7

WILLIAM JAMES'S NATURALISTIC ACCOUNT OF CONCEPTS AND HIS 'REJECTION OF LOGIC'[1]

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1. Introduction

William James was one of the most controversial philosophers of the early part of the twentieth century, and his apparent skepticism about logic and any robust conception of truth was often simply attributed to his endorsing mysticism and irrationality out of an overwhelming desire to make room for religion in his world-view. However, it will be argued here that James's pessimism about logic and even truth (or at least 'absolute' truth), while most prominent in his later views, stem from the naturalistic conception of concepts developed much earlier in *The Principles of Psychology* (1890), and it is his commitment to naturalism about our conceptual powers, rather than to any sort of mysticism or irrationalism, that motivates his skepticism about the scope and power of logic, and ultimately about the objectivity of truth itself.

2. Concepts from *the principles of psychology* to *some problems in philosophy*

James's naturalistic understanding of concepts is most explicit in his *The Principles of Psychology* (1890), though it can be found in earlier papers such as "The Sentiment of Rationality" (1879) and "The Function of Cognition" (1885) that fed in to that work. James's view has always been, as he puts it in these early works, that a concept is a "teleological instrument" with which partial aspects of a thing (which "for our purpose" we regard as the "essential" aspects) are used to represent the whole.[2] James takes such conceptualizations to be indispensable because they allow us to make sense of experience by breaking it up into kinds about which general inferences can be made.

As James puts it: "A conceptual scheme is a sort of sieve in which we try to gather up the world's contents,"[3] and concepts allow one to formulate the general

claims that make the 'web of belief' a *web* (rather than the mere "big blooming buzzing confusion" (James 1890, p. 462, James 1911, p. 32)). Such general claims rely on our dividing experiences into *kinds*, and there are, of course, many ways to do this. James recognized this, and it should be stressed that he viewed the 'essential' properties that our concepts pick out as having as much to do with our interests as with the world itself:

> There is no property ABSOLUTELY essential to any one thing. The same property which figures as the essence of a thing on one occasion becomes a very inessential feature upon another. . . . But as I am always classifying it under one aspect or another, I am always unjust, always partial, always exclusive. My excuse is necessity – the necessity which my finite and practical nature lays upon me. My thinking is first and last for the sake of my doing, and I can only do one thing at a time. . . *the only meaning of essences is teleological, and that classification and conceptions are purely teleological weapons of the mind*. The essence of a thing is that one of its properties which is so *important for my interests* that in comparison with it I may neglect the rest.
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> (James 1890, pp. 959–961)

Concepts are thus not heavenly forms that we somehow grasp or intuit. Nor are they forced upon us by a 'ready made' world that has essential properties of its own. Rather, they are natural simplifications/adaptations that *we* develop in order to make sense of our experience, and thus cope with our current environment. As James puts it, the concepts under which we characterize a given object "characterize *us* more than they characterize the thing" (James 1890, p. 961).

In later works, particularly *A Pluralistic Universe* (1909) and *Some Problems of Philosophy* (1911), James stresses that our concepts are themselves independent objects of experience. Concepts "are realities of a new order", and the relations between them "are just as much directly perceived, when we compare our various concepts, as the distance between two sense-objects is perceived when we look at it" (James 1909, p. 122).[4]

James further expands on how our concepts can collectively make up self-standing *models* (or "maps" (James 1911, p. 43)) which we can inspect, and in terms of which perceptual experience can be understood. Concepts help make up a kind of 'notional world' in terms of which the world we perceive is understood. We map perceived objects onto their notional counterparts and predict their behavior based on what their notional counterparts would do.

> The 'rationalization' of any mass of perceptual fact consists in first assimilating its concrete terms, one by one, to so many terms of the conceptual series, and then in assuming that the relations intuitively found among the latter are what connect the former too . . . To 'explain' means

to co-ordinate, one to one, the *thises* of the perceptual flow with the *whats* of the ideal manifold, whichever it be.

(James 1911, pp. 41–42, see also p. 33.)

As James later puts it, in order to be successful, the models of reality constructed with our concepts need only do justice to those aspects of reality that they are used to cope with.[5] Our concepts have been developed and selected through our history for their usefulness, not necessarily their complete fidelity to all aspects of what is conceptualized (though the two will not be entirely unrelated), so the types of inferences that our concepts license may not be true of everything (or always true of anything) that they are applied to.

Concepts as more traditionally conceived by philosophers should automatically match (perhaps even determine) reality's structure, but there is no guarantee that concepts as James understands them will do so. Especially since James doesn't try to account for our concepts being *about* external realities in terms of their *resembling* them (James 1890, pp. 437, 455).[6] Roughly put, a concept is about an external reality if it allows us to *handle* that reality, and so while some sort of structural isomorphism between concepts and their objects is always nice, there is no reason to think that it must always be present.

A simple model that allows one to act successfully most of the time is often more useful than a more 'truthful' model that is too complex to be used effectively in actual practice. For instance, the primitive 'model' of the world deployed by frogs treats all small flying objects as things to be eaten, and while the actions endorsed by this model are not always optimal (the frogs will occasionally eat fly-sized bits of non-organic material that is shot past them, etc.), it works often enough for frogs to survive in their environment. A more complex model, by contrast, while it might produce fewer misidentifications, might also be slower to implement, resulting in many flies that would have been captured with the simpler model getting away.

Indeed, James argues that we frequently use *different* models to cope with different aspects of reality, and while this practice is useful, it would inevitably lead to contradictions if the models were all viewed as true theoretical descriptions of reality. This is one of the sources of James's 'instrumentalism.' Our models are useful instruments to cope with experience but their theoretical incompatibility prevents them from being viewed as absolutely true descriptions of reality. As James famously put it "Common sense is better for one sphere of life, science for another, philosophic criticism for a third; but whether either is truer absolutely, Heaven only knows" (James 1907, p. 93). James's 'instrumentalism' does not stem from any sort of prudishness about 'unobservables' (as if we had a single coherent theory of the world, but refused to commit ourselves to the existence of the theoretical entities postulated in it). Rather, it derives from the recognition that we have a number of indispensable yet incompatible models of the world, no single one of which is adequate for all of our purposes, and no two of which could be 'absolutely true' together.

Furthermore, James is very sensitive to the analogical nature of many of our conceptual models. We often understand novel ranges of experience by analogy

135

with other experiences that we are more familiar with. This 'metaphorical' form of understanding is a very powerful tool for comprehending not only novel experiences, but also things as familiar as our own minds. Indeed, James was very aware of our tendency to understand 'abstract' phenomena such as the mind in terms of 'concrete' metaphors relating to our practical interactions with the physical world. As he puts it "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."[7] These 'concrete' metaphors are, according to James, essential to our understanding precisely because human cognition evolved not in the context of having to solve theoretical problems about comparatively abstract objects, but rather in the context of practically coping with our concrete environment. Concrete objects and "things of the sort we literally *handle*, are what our intellects cope with the most successfully," and this suggests that "the original and still surviving function of our intellectual life is to guide us in the practical adaptation of our expectancies and activities" (James 1909, p. 111). The notional model we build up to understand the world we perceive will often thus be metaphorical through and through.

However, while importing the inferential structure of one domain into another is often a successful way of coping with experience, it can occasionally misdirect our thinking. If an analogy that is successful for certain practical purposes is treated as a literal reflection of reality, then *all* of the inferential transitions licensed in the primary domain would be licensed in the analogical one. Losing sight of the (often very real) *differences* between the two domains can lead reasoning astray, and while James follows Bain in characterizing genius as "a native talent for seeing analogies,"[8] he warns that not making sufficient allowances for the differences between the two domains is "the common fallacy in analogical reasoning" (James 1909, p. 71). If we were to uncritically tease out all of the 'logical consequences' of our analogically structured concepts (and uncritically take our model to reflect reality perfectly), we would frequently be led into error.[9] Consequently, while analogical concepts are useful, indeed indispensable, they should be used with caution outside of the 'everyday' practical use for which they originally evolved.

Concepts are, then, for James, simply tools with which we practically cope with our environment, and they come to be about objects in the environment because they lead us to literally handle them, not necessarily because they 'mirror' any part of their essential structure. This conception of concepts (and their resulting limitations) is radically at odds with that of most philosophers in James's day, and it ultimately led to his endorsing radical views on the authority of logic and the possibility of our reaching any sort of 'objective' truth.

3. James's 'rejection of logic'

A general willingness to either accept the logical consequences of one's beliefs, or to revise those beliefs, is viewed by many philosophers as inseparable from

rationality, so it is not surprising that James's 'rejection of logic' in *A Pluralistic Universe* (1909) was viewed as perhaps the most flagrantly 'irrational' strand in his philosophy,[10] with passages like the following being met with incomprehension and disappointment by many of James's contemporaries.[11]

> I have finally found myself compelled to *give up the logic* [of identity], fairly, squarely, and irrevocably. It has an imperishable use in human life, but that use is not to make us theoretically acquainted with the essential nature of reality. . . . Reality, life, expedience, concreteness, immediacy, use what words you will, exceeds our logic, overflows and surrounds it. If you like to employ words eulogistically, and so encourage confusion, you may say that reality obeys a higher logic, or enjoys a higher rationality.
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> (James 1909, pp. 96–97).

However, James's 'anti-logical' writings, while perhaps not as happily put as they could be, pick out something very deep and important that runs throughout his philosophy. In particular, James's target is not so much *logic*, as it is a certain attitude towards our *concepts*. If (formal) logic (particularly the logic of identity) occasionally fails to apply to reality, the problem may not be with logic itself but rather with our attitudes towards the *conceptualizations* of reality upon which our logic is applied. Logical inferences are only applicable to conceptualizations of reality, and our conceptualizations may not (for certain theoretical purposes) adequately reflect reality's actual structure. As James also puts it:

> logic, giving primarily the relations between concepts as such, and the relations between natural facts only secondarily or so far as the facts have been already identified with concepts and defined by them, must of course stand or fall with the conceptual method. *But the conceptual method is a transformation which the flux of life undergoes at our hands in the interests of practice essentially and only subordinately in the interests of theory*.
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> (James 1909, p. 109, italics mine.)

James's claim is that logic can take concepts that have evolved to cope with reality on a *practical* level, and derive a *theoretical* picture that grotesquely distorts reality. In such cases the rational thing to do is to "subordinate logic. . . [and] throw it out of the deeper regions of philosophy to take its rightful and respectable place in the world of simple human practice" (James 1909, p. 97). The claim that logic will not always lead us to the truth is not the same as the claim that its laws are not themselves true. James defends the former claim, but he is not committed to the latter.

James views in this area become clearer when we recognize that he works with a picture of our belief and belief revision that he describes as follows:

> The individual has a stock of old opinions already, but he meets a new experience that puts them to a strain. Somebody contradicts them; or

in a reflective moment he discovers that they contradict each other; or he hears facts with which they are incompatible; or desires arise in him which they cease to satisfy. The result is an inward trouble to which his mind till then had been a stranger, and from which he seeks to escape by modifying his previous mass of opinions. He saves as much as he can, for in this matter of belief we are all extreme conservatives. So he tries to change first this opinion, and then that (for they resist change very variously), until at last some new idea comes up which he can graft upon the ancient stock with a minimum of disturbance to the latter.

(James 1907, pp. 35–36)

Such a view fits into the now familiar "web of belief" approach to belief and belief revision,[12] and the similarities with the following passage from Quine should be familiar:

The totality of our so-called knowledge or beliefs . . . is a man-made fabric which impinges on experience only along the edges. Or, to change the figure, the total science is like a field of force whose boundary conditions are experience. A conflict with experience at the periphery occasions readjustments in the interior of the field. Truth values have to be redistributed over some of our statements. Reëvaluation of some statements entails reevaluation of others, because of their logical interconnections – the logical laws being in turn simply certain further statements of the system, certain further elements of the field.

(Quine 1951, p. 42)

It should be noted that for Quine, the logical laws are themselves items in the web,[13] and James shares much the same view here. There is a common view that we are *rationally required* to keep our web of belief consistent,[14] but for James such consistency is just one more factor that can be traded off case by case, and while one would hope that all such strains are removed in the long run, they need not be immediately resolved. Giving up any single belief of an inconsistent set may produce more strain than the inconsistency itself. James's position can be understood as suggesting that while keeping the more 'abstract' beliefs at the center of the web consistent with the rest has considerable value, we should not always do so at the expense of rejecting the more 'perceptual' beliefs that make up the periphery.[15] Indeed, he often suggests that we not only *needn't* revise such peripheral beliefs, but also that we *can't* give them up simply because some argument shows them to be incompatible with other beliefs that we hold.[16] James is effectively arguing that the periphery can (and typically does) hold, in spite of its apparent inconsistency with the center. He is not, *pace* his critics, arguing that the logical beliefs at the center must go. We can recognize that there is something inadequate about the way that our total belief set is structured in these cases, but also recognize that no available candidates for change make things any better.

138

Ideally, perhaps at some 'end of inquiry' the web will be completely consistent,[17] but we need not toss the whole thing just because it fails to be so now.

To understand how James's account of concepts is tied to his views on logic, we should remember that the main target of the 'anti-logical' lectures in *A Pluralistic Universe* is not just the sort of metaphysical monism associated with the Absolute Idealists (such as Bradley and Royce) who he criticized in those lectures, but a broader tendency towards *Intellectualism* in philosophy, a tendency characteristic not only of the Absolute Idealists, but also of more empiricist and 'scientific' philosophers such as Bertrand Russell.

According to James, intellectualism has as its source "the faculty which gives us our chief superiority to the brutes," namely, our power "of translating the crude flux of our merely feeling-experience into a conceptual order" (James 1909, p. 98). James claims that whenever we conceive a thing, we attempt to *define* it,[18] and intellectualism involves taking concepts to capture reality so well that the inferential patterns flowing from our definitions become the measure of reality itself. James traces this tradition of 'abusing' our concepts back to Socrates and Plato:

> Intellectualism in the vicious sense began when Socrates and Plato taught that what a thing really is, is told us by its *definition*. Ever since Socrates, we have been taught that reality consists of essences, not of appearances, and that the essences of a thing are known whenever we know their definitions. So first we identify the thing with a concept and then we identify the concept with a definition, and only then, inasmuch as the thing *is* whatever the definition expresses, are we sure of apprehending the real essence of it or the full truth about it.[19]

If the inferential consequences that flow from our concepts' definitions reflect the 'essence' of reality, then logic (by being able to tease out these inferential consequences) would be "an adequate measure of what can and cannot be."[20] Logic is able to determine the structure of, and relations between, the models we construct to understand the world, and if we can assume that the structure of these mental models is isomorphic to the structure of the world, then such logical investigations would reveal the structure of the world as well.

This assumption that our concepts match reality, coupled with the use of logic to determine just what does, and does not, fall under our concepts, leads the intellectualist to deny the reality of seemingly obvious features of experience. Consequences that can be teased out of the conceptual beliefs at the center of our web of belief are endorsed at the expense of the psychologically more robust beliefs found at the periphery. Such priorities are characteristic of the 'verbal' nature of Lotze's, Royce's and Bradley's idealistic arguments which James claims all rely on the properties of words rather than things (James 1909, pp. 31–33). Such arguments, James would insist, properly draw conclusions about the nature of our conceptual models of the world, not about the nature of the reality conceived. In

such cases, concepts, "first employed to make things intelligible, are clung to even when they make them unintelligible."[21]

James claims that ordinary logic "substitutes concepts for real things" (James 1909, p. 67), and this raises for him the question of the extent to which inferences relying on such substitutions are legitimate. If (as the intellectualist supposes) the structure of our concepts 'mirrors' the structure of reality, then conclusions logically derived from the structure of our concepts should also be true of the reality conceived. On the other hand, if the conceptual order does not mirror the order of reality, no such conclusions follow. Of course, from James's naturalistic picture of concepts outlined above, there is little, if any, reason to think that such a mirroring relationship must exist. If concepts are effective but imperfect instruments we developed to cope with reality, there is no *a priori* reason to think that the structure of these tools must be *completely* isomorphic to the structure of what they work on. Some fit is to be expected, but it will often be limited to the area of everyday practice.

James's reservations about the unbridled use of conceptual logic can thus be understood as tied to his denial of the existence such 'analytic' conceptual inferences about the world, and such a rejection is characteristic of those who endorse more naturalistic accounts of concepts. Since concepts do not pick out objects in the world in virtue of their 'logical' structure, there is no reason to think that inferences based on this logical structure must be truth-preserving.

It is this potential gap between concepts and what they represent that lets James see a distinction (invisible to most of his contemporaries, yet essential to his own position) between logic and rationality. James is not here making the now familiar claim that logic is concerned simply with truth, while rationality is concerned with a wider range of human concerns (not the least of which is utility). This familiar distinction between truth and utility is associated with a popular reading of James's philosophy, particularly his *Pragmatism* (1907) and *The Will to Believe* (1897),[22] and might also seem supported by James's claim that "rationality has at least four dimensions, intellectual, aesthetical, moral, and practical" (James 1909, pp. 54–55). However, James's claim that there are at least four dimensions of rationality does not in itself suggest that there are forms of rationality that are not truth-sensitive. Indeed, such a reading of James would suggest that truth was the exclusive concern of intellectual rationality, and thus that the aesthetical, moral and practical dimensions of rationality have no business with truth. This would be a very un-Jamesian concession to his rationalist opponents. In any case, James is clearly talking about rationality in *all* its dimensions when he claims right before the passage quoted above that any hypothesis that makes the world appear more rational "will always be accepted as more probably true than an hypothesis that makes the world appear irrational" (James 1909, p. 54). Consequently, such passages give us no compelling reason to think that James's distinction between logic and rationality should be understood as mirroring the distinction between truth and utility.[23]

Rather than relying on a division between truth and utility, James's distinction between logic and rationality is best seen as drawing on the potential differences

between the conceptual order and the reality that it is supposed to represent. Rationality is concerned optimizing the relation between our beliefs and reality, while logic is concerned more narrowly with the inferential relations between our concepts. If (as the intellectualist assumes) our concepts capture the structure of reality, then there will be no room for a conflict between logic and rationality. However, if (like James) one feels that our concepts are a practically adequate, but nevertheless imperfect reflection of reality, then there will be space for a conflict between logic and rationality. James sees his intellectualist opponents' uncritical use of conceptual logic as leading them to conclusions that are radically out of touch with any robust sense of the reality of the world we experience. Such philosophers, in virtue of being "loyal to the logical kind of rationality" end up being "disloyal to every other kind" (James 1909, p. 94). The contradictions which can follow from the unrestricted use of conceptual logic point to a dilemma that James takes his opponents to simply ignore.[24] Namely, in some cases we must either "give up the logic of identity" or "believe human experience to be fundamentally irrational", and while "neither is easy", "we must do one or the other."[25] When he faces up to the dilemma, James has no doubt about which horn to grab.

> That secret of a continuous life which the universe knows by heart and acts on every instant cannot be a contradiction incarnate. If logic says that it is one, so much the worse for logic. Logic being the lesser thing, the static incomplete abstraction, must succumb to reality, not reality to logic. Our intelligence cannot wall itself up alive, like a pupa in its chrysalis. It must at any cost keep on speaking terms with the universe that engendered it.
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> (James 1909, p. 94)

What James chooses to preserve, it should be noted, is not only the legitimacy of naïve perceptual experience, but also the assumption that the world we experience is fundamentally *rational*. If a conceptual treatment of perceptual reality ("when radically and consistently carried out," (James 1911, p. 46)) leads to the conclusion that perceptual reality is not real at all, this simply illustrates our concepts' inability to adequately capture (for the purposes of theory) the reality perceived. In such cases, James suggests, we should "turn a deaf ear" to the apparent contradictions that logic reveals.

> [T]he immediate facts don't sound at all, but simply *are*, until we conceptualize and name them vocally, the *contradiction results only from the conceptual or discursive form being substituted for the real form*. But if . . . that form is superimposed for practical ends only, in order to let us jump about over life instead of wading through it; and if it cannot even pretend to reveal anything of what life's inner nature is or ought to be; why then we can turn a deaf ear to its accusations.
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> (James 1909, p. 121, italics mine.)[26]

141

A proper 'sense of reality' is crucial when making inferences with our concepts. If they seem to be leading us astray, that may be a good indication that they in fact are.

Nevertheless, the use of concepts is essential to coping with reality, and James is certainly not suggesting that we try to get by without them. If concepts had a purely *theoretical* function, then their leading to contradictions might suggest that they should be given up. On the other hand, if (as James insists) they have primarily a *practical* function, and their use leads to no practical problems, then the fact that they can lead philosophers to certain theoretical difficulties gives us no reason not to keep using them. James thus advocates a 'pragmatic' approach to the use of our concepts. Use them when they help us understand and cope with reality (as they typically do) but discard them whenever they seem to lead us to contradiction and confusion.[27] This paradigmatically pragmatic attitude towards our concepts is firmly grounded not in a lack of concern with truth or rationality, but rather in a naturalistic attitude towards concepts and their limitations.[28]

James's rejection of conceptual logic is thus deeply connected not (or at least not only) to his sympathy with mysticism,[29] but rather to the understanding of concepts coming out of his work in psychology, and his resulting views on the limitations of human conceptualization. There is no reason to think that an intellect "built up of practical interests" (James 1890, p. 941) need develop concepts that are perfectly isomorphic to the structure of reality. Our concepts may be flawed from the point of view of pure theory, but in absence of a more adequate set (and in face of the fact that they work fine for practical purposes), giving them up is neither a realistic nor a *rational* option. The concepts are not only practically useful, but may serve as a starting point that may ultimately help us find a more theoretically adequate set. James's rejection of logic can thus be understood as reflecting a type of *anti-rationalism*, in that it undermines the 'rationalist' program that extends from Plato right though to twentieth-century 'conceptual analysis.'[30] Nevertheless, it is not a form of *irrationalism*. That is to say, it is not committed to the claim that life or the world is fundamentally irrational. James's position is, then, not so much that we should give up logic, but rather that we should give up the assumption that we are rationally obligated to endorse all of the apparent logical consequences of all the claims that we accept.

4. Conclusion: conceptual pessimism and pessimism about 'Absolute' truth[31]

This picture of how our concepts relate to reality also explains James's notorious caginess about 'objective' truth, even when the latter is understood merely in the Peircian sense of the "opinion which is fated to be ultimately agreed to by all who investigate" (Peirce 1877, p. 139). James has something like Peircian truth in his system, namely, "absolute" truth, but he presents it as something that we may never attain.

> The 'absolutely' true, meaning what no farther experience will ever alter, is that ideal vanishing-point towards which we imagine that all our

142

temporary truths will some day converge. It runs on all fours with the perfectly wise man, and with the absolutely complete experience; and, if these ideals are ever realized, they will all be realized together.

(James 1907, pp. 106–107)

'Absolute' truth requires there to be beliefs that we *would* converge on were we to investigate long enough, and James's picture of concepts leaves it a real possibility that prolonged inquiry might simply result in our oscillating between claims and their denials.

This shouldn't be surprising, if concepts emerged to serve our *practical* ends, and our most fundamental concepts evolved to serve the most basic of these ends, then our conceptual system may not be well suited to provide the kind of consistent *theoretical* account of reality that Absolute Truth requires.[32] What we have instead are sets of concepts that work piecemeal in particular contexts (most famously, the contexts of 'common sense', "science" and "philosophic criticism" (James 1907, pp. 92–93)), but none of which work in every context. Inquiry into a question will never produce a stable answer, since there is not a stable framework for inquiry, and when we adopt, say, a scientific framework, many claims that were previously endorsed in, say, the common sense framework will be denied because their ontological presuppositions will be rejected.[33]

Like James's views on Logic, this view of truth is undoubtedly pessimistic, but it is ultimately motivated not in terms of any commitment to the irrational, but rather from his fundamentally naturalistic approach to the mind and its powers.

Notes

1 I'd ~~also~~ like to thank Jim Campbell, Richard Gale, Sandra Lapointe and audience members at the Eugene Oregon meeting of the Society for the Advancement of American Philosophy for comments on an earlier version of this paper.
2 James (1890, pp. 961–962). Furthermore, these 'partial' aspects, while they are important to us, need not even be shared by all the elements in the relevant class. (For a more extended discussion of this last point, see Jackman, forthcoming).
3 James (1890, p. 455). See also James (1909, pp. 98, 105).
4 See also, James (1902, p. 54).
5 If one is driving from New York to Boston, one doesn't want a map that shows *every* road, alley and cow path between those two cities, nor does one typically want one that shows every little bend and curve in each road. Still less do we usually need information about the terrain, vegetation and population. A map that had every such detail would typically be *less* effective in guiding one between the two cities than the less 'cluttered' maps we typically use.
6 For a fuller discussion of this, see Jackman (1998).
7 James (1909, p. 111). In this respect, James anticipates some of the claims about the 'metaphorical' character of cognition worked out in more detail in Lakoff and Johnson (1980, 1999).
8 James (1907, p. 500), see also James (1890, pp. 972, 984) and James (1909, p. 71).
9 Treating ideas as objects is a notorious case of this, and the fact that we typically conceptualize experience in terms of concrete bounded objects is part of the reason

143

why James thinks that it will be so difficult (if not impossible) for us to come up with adequate conceptualizations for phenomena which are not 'static' (James 1911, pp. 51, 54–55).

10 Other candidates include, of course, *Pragmatism*'s (1907) purported equation truth with what is expedient to believe, and his purported claim in *The Will to Believe* (1897) that we are rationally entitled to form any belief that makes us happy. I argue in Jackman (1998, 1999) that such attributions of defenses of irrationality to James are not, ultimately, justified.

11 Peirce was happy to group James's "intense hatred for logic" with his "almost unexampled incapacity for mathematical thought" (Peirce 1911, p. 182), and for more of the negative reaction of James's contemporaries to his rejection of logic, see Perry (1935, v. II pp. 594–597). For a contemporary manifestation of such disappointment, see Gale (1999 p. 298).

12 See Quine (1951) and Quine and Ullian (1970). Though one could argue that for James what needs to be held together is more than just a set of beliefs, but rather a general web of mental states such as beliefs, fears, hopes and desires. (For a discussion of this, see Putnam 1995, p. 26; Gale 1999, p. 126).

13 Quine's commitment to this consequence seems to be qualified seriously in Quine (1970).

14 This assumption is something like what Wilson has referred to as the "the moral imperative of first-order logic" (Wilson 1994, p. 527.) For a recent attack on the principle that we can, or even should, keep our beliefs consistent, see Sorensen (2001).

15 And of course, our 'mystical experience' was for James, more like perception in this respect than conception (see James 1902, pp. 319–320).

16 For a discussion of the ineffectiveness of argument against intuition, see James (1902, p. 67).

17 Though, as we will see soon, James has a good deal of skepticism about this possibility.

18 James (1911, p. 47). This might seem like a stretch to some, but it is entirely natural if viewed as a consequence of the then prevalent idea that all categorization is in terms of sets of necessary and sufficient conditions. If categories did really work this way, then all concepts would at least involve 'implicit' definitions in terms of the necessary and sufficient conditions that they embody. For a discussion of the popularity of this conception of concepts and categorization, and a criticism of its empirical accuracy, see Lackoff (1987).

19 James (1909, p. 99).

20 James (1909, p. 101).

21 James (1909, p. 99). Once again, idealists such as Bradley are the immediate target, but the larger one is the 'intellectualism' such idealists share with a much broader philosophical community.

22 This popular reading remains, nevertheless, a mistaken one. In particular, James's 'pragmatism' about truth is best understood as stemming from his naturalistic and pragmatic explanation of how our representations get their content. For a discussion of this, see Jackman (1998, 1999).

23 Which is not to say that one couldn't draw a distinction between logic and rationality in this way. Prudential and truth-directed rationality need not always give the same advice about, say, what to believe, and James was certainly aware of this (see Jackman 1999). Furthermore, it bears repeating at this point that while there is still a widespread view that James's "pragmatic theory of truth" collapsed truth and utility, a closer reading of his texts provides fairly compelling grounds for thinking that he kept the two quite separate (see Jackman 1998).

24 "Few philosophers have had the frankness fairly to admit the necessity of choosing between the 'horns' offered. Reality must be rational, they have said, and since the

144

ordinary intellectualistic logic is the only usual test for reality, reality and logic must agree 'somehow'" (James 1909, p. 96).

25 James (1909, p. 96). James further claims, "I must squarely confess that the solution to the problem impossible, and then either give up my intellectualistic logic, the logic of identity, and adopt some higher (or lower) form of rationality, or, finally, face the fact that life is logically irrational" (James 1909, p. 95); see also James (1909, pp. 108–109).

26 See also James (1902, p. 67) for the claim that we often can't help doing so.

27 James (1911, p. 53).

28 James can thus be understood as making a type of 'Wittgensteinian' point (of course, one courts trouble whenever one characterizes any position as 'Wittgensteinian', and those who do not find the analogy suggestive should feel free to ignore it). Our concepts are fine for their 'everyday' use, but if the inferential moves they license are applied indiscriminately, they can lead us to the sorts of contradictions and paradoxes characteristic of philosophy. A similar stance is taken in his *Pragmatism*, where he argues that "the moment you pass beyond the practical use of these categories . . . to a merely curious or speculative way of thinking, you find it impossible to say within just what limits of fact any one of them apply" (James 1907, p. 90).

29 See James (1902, Lectures XVI and XVII).

30 For a discussion of this program and its ambitions, see the fourth chapter of Rorty (1979).

31 The material in this section is covered in considerably more detail in Jackman (2015).

32 James seems to suspect that it will be a problem with *any* conceptual system, since *conceptualization itself* misrepresents the 'continuous' nature of reality. Concepts require sharp boundaries, and while the imposition of models of the world where things are sharply defined has tremendous practical value, it inevitably misrepresent the richness of reality, and thus are unable to get to a point of Absolute Truth. For instance, James is pessimistic about our ever finding a set of concepts that would capture aspects of reality such as time and change (see James 1911, pp. 51, 54–55). For a discussion of this, see Gale (1999). While they are at the forefront of these later works, remarks about the difficulty about capturing experience with 'static' concepts go all the way back to *The Principles of Psychology* (e.g. James 1890, p. 442).

33 Of course, one might think that this is only a *temporary* state, and that we should expect, eventually that we should be able to find a single stable system that will explain everything. However, James seems pessimistic about the *status quo* changing, and the conception of concepts outlined above is, once again, the source of his doubts.

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