actions, aspects, relations, and "Me's" that have no hard boundaries among them within each person and across assemblages of persons.[40] "The Self in this widest sense" is not "the bare principle of personal unity" but instead a "*self of all the other selves*," "the source of effort and attention, and the place from which appear to emanate the fiats of the will."[41] This self is both continuous and discontinuous, both independent and dependent on others. Its form of wholeness is not absolute but, as Leary puts it, "constructed over time."[42] But James, writing as a philosopher as well as a psychologist, is interested not only in personality development but in conceptualizing the nature of experience. Personhood for him as for other personalists is not to be regarded as an empirical fact. Instead, it is a principle of the relation of the human to universal reality through our experience. As Randall Auxier puts it,

> the personal modality either creates or exceptionlessly characterizes *the* barrier between and among the plural existences that populate all experience.... The principle of conjunction for James is *time*...; the principle of disjunction is *person*.[43]

James' solution to the old antinomy—that is, a stalemate, as at Port Arthur—is to see consciousness as pulsation, just as light is neither particle nor wave but a third thing. The substantive is the resting transitive in the stream of thought, and the transitive is the moving substantive in the stream of thought; the stream itself is action indivisible except as appropriated for practical purposes.[44] Our thinking is truly the thinking we know—transient, streaming, fuzzy, on the fringe as well as at the center—rather than machine-like calculation or logical proof. At its most powerful as non-logical, our will motivates our interests and uses attention to drive the development of personality in a "strenuous" life. We do not proceed by the grid-search of logic but by the "sting" of things that provokes

us to try out various forms of inquiry, including logic, in order to find out what we might do about the world facing us.[45]

The effects of will, sparked by the stings of the world, includes every type of consciousness that comprises a person. In his 1890 paper "The Hidden Self," after discussing phenomena revealed by hypnosis, multiple personalities, and synaesthesia, James writes that in at least some people the total possible consciousness may be split into parts which co-exist...and are complimentary," among every sort of relation among them.[46] And in his entry in 1895 for an encyclopedia on "Persons and Personality," James emphasizes that the kinds of unity that the associationist psychology of his day—and, one can add, a number of analytic philosophers since then who turn personhood into a mereological puzzle—propose as the unity consciousness must have if it is to have unity, whether one argues it has or does not have unity, does not in the least fit the deep resources and multiform capabilities of actual conscious persons.[47]

Understanding the universe and understanding personal consciousness both alike cannot disregard all of this, even in mystical form, for we live with stings that cause all of them to spring or rush up in our complete engagement with the world.[48] Furthermore, the human person has a corporate aspect, for just as I am made up of many parts within myself, so also am I part of societies and part of the whole universe.

Personality is not "an immediate datum" but "an approved working assumption, wh. is psychologically easy and practically valuable."[49] And what could be more appealing to James than something "psychologically easy and practically valuable"? This view of personhood, founded in his epistemology, though expressed in psychological terms, links the complex, relational self to the striving, stung, strong, and strenuous willing self—to the moral actor that James saw in every individual as they unfold their inner disposition into a life of working responses to the world in which they are vulnerable. This is what I call James's pluralistic personalism.

Now, personalism as a whole is more of a program than a doctrine. It is an approach that appears in various schools of thought.[50] But in James's day, and in his hometown, it did appear as a philosophical school that went through to a third generation after

World War II, and its ideas continue today. This is the "Boston Personalism" founded by Borden Parker Bowne (1847–1910).[51] James and Bowne were friends (through the second instantiation of the Metaphysical Club), though not close. There is little exchange of letters between them, notably James's writing to support Bowne against the "blatherskites" in the Methodist Church (in which Bowne was ordained) who put him on trial for heresy.[52] Bowne also on at least one occasion argued for a "communal conception of truth" that echoes the epistemology of Pragmatism.[53] People interested in Bowne recite James' polite encomia of Bowne, but people interested in James do not often refer to Bowne. Yet James quoted from Bowne's *Metaphysics* at length and approvingly in *Principles of Psychology*.[54]

Bowne's basic ontological position is that personhood (or "personality") is "the deepest thing in existence...intellect as the concrete realization and source" of being and causality.[55] Bowne says that if we dismiss abstractions because they are static and have no force in the world, what is left as real is solely the "power of action."

> Real things are distinguished from things having only conceptual existence by this power and fact of action.... We demand of being that it shall contain in itself the ground and explanation of the apparent order.... Only the definite and only the active can be viewed as ontologically real....[56]

> The truth is that in the separation between a thing and its power, we are the dupes of language.... Things as existing do not have the distinction of substance and attribute which they have in our thought. They do not consist of subjects to which predicates are externally attached...but they exist only in the predicates.[57]

He defines persons as non-substantial powers, holding that all "powers or forces are only abstractions from the one indivisible agent."[58] All force and therefore all being is personal; without intelligence the world would be merely a molar heap of inert objects.[59] In this way personhood as intelligence supplants both materialist mechanism and concrete vitality replaces the rationalist

Absolute for a non-absolute personalist idealism.[60] From this short overview of Bowne's position, we can see that his ontology is fully relational, like James's; that it is mostly an ontology of powers, or forces, rather than one of substances, roughly like James's; and that mind is not separate from being in the way that subjects are supposedly other than objects, quite like James. But unlike James, his concept of intelligence was limited to the traditional cognitive tasks. Bowne did not intuit, as James did, that relationality shows us that the fringes of consciousness, which are merely vibrational rather than dispositive, lead us into a vast, ultimately cosmic mutual influence of mind and the universe. In Bowne there is nothing like James's recognition that "Every smallest state of consciousness, taken concretely, overflows its definition."[61] Bowne did not advance as far as James toward a processual view of existence. He did not create a concept of personhood that resolved the turbulence of continual change with the sense of one's own identity. Nor had he any hint of the momentous consequences of Bergson's analysis of temporality, which showed how the apparently imposed world always feels "mine," suggesting a more advanced personalism. And he did not develop the sophisticated analysis of self-referentiality that Bergson and Husserl explored as part of uncovering the inseparability of consciousness and the universe. These notions in James that are not in Bowne serve as the elements of a pluralist personalism.

Another form of pluralistic personalism leaped from Boston to Berkeley in the person of George Holmes Howison (1834–1916). Howison was also a close friend of James.[62] Howison calls his system "personal and "multipersonal idealism."[63] Josiah Royce called it Howison's "multipersonalitairianism."[64] But all personalists are metaphysical pluralists, as Auxier says, because all must admit that personhood does not pertain solely to God.[65] Like James, Howison emphasizes the historical manifold as the locus of "all the essential moral qualities" we require of God, rather than a monistic Absolute.[66] And, also like James, he strongly emphasizes the cross-temporal community of meaning that persons create. But Howison sees all this as tending toward a final cause. Indeed, the "organising place" he gives to "Final Cause," subduing "Efficient Cause," resident in a "World of Spirits," is central to his thought

because it alone enables the "mutually thought correlation" of persons within the "Eternal Republic."[67] James, on the other hand, does not approach God as a real force, nor has he much use for final causes. His concern was not the actual final product of human inquiry, as Howison's was, but rather the capability—with all its failures as well as successes, always realized but partially—for open-ended, ever-enriching experience. His interest was not a complete cosmos—out there but of which we are a part—but the "completest" opening within each of us and for all of us as a community to reality.[68] To Howison this "transmission view" was merely "permissive." It encourages us but predicts nothing. The matter it left to chance that particularly disturbed Howison was that of personal immortality.[69] In this sense, Howison correctly read James's "tychism." To the "hope of the real improvement of this present world" and "the solvability of the Enigma of Evil" that Howison desired, James's meliorism was a "moral discouragement."[70] James and Howison apparently each saw the other's pluralism as too atomistic: Howison, because the lack of absolute knowledge is irrationalist and chaotic;[71] James, because Howison's logic is too rigid to allow the flow of consciousness.[72] In direct reply to Howison's published critique, James says that Howison does not untangle "the prima facie rebelliousness of the world of facts" but instead cuts them off from any capacity for relationship except through their "*rational fitness*" from the perspective of final cause.[73]

We can now see the elements of James's pluralistic personalism. The personalism part seems close to Bowne's: persons are relational and processual intelligences who make sense and meaning of the world for themselves, and they are not units advancing to some absolute (whether as its servants or as its creators), like iron filings turned all in the same direction straight to a magnet. But Bowne understands reality as intelligent and therefore personal, while James heads in a related but also very different direction when he started in Bergson's footsteps. The pluralism part distinctively concerns our richest and "completest" experience of our lives, broadly quite apart from what is the richness of reality or the universe itself. This, which Howison regards as mere "permission" rather than what I by simile call magnetically-enforced orders,

focuses us on the adventurous, eager, strenuous "energies of man" by which we participate in reality and in our communities.74 The pluralistic diversity of personality—the point of view we each congenitally have—is a factual motor of what becomes lives expanding beyond their starting-points. It is for the sake of living well in this manner that James urges us not to fly on the wings of concepts to crawl and wade through experiences that we are forever tempted to perch above by way of either science or theology.

In developing pluralism with an outcome in the ethics of personalism, James built on the spirit of personalism as his vision widened. Bowne's ontology has some real strengths that form an enduring foundation for personalism, but what appears as James's pluralist personalism goes much further and shows the personalist factor that both entered into but was also suppressed in early phenomenology (as, for example, in Husserl's avoidance of the ethical implications of subjectivity), although it was Bergson who ignited the last phase of James's thought. Part of James's widening was also due to Josiah Royce's influence. Royce pulled him to absolute idealism, and Bowne represented a non-absolute, or personal, idealist ontology that, it is easy to think, James found congenial. But there was more to it: something that was not exactly mysticism, as distinguished from the spiritualism of his day, because James himself did not have visions nor did he pursue a pure consciousness experience, although he clearly understood and sympathized with Buddhism vastly more by the time of *A Pluralistic Universe* than he had in *Pragmatism.* Also, he shared one of the basic impulses of personalism with Bowne that we also find in Søren Kierkegaard and Friedrich Nietzsche: loathing of nineteenth-century and turn-of-the-century gigantism in business, academia, and empires. James also claims, in his own way, the basic premise of personalism: the absolute value of persons pitched against the instrumental and lesser value of objects, concepts, and words. Finally, James's concept of the intuitive philosophical core native to each person was the intuitive, core philosophical idea native to James himself and his philosophy. We see this in his early paper of 1879, "The Sentiment of Rationality," where he begins to fashion each major theme of Pragmatism from this observation.75

The claim that humans are the "highest" persons has become a millstone on the neck of the fortunes of personalism in the development of thought about the place of humankind in natural reality, now a crucial question in the age of the anthropocene and of artificial intelligence. This is in addition to the various exogenous forces that eclipsed personalism in philosophy after World War II and in theology from the weak developments from within personalism itself.[76] It is the case that the works of Bowne and others do acknowledge the non-human in ways that might be fruitful, but the issue is beyond the scope of this essay. In James's pluralistic personalism examined here, however, lie two lines of thought that can serve to discover a personalist response to the challenge of the other-than-human and the more-than-human. The first is the notion, associated with James's last work, that the consciousness or intelligence in non-human entities are a function of the universe properly understood as infinitely rich. The second, which James held in one form or another through most of his work, is the idea that our richest experience moves us to find the moral worth of non-human as well as of ourselves by using just that aporetic intelligence that is human intelligence rightly understood.

To complete the thought of this paper, however, it is necessary to talk about the person who leads us out of the stalemate. For if I completed an account of the intricate conceptual pattern of this allusion solely, in a passage, within a lecture, in a book, inside James's life work, I would not notice nor explain that the unsnaring is not disincarnate. James embedded the wide rationality he conceived in his experience, and we are therefore wise to hunt for the ways in which his writing expresses this, even if our more conventionally logical minds want to dismiss such things as poetry or "mere" performance. It is done by a person, Prof. James, in order to avoid dryness, not to replicate it. He aimed to bust up the stalemate.

And so I return to William James the peacemaker. If we look again at his use of the Port Arthur metaphor, we ought to notice that he shapes it as a miniature narrative. There's a "we" traveling through a life of the mind. And these travels become, through metaphor, a kind of dream or even nightmare: "*we* have to plough or wade through the whole intolerable interval. No detail is spared *us*" (italics mine). This echoes his own descriptions of intellectual

struggle, from his early "neurasthenic" fears about the nature of existence to his later intense struggle with traditional ontology that brought him at last to Bergson's overthrow of it. It is actual persons engaged with life whom barbed wire and warfare murder and who must find their ground by falling flat to hug it. The story so briefly narrated is that of vulnerability. The moral is that traditional ontology harms the narrator and the readers. It makes war on our souls.

James here speaks to one of his outstanding but little-noticed characteristics: his vulnerability. It is the hidden cause of much of his intimacy with his readers. Many of his important writings were not at first for readers. They were for auditors at lectures. This immediacy gave them not only the grace missing from journal publication but also the pathos of personal exposure to the feelings of others and the complicated, jittery affect of all actual and intense conversation. When lecturing and writing, James was a performer who knew that acting a role requires a veiled but nevertheless real part of the true human person that is the actor. His work shows more roles as we think more about it: scientist, empiricist, physician, psychologist, therapist, teacher, debater, friend, persuader, ethicist, political moralist, logician, science theorist, student of religion, nearly a mystic, all woven through his favorite role, that of philosopher. Realizing the performative aspect of James's address to us helps us see to what a high degree he regarded philosophizing as interpersonal and thus requiring the investment of one's personality in the recognition of the personhood of others. We also see that he strove to actualize a pluralistic personhood in which he and every other person can practice different roles and grow in various directions. For James, this is ameliorating in a way that marching to the beat of logic never can be.

To whom was the barbed wire at Port Arthur an obstacle? To all persons, real people who walked, had always been walking, across that land. At Port Arthur the ordinary earth was corrupted by arms, as our inner lives are hidden from us by metastasizing concepts. The immediacy and strength of this phrase in the text of the lecture puts us all in the contested, embattled spot, between armed empires and also between ontologies armed like deathstars, huge and embattled. (James in fact compared F. H. Bradley's idealist ontology to the

fortified and fallen Port Arthur.[77]) James's pluralism was an offer of peace in the ontological world war that carried along a notion of peace in the other spheres that were to tear civilization apart worldwide through a civil war in Europe nearly a century long. There, facing gigantic violence, stands the person.

This kind of peacemaking served some of the aims of a philosophical view of society that James did not explicitly develop, although he was constantly thinking about contemporary politics, as his letters show, and not infrequently spoke out on key issues. Although he never called himself a personalist, the notion of personhood and its implications in moral philosophy was for him, as for Bowne and others, a focus of the vast moral potential of consciousness, a real and present ground beneath our feet, as against the eliminationist force of reductionist philosophy, technocratic systems of knowledge, and martial violence to which the merely but infinitely human is vulnerable.

The problems of war and of totalized social systems, of course, did not end. Today true subjectivity that was a hope of rescue has been turned into a bad subjectivity. The heroic autonomous person often reveals the imperialist society and dominative technology. Or subjectivity is seen as one of the two elements of "Cartesian violence." And the person today is so overwhelmed by commodified "choices" by which she can be made to think that she as consumer is creating her "personality" by shopping that personhood is like a goose fattened to be made into fois gras by the capitalist butcher. Had James lived longer, he would likely have developed his principled critique of the disincarnate, dry, hollow, and dehydrated forms of philosophy according to one or another of the possible directions taken in the half-century after his death that we can see in his work.

Among those forms, one that gives us a fruitful comparison with James's ideas is the work of Emmanuel Levinas. James's lucidity was as completely opposite a form of philosophical prose to Levinas's language as imaginable. But his later development sprang from Bergson, as did Levinas's initial work, all despite the purgatory to which the work of Bergson, which is the object of James's work in this lecture, was consigned, along with Whitehead, by the orthodox pontiffs of Anglophone disciplinary philosophy until the

last few decades. James sensed that personhood is a concrete reality, even if we cannot say that it has the kind of unity denoted as "identity"; and that it is real as a multiplanar form of being. He seems to hold, further, that its reality is validated by its ethical weight, as it is the mode of being of the moral actor and of the living of moral life. James's example of the two souls on the rock who form a moral community foreshadows Levinas's category of the face of the Other, and both of them hold personhood together as moral agency.[78] Here in the passage about Port Arthur, James was foreseeing the calamity of war to which Levinas's mature work was a response: totalized ontologies that really are red in tooth and claw. Both saw totalized ontology as violence. In a Levianasian way, James wants to turn the stalemate of human relations into the improving morality of human relations, as when his two souls on the rock live in their moral claims on one another rather than at war with one another.

The freedom we have inheres in personhood because it is personhood that, in its fullest realization, ventures into the dimensions of life. That each personality has within it its own intuitive worldview signals this freedom: the pluralistic universe is ours to explore, not the property of impersonal rationality, which stems from fear and leads to aggression and suppresses rather than liberates. To James the wonder of the reality of persons, others and his own self, was a patent part of the pluralistic universe within each person and connecting all persons.[79]

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NOTES

[1] Dr. Bennett Gilbert is the author of *Power and Compassion: On Moral Force Ethics and Historical Change*, forthcoming 2025

[2] May, Rollo, "William James' Humanism and the Problem of Will." *William James: Unfinished Business*, 74–75 (73–92).

[3] This thought is inspired by Eduardo Viveiros de Castro when he writes: "Ontological differences...are political because they imply a situation of war —not a war of *words*, as per the linguistic turn, but an ongoing war of *worlds*, hence the sudden, pressing insistence on the ontological import of our ethnographic descriptions, in a context in which the world ('as we know it') is imposed in myriad ways on other peoples' worlds (as they know them), even as this hegemonic world seems to be on the brink of a slow, painful and ugly ending," "Who is Afraid of the Ontological Wolf? some comments on an ongoing anthropological debate," *The Cambridge Journal of Anthropology*, 2-17. Viveiros de Castro refers here to James's ontological pluralism as well as to Gilles Deleuze. Manuel de Landa's *War in the Age of Intelligent Machines* is an extended meditation on the theme of ontology in war, based on Deleuze and Felix Guattari's concept of the "machinic phyllum" in *A Thousand Plateaus*, 456–459.

[4] Crary, Jonathan, *Suspensions of Perception Attention, Spectacle, and Modern Culture*, 13.

[5] James, William, "The Moral Philosopher and the Moral Life," in *The Will to Believe and Other Essays in Popular Philosophy*, 158.

[6] Letter to Pauline Goldmark, February 24, 104, in William James, *The Correspondence of William James*, vol. 10, 394; for his continued expressions of support for Japan, cf. 467, 548, and 564 n. 2; and James, *The Correspondence*, vol. 11, 53, 54, and 105.

[7] Letter to Théodore Flournoy, June 14, 2004, in James, *The Correspondence*, vol. 10, 109, 415.

[8] Letter to Bergson, June 13, 1907, in James, *The Correspondence*, vol. 11, 378.

[9] Letter to Bliss Perry, October 3, 1905, in James, *The Correspondence*, vol. 11, 99.

[10] James, *A Pluralistic Universe*, 110.

[11] In a letter to Borden Parker Bowne written from Haarlem, Netherlands, while working on his Gifford lectures on August 17, 1908, James again uses spatial metaphors of "wading through the intervening concrete particulars," whereas instead we miss the richness of reality when we "jump or fly over the surface of experience and perch on distant spits conceptually...." (*The Correspondence*, vol. 11, 87–89).

[12] James, *A Pluralistic Universe*, 246–253.

[13] James, *A Pluralistic Universe*, 111.

[14] James, *A Pluralistic Universe*, 110.

[15] James, 112.

[16] James, 112.

[17] James, 113.

[18] Bergson, Henri, *Matter and Memory*, 14, 248-249.

[19] Bergson, 240–243.

[20] For the influence of James on Husserl, see Bruce Wilshire, *William James and Phenomenology: a study of "The Principles of Psychology*," 3ff.

[21] For a full account of the role of the "fringe" in James's view of consciousness, see Gerald E. Myers, *William James: his life and thought*, 247–262. Aron Gurwitsch discusses it from a phenomenological point of view in *The Field of Consciousness: Theme, Thematic Field, and Margin* (vol. III of his *Collected Works*), 301ff. Bruce Wilshire finds that James handled the fringe inconsistently with respect to developing a phenomenology (*William James and Phenomenology*, 87–108). Crary, *Suspensions*, 284ff. et passim, looks at the issue of the dismissal of fringe attention under nineteenth century capitalism.

[22] Anson Rabinbach in *The Human Motor: Energy, Fatigue, and the Origins of Modernity*, 52–83, showed the way in which rationalized capitalism turned human mental and physical energy into economic production.

[23] Gurwitsch, *loc. cit*.

[24] James, William, *The Principles of Psychology*, 153–154.

[25] James, *A Pluralistic Universe*, 111.

[26] James, 112.

[27] James, 113.

[28] James, William, "The Moral Equivalent of War," in *Essays in Religion and Morality*, 162–173.

[29] James, *A Pluralistic Universe*, 112.

[30] James, "The Moral Philosopher and the Moral Life," 330.

[31] James, 347.

[32] Letter to Thomas Wren Ward, January 7, 1868, in James, *The Correspondence of William James*, vol. 4, 249.

[33] Perry, Ralph Barton, *The Thought and Character of William James*, 2.690. In *The Principles of Psychology,* 398, James writes about how much he disliked having to teach logic.

[34] James, "The Moral Philosopher and the Moral Life," 340–341.

[35] James, *A Pluralistic Universe*, 130.

[36] Cf. Gary S. Slater, "The Moral Framework of A Pluralistic Universe," in *William James, Moral Philosophy, and the Ethical Life*, 347–362.

[37] James, "The Moral Philosopher and the Moral Life," 341 (italics his).

[38] McDermott, John J. *Streams of Experience: reflections on the history and philosophy of American culture*, 147.

[39] McDermott, John J. ed. *The Writings of William James: a comprehensive edition*.

[40] Leary, David E. "William James on the Self and Personality: clearing the ground for subsequent theorists, researchers, and practitioners," *Reflections on The Principles of Psychology: William James after a century*, 101–137. Harry T. Hunt, in *On the Nature of Consciousness: cognitive, phenomenological, and transpersonal perspectives*, 115ff., sensitively develops a similar reading.

[41] James, *The Principles of Psychology*, 280.

[42] Leary, "William James on the Self and Personality," 109.

[43] Auxier, Randall E. *Time, Will, and Purpose: living ideas from the philosophy of Josiah Royce,* 217, 224.

[44] James, *The Principles of Psychology*, 243–244.

[45] James, 926

[46] James, "The Hidden Self," in *Essays in Psychology*, 261.

[47] James, *Essays in Psychology*, 315–321.

[48] James, *The Varieties of Religious Experience*, 307–308.

[49] Letter to F. C. S. Schiller, January 10, 1904, in James, *The Correspondence*, vol. 10, 483.

⁵⁰ For a general account of personalism and its varieties, see Thomas D. Williams and Jan Olof Bentssen, "Personalism," in Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/personalism/; and Jan Olof Bengtssen, *The Worldview of Personalism: origins and early development*.

⁵¹ For the ideas of Boston Personalism, see the various essays in *Personalism Revisited: Its Proponents and Critics*; and *The Boston Personalist Tradition in Philosophy, Social, Ethics, and Theology*, especially Deats' "Introduction to Boston personalism." Some works by and about its history include Randall E. Auxier, "The History and Principles of American Personalism: A Comparison of the Harvard and Boston University Schools," in *Roczniki Teologiczne*, 21–36; and Kevin M. Dirksen and Paul T. Schotsmans on Bowne and his Boston followers, "The Historical Roots of Personalism: Borden Parker Bowne and the Boston Tradition on Personal Identity and the Moral Life," in *Bijdragen: International Journal for Philosophy and Theology*, 388-403.

⁵² Letter to Bowne, December 29, 1903, in James, *Correspondence*, vol. 10, 350. Bowne and James corresponded between 1895 and 1909 (James, *Correspondence*, vol. 10, 641).

⁵³ See *The Real Metaphysical Club: the philosophers, their debates, and selected writings from 1870 to 1885*, 389–390.

⁵⁴ James, *Principles of Psychology*, 215.

⁵⁵ Bowne, *Metaphysics*, 86.

⁵⁶ Bowne, 16–17.

⁵⁷ Bowne, 21.

⁵⁸ Bowne, 24.

⁵⁹ Bowne, 252.

⁶⁰ For more on Bowne's ontology, see my "Two and One-Half Arguments For Idealism" In *Idealistic Studies*, 133–155; Thomas O. Buford, "Persons in the Tradition of Boston Personalism," in *The Journal of Speculative Philosophy*, 214–218; and the same author's "Introduction" to selections from Bowne in *Pragmatism and Classical American Philosophy: Essential Readings and Interpretive Essays*, 646–652, is a good summary of Bowne's metaphysics.

⁶¹ James, *A Pluralistic Universe*, 129.

[62] Auxier, *Time, Will, and Purpose*, 202–210, examines the tangle of friendships among James, Bowne, Howison, and Royce in terms of the development of personalism, placing Bowne at the center. Howison went to Berkeley when James's effort to obtain a position at Harvard for him failed. It was Royce who then came to Harvard instead.

[63] Howison uses this phrase in a four page pamphlet, *Outline of the Philosophy Termed Multipersonal Idealism*, 1895, presumably published in Berkeley. I have not been able to look at it: Berkeley itself records no copy, and the only copies in WorldCat are two in Germany (Bayerische Staatsbibliothek and Thüringer Landesbibliothek). Howison sent this pamphlet to James, who breezily replied on June 29, 1895 from Chocorua with a comment about the "triviality" of abstract metaphysics. He then had to smooth Howison's ruffled feathers on July 17 by blaming it on "the fragrances of the spruces and sweet ferns" at his mountain retreat (James, *Correspondence*, vol. 8, 50 and 57).

[64] As cited by James McLachlan, "George Holmes Howison: 'The City of God' and Personal Idealism," in *The Journal of Speculative Philosophy*, 224.

[65] Auxier, *Time, Will, and Purpose*, 76–77.

[66] Howison, George Holmes. "In the Matter of Personal Idealism, in *Mind*, 234.

[67] Howison, George Holmes. *The Limits of Evolution and Other Essays, illustrating the metaphysical theory of personal idealism.*

[68] James, *Psychology: a briefer course*, 158.

[69] Howison, *The Limits of Evolution*, 279–285.

[70] George Holmes Howison, "Personal Idealism and Its Ethical Bearings," in *International Journal of Ethics*, 456.

[71] McLachlan, "George Holmes Howison," 237.

[72] Auxier, Time, Will, and Purpose, 208.

[73] James, *Correspondence*, vol. 9, 502–503 (June 17, 1901).

[74] Howison's thought, in my view, fails to resolve the tension between his vision of "a universe of self-determining rational beings" and their destination toward "an ultimate Harmony." He says, in dissenting to James from James's ideas in Pragmatism, "I'm, with Royse, [sic] for 'the eternal....'" (James, *Correspondence*, vol. 11, 286).

[75] In *Essays in Philosophy*, 32–64.

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[76] For the developments in philosophy, see McDermott, *Streams of Experience*, 226. For the developments on theology, see Gary Dorrien, "Making Liberal Theology Metaphysical: Personalist Idealism as a Theological School," in *American Journal of Theology and Philosophy*, 241–242.

[77] Letter to F. C. S. Schiller, August 321, 1904, in James, *The Correspondence*, vol. 10, 456.

[78] James, "The Moral Philosopher and the Moral Life," 155.

[79] James also was tending toward a kind of personalist cosmopsychism at the very end of his life, as discussed by Jordan Ganeri, "Cosmic Consciousness," *The Monist*, vol. 105 (2022): 50-55 (43–57). Ganeri quotes James's "The Confidences of a Psychical Researcher," *American Magazine*, vol. 68 (October, 1909): 580–589.