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THE COMMUNITY IN THE PHILOSOPHY OF WILLIAM JAMES

A THESIS APPROVED FOR THE

DEPARTMENT OF PHILOSOPHY

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ABSTRACT

There are those who have stated that James' social philosophy is of little import, and that the reader of James is, therefore, hard-pressed to find any notion of community therein. My primary purpose in this work is to show that while James has no systematic "theory of community," he does have important things to say about our "experience of community." In showing this, I also indirectly respond to the claim made against James' social philosophy.

I call attention to the importance of James' theory of relations--where both conjunctive and disjunctive relations are held to be as real as the terms they connect--to his position as regards both the self, and the relation of selves known as the community. This is also the basis for James' suggestion that on the common sense level of daily life, we operate within the framework of a narrative concept of selfhood.

Our experience of community consists of three overlapping areas: the material, social, and spiritual. In the first area, our focus is upon "me and mine." In the second, it is on our social relations. The third has to do with the moral relations that exist between ourselves and other members. I suggest that a hypothetical Jamesean community is one that is pragmatic in orientation. James characterizes the pragmatic community as "an experiment of the most searching kind."

CHAPTER 1

JAMESEAN RELATIONS VERSUS HUMEAN RELATIONS

We can investigate the concept of community without ever referring to human beings at all, but we can not explore any community without first giving an account of relations.

The immense popularity and influence which James' The Principles of Psychology has enjoyed from its initial publication to the present day, has understandably fostered the belief that James came to philosophy through the portals of experimental psychology. Nevertheless, it is British empiricism which constitutes the most important influence in this regard, and it is Hume's treatment of relations in particular that serves as the target against which a great deal of James' mature philosophy is directed. James' thoughts on the community also reflect this concern. Accordingly, I begin with Hume.

That which comes before the mind, that of which the mind is aware, are perceptions.[1] Perceptions are of two sorts: impressions and ideas, both of which can be either simple or complex. Impressions comprise "our sensations, passions and emotions,"[2] but it is the intensity with which

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[1] David Hume, A Treatise of Human Nature, 2d ed., ed., P. H. Nidditch (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1978), p. 1

[2] Ibid., p. 1

they "strike upon the mind"[3] or force their way into consciousness, which is their most defining characteristic. Impressions can then be divided into "those of Sensation and those of Reflextion."[4] Impressions of sensation are simply the product of the five senses, but to a great extent impressions of reflection, which comprise our passions and emotions, require the prior mediation of either one or more impressions of sensation, or one or more corresponding ideas.[5]

Of course thought does not merely consist of simple impressions and simple ideas; rather, it is the complex forms of these mental phenomena which form the greater part of the content of consciousness, along with whatever one's current emotional state may be. Impressions cause ideas, and simple ideas exactly copy simple impressions.[6] This basic process works much the same way regarding complex impressions and their corresponding complex ideas, though with one important difference:

> I perceive, therefore, that tho' there is in general a great resemblance betwixt our complex impressions and ideas, yet the rule is not universally true, that they are exact copies of each other.[7]

The degree of resemblance between seeing the color red, and after closing our eyes, thinking of the color of red is

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3 Hume, Treatise, p. 1

4 Ibid., p. 7

5 Ibid., pp. 275-6

6 Ibid., pp. 4-5

7 Ibid., p. 3

quite high. To perform this experiment with even a moderately detailed painting though, produces results of a much lower order. And it is not only memory which allows the purposeful generation of complex ideas; imagination also plays an equally important role.

Memory and imagination allow us to reproduce previous impressions in the form of ideas, and just like impressions and ideas, they are primarily differentiated by the force and vivacity by which they are experienced, or present their products to consciousness.[8] There is a quality, a sense of affirmation, a strength or liveliness which attends the recollection of my activities this morning, which is not present when I plan and imagine what I shall do tomorrow.

> 'Tis evident that the memory preserves the original form, in which its objects were presented, and that where-ever we depart from it in recollecting any thing, it proceeds from some defect or imperfection in that faculty.[9]

The imagination, on the other hand, unlike "the memory [which] is in a manner ty'd down...without any power of variation,"[10] possesses great power and freedom in the coupling, separation, and rearrangement of ideas, and humankind's many rich and varied mythologies well attest to this activity. But obviously thought for most people does not consist of one fantasy after another throughout the

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8 Hume, Treatise, pp. 8-9

9 Ibid., p. 9

10 Ibid., p. 9

course of a normal day's activities; and evidently enough regularity exists that we do in fact think in ways which resemble how it seems other people think as well. Also, except in cases where one is trying to sort out some complex problem, for example, thought seems generally to flow along in ways more unconscious or automatic than purposeful. Hume therefore argues for the existence of certain unifying principles which must be at work in giving to the imagination a direction and purpose which, alone, it would not normally possess.

> As all simple ideas may be separated by the imagination, and may be united again in what form it pleases, nothing wou'd be more unaccountable than the operations of that faculty, were it not guided by some universal principles, which render it, in some measure, uniform with itself in all times and places. Were ideas entirely loose and unconnected, chance alone wou'd join them; and 'tis impossible the same simple ideas should fall regularly into complex ones (as they commonly do) without some bond of union among them, some associating quality, by which one idea naturally introduces another.[11]

This "associating quality" which aids the imagination in its manipulation of ideas in ways which convincingly mask the inherent singularity of our perceptions, consists of what are referred to as relations.

Curiously, given the importance of relations to Hume's philosophy,[12] the section devoted to relations in the

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[11] Hume, Treatise, p. 10

[12] Norman Kemp Smith believes that Hume's greatest contribution is his theory of belief: "this new doctrine of belief [is] certainly one of the most essential, and perhaps the most characteristic doctrine in Hume's philosophy," "The Naturalism of Hume" Mind 54 (April 1905) p. 151. This is

Treatise is brief in the extreme, although considerable time is spent in Part 3 of Book 1 analyzing the important relation of cause and effect.[13] Human thought, as we know it, could not exist without relations:

> All kinds of reasoning consists in nothing but a comparison, and a discovery of those relations, either constant or inconstant, which two or more objects bear to each other. This comparison we may make, either when both the objects are present to the senses, or when neither of them is present, or when only one.[14]

"All kinds of reasoning" encompasses both the formal, as in pure logic and mathematics, and the informal, having to do with the common occurrences of daily life. Later, in the

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not Hume's own evaluation though: "if anything can entitle the author to so glorious a name as that of an inventor, 'tis the use he makes of the association of ideas, which enters into most of his philosophy" (Treatise, pp. 661-62). The "association of ideas" of which Hume speaks here, comprises the relations of resemblance, contiguity, and cause and effect. My point is that, in the end, Kemp Smith's contention is little different from Hume's original estimate; for Hume tells us "that all belief arises from the association of ideas, according to my hypothesis." Treatise, p. 112

13 David Armstrong in Universals: An Opinionated Introduction (Boulder: Westview Press, 1989), pp. 29-30, suggests that the brevity of Hume's account may be due to the tradition established by Aristotle of classifying relations as being at the bottom of the ontological scale. See Aristotle's The Metaphysics, translated by John H. McMahon (Buffalo: Prometheus Books, 1991) 1088[a]. Armstrong goes on to write:

> Philosophy has been a long time coming to grips with the category of relation....The categories of substance (thing) and attribute (property) are long established, but not so the category of relation. It is not until the late nineteenth and twentieth century with C. S. Peirce, William James, and Bertrand Russell that relations begin (no more than begin) to come into focus. p. 29

14 Hume, Treatise, p. 73

Enquiries, this distinction is reflected in Hume's categories of "Relations of Ideas, and Matters of Fact;"[15] but in the Treatise, Hume's sketch of our relational landscape takes the form of a differentiation between those relations which are natural, and those which are philosophical:

> The word Relation is commonly used in two senses considerably different from each other. Either for that quality, by which two ideas are connected together in the imagination, and the one naturally introduces the other, after the manner above-explained; or for that particular circumstance, in which, even upon the arbitrary union of two ideas in the fancy, we may think proper to compare them. In common language the former is always the sense, in which we use the word,relation; and 'tis only in philosophy, that we extend it to mean any particular subject of comparison, without a connecting principle.[16]

There are three natural relations, and Hume sees them as resulting from "original qualities of human nature"[17] viz., "Resemblance, Contiguity in time and place, and Cause and Effect."[18] Thus, the natural relations are seen as evidencing the biological prerequisites necessary for us to extend our proclivity to compare into every corner of human experience. The philosophical relations are seven in number: resemblance, identity, space and time, quantity or number, quality, contrariety, and cause and effect.[19] It will be

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[15] Hume, Enquiries Concerning Human Understanding and Concerning the Principles of Morals, 3rd ed., ed., P. H. Nidditch (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975), p. 25

[16] Hume, Treatise, p. 15-16

[17] Ibid., p. 13

[18] Ibid., p. 11. These three relations form the basis of what was referred to during the late nineteenth and early twentieth century as the "laws of association." Prominent associationists of this period were John Stuart Mill (1806-1873) and Alexander Bain (1818-1903).

[19] Ibid., pp. 14-15, There has been some debate during the

noticed that the relations of resemblance and cause and effect appear in both lists. This is because Hume sees resemblance as being in some degree "necessary to all philosophical relation,"[20] while on the other hand, "causation is the most extensive" and important of all the relations:[21]

> And indeed there is nothing existent, either externally or internally, which is not to be consider'd either as a cause or an effect; tho' 'tis plain there is no one quality, which universally belongs to all beings, and gives them a title to that denomination.[22]

The philosophical relations are divided into two groups with respect to their ability to either serve as "the objects of knowledge and certainty,"[23] or not. The first group have to do only with the intrinsic characteristics of ideas themselves, and are "resemblance, contrariety, degrees in quality, and proportions in quantity or number."[24] Such relations as these are intuitively or demonstrably ascertained, while those in the second group, identity, relations of time and place and causation, are dependent on memory and experience.[25] Let us now bring this

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last 200 years as to the adequacy of Hume's list of philosophical relations. Today, rather than compiling various lists, most simply refer to all relations as being philosophical in nature. Armstrong, in Universals, believes that given the topic, Hume's list is probably as adequate as any could be. p. 29

20 Hume, Treatise, p. 14

21 Ibid., p. 12

22 Ibid., p. 75

23 Ibid., p. 70

24 Ibid., p. 70

25 Ibid., pp. 69-70

sketch of several of Hume's first principles into focus by considering what I take to be the mandate of empiricism as expressed in Hume's introduction to the Treatise.

In Hume's day, as in our own, the various sciences were progressing with great rapidity. Hume felt that above all else what was lacking was a foundation more secure than had been supplied by either the rationalism of the scholastic doctors, or the theologian's appeal to authority. He would supply this foundation, and it would take the form of a "science of man," i.e., a science of human nature. Simply put, it is always "we" who know, so it is with human nature that we begin. Hume wastes no time in informing us what are to be the guiding principles of this new science:

> And as the science of man is the only solid foundation for the other sciences, so the only solid foundation we can give to the science itself must be laid on experience and observation.[26]

This is again emphasized when he speaks of both "the schools of the philosophers" and "all the sciences:" "None of them can go beyond experience, or establish any principles which are not founded on that authority."[27] And finally, a passage which summarizes the preceding, while also pointing us in the direction of our eventual consideration of the relations between the members of a community, is the following:

> We must therefore glean up our experiments in this

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[26] Hume, Treatise, p. xvi

[27] Ibid., p. xvii

> science from a cautious observation of human life, and take them as they appear in the common course of the world, by men's behaviour in company, in affairs, and in their pleasures. Where experiments of this kind are judiciously collected and compared, we may hope to establish on them a science, which will not be inferior in certainty, and will be much superior in utility to any other of human comprehension.[28]

For Hume, reason in its strict sense can tell us nothing about the real world; its operations within the realm of "relations of ideas" drastically limits its sphere of influence. The final court of appeal is human experience, in all its rich diversity. And this I take to be the mandate of empiricism.

It is now only natural to enquire how fully Hume follows his own recommendations. Regarding the "spirit of the law" so to speak, most would agree that Hume attempts to follow his own injunctions; but as to the "letter of the law," many see Hume as having drifted from the path on a number of important issues. And for James, this applies to Hume's treatment of relations in particular. Let us first, though, look at the two primary elements of consciousness: impressions and ideas.

If our appeals are to be to experience, from what experience are these elements derived? Can they be, for example, confirmed by demonstrations, proofs, or probabilities as we are advised by Hume to consider when evaluating any argument?[29] I think not. It would seem that Hume

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[28] Hume, Treatise, p. xix. In these passages Hume is of course not thinking of either pure logic or mathematics.

[29] Hume, Enquiries, p. 56. See Hume's footnote.

himself provides a priori definitions of impressions and ideas. And thus, the first principles which subsequently follow, should be seen as being merely derivations from definitions. Interestingly, Hume warns us against the occurrence of this very situation:

> If we reason a priori, anything may appear able to produce anything. The falling of a pebble may, for aught we know, extinguish the sun; or the wish of a man control the planets in their orbits.[30]

And in a more vigorous passage he exhorts us:

> When we run over libraries, persuaded of these principles, what havoc must we make? If we take in our hand any volume; of divinity or school metaphysics, for instance; let us ask, Does it contain any abstract reasoning concerning quantity or number? No. Does it contain any experimental reasoning concerning matter of fact and existence? No. Commit it then to the flames: for it can contain nothing but sophistry and illusion.[31]

In these passages Hume could be seen as actually condemning his own practices, though he is more than likely referring to the medieval schoolmen and their philosophical descendants. Still, I think most will agree that he gives a measure of reality to impressions and ideas which he refuses to extend to any relation other than the three associative relations. Fraser Cowley writes:

> It is because the doctrine of impressions and ideas is not regarded as a hypothesis but self-evident, that it is never fully formulated and always remains radically obscure and ambiguous.[32]

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[30] Hume, Enquiries, p. 164. This passage concerns cause and effect, though we should remember that impressions cause ideas.

[31] Ibid., p. 165

[32] Fraser Cowley, A Critique of British Empiricism (New York: ST Martin's Press, 1968), p. 12

Common sense, though, seems to confirm to all of us that we really do have all sorts of relational ideas every day of our lives, and indeed, would not experience the world as we do unless they were also a valid and integral part of that self-same experience. T. H. Green, in his famous introduction to the Treatise calls Hume's copy theory of ideas into question, and in so doing, clearly states the problem:

> The question, then, that he had to deal with was, to what impressions he could reduce those conceptions of relation--of cause and effect, substance and attribute, and identity--which all knowledge involves.[33]

Hume does not dodge the question raised by Green, and informs us what he likewise believes logically follows from it:

> All events seem entirely loose and separate. One event follows another; but we never can observe any tie between them. They seem conjoined, but never connected. And as we can have no idea of any thing which never appeared to our outward sense or inward sentiment, the necessary conclusion seems to be that we have no idea of connexion or power at all, and that these words are absolutely without any meaning, when employed either in philosophical reasonings or common life.[34]

The preceding remarks would seem to settle the question, at least as far as Hume is concerned, once and for all; but Hume sees that such scepticism must be moderated, and in the very next section he tells us: "But there still remains one method of avoiding this conclusion, and one source which we have not yet examined."[35] Hume's solution

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[33] David Hume, A Treatise of Human Nature, and Dialouges Concerning Natural Religion, 3 vols, eds. T. H. Green, T. H. Grose, new edn. revised by T. H. Grose (London: Longmans Green, and Co, 1878), 1, p. 162

[34] Hume, Enquiries, p. 74

[35] Ibid., p. 74

harkens back to the introduction of the Treatise, for the "source" of which he speaks is experience.[36] But it is not to the common-sense supposition of experienced relations to which he appeals; it is to our experience of constant conjunction and feeling.

> [A]fter a repetition of similar instances, the mind is carried by habit, upon the appearance of one event, to expect its usual attendant, and to believe that it will exist. This connexion, therefore, which we feel in the mind, this customary transition of the imagination from one object to its usual attendant, is the sentiment or impression from which we form the idea of power or necessary connexion...What alteration has happened to give rise to this new idea of connexion? Nothing but that he now feels these events to be connected in his imagination...When we say, therefore, that one object is connected with another, we mean only that they have acquired a connexion in our thought...[37]

Evidently then, our experience of relations is really only a fiction, for all that is ever involved is the experience of constant conjunction, and the experience of a certain feeling. The idea we have of connection is a copy of an impression arising from these easy transitions of the imagination. Indeed, Hume confirms that "This easy transition is the effect, or rather essence of relation..."[38] What then do we have? And what is the true import of this somewhat mysterious feeling mentioned by Hume? Both questions can be answered by one word: belief.

Hume categorizes belief as

something felt by the mind, which distinguishes the

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36 Hume, Treatise, p. xvi

37 Hume, Enquiries, pp. 75-76

38 Hume, Treatise, p. 220

> the ideas of the judgement from the fictions of the imagination. It gives them more force and influence; makes them appear of greater importance; infixes them in the mind; and renders them the governing principles of all our actions.[40]

Hume is obviously convinced that real belief can not be turned off and on like a water faucet, especially if it has the importance which the last line of the above quote implies. But belief should not be thought of as merely the addition of some new idea to the idea under consideration either.

> But I go farther; and not content with asserting, that the conception of the existence of any object is no addition to the simple conception of it, I likewise maintain, that the belief of the existence joins no new ideas to those, which compose the idea of the object. When I think of God, when I think of him as existent, and when I believe him to be existent, my idea of him neither encreases nor diminishes.[41]

This characterization of belief as a certain way of conceiving ideas is held to throughout Hume's treatment: "belief is nothing but a more vivid, lively, forcible, firm, steady conception of an object, than what the imagination alone is ever able to attain."[42] Any impression can communicate a portion of its "force and vivacity" to a related idea, and this is what occurs in the case of belief.[43] The importance of belief to our apprehension of relations is thus way out of proportion to Hume's simple, almost naive account of it, for in the end it is only "a

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40 Hume, Treatise, p. 629

41 Ibid., p. 94

42 Hume, Enquiries, p. 49

43 Hume, Treatise, p. 98

lively idea related to a present impression..."[44]

Belief, then, is Hume's heroic solution to the problem of experienced relations. Working within the boundaries imposed upon him by the empiricism of Locke and Berkeley in general, and the theory of ideas in particular, this result should not seem surprising. Even so, many philosophers have seen Hume's solution as ultimately doing little to successfully resolve the scepticism inherent in the theory of ideas. Thomas Reid (1710-1796) gives this colorful judgement:

> The theory of ideas, like the Trojan horse, had a specious appearance both of innocence and beauty; but if those philosophers had known that it carried in its belly death and destruction to all science and common sense, they would not have broken down their walls to give it admittance.[45]

Hume's philosophy, though a brilliant beginning, ultimately fails by being insufficiently empirical. Hume seeks to base his philosophy on an unswerving appeal to experience; yet the a priori elements of impressions and ideas force him into an erroneous view of experience which is both fragmented and deficient. Sadly, this has caused Hume's philosophy to gravitate back and forth between common sense and scepticism to this day.

For much of James' philosophy, this is the point at which he begins. He feels Hume's philosophy can be

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[44] Hume, Treatise, p. 98

[45] Thomas Reid, Inquiry and Essays (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Co., Inc., 1983), p. 61

corrected; whereas Kant's, for example, can not. This being the case, Ralph Barton Perry makes this observation:

> The key to James' relations with Hume is to be found in the fact that he studied him in the edition by Green and Grose; and approached the text of the Treatise by way of Green's famous 'Introduction,' in which Hume was charged with a failure to provide for relations.[46]

James is in agreement with Green's initial evaluation of the problem, but is just as quick to bemoan his rationalistic solution:

> Green more than any one realized that Knowledge about things was knowledge of their relations; but nothing could persuade him that our sensational life could contain any relational element. He followed the strict intellectualist method with sensations. What they are not defined as including, they must exclude. Sensations are not defined as relations, so in the end Green thought that they could get related together only by the action on them from above of a 'self-distinguishing' absolute and eternal mind, present to that which is related, but not related itself.[47]

Neither the terms of experience, nor the relations which connect them, stand in any need of transcendental support. Also, belief, though important, need not be made to bear the whole burden of experienced relations. James' empiricism offers another solution; and it does so by simply being consistent, and therefore, "radical."

> Every examiner of the sensible life in concreto must see that relations of every sort, of time, space, difference, likeness, change, rate, cause, or what not, are just as integral members of the sensational flux as terms are, and that conjunctive relations are just as

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[46] Ralph Barton Perry, The Thought and Character of William James, 2 vols, (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, Publishers, 1974), 1, p. 551

[47] William James, A Pluralistic Universe (New York: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1909), p. 278

> true members of the flux as disjunctive relations are. This is what...I have called the 'radically empiricist' doctrine...[48]

Certainly constant conjunction and habit can and do engender feelings of reasonableness concerning the reality of connections, but this is not the only way this can occur, nor even the most important. Experience is not necessarily one of singularity--as the nominalism of classical empiricism encourages us to believe--we experience many things: various terms, various conjunctions and disjunctions, and at times, only chaos and confusion. In thus distinguishing himself from Hume, James' empiricism does does not begin by stipulating that experience must of necessity correspond to this or that a priori distinction. When we cut experience up into parts, or make distinctions, or evaluate it, or organize it, or whatever, it is for some purely "willful" human end, not because either brain physiology or the ultimate nature of reality has forced us to do so. James asks us to accept our experiences as they are initally given, or, as it were, at their "face value." And this means that regarding experience as such,

> [we] take it just as we feel it, and not to confuse ourselves with abstract talk <u>about</u> it, involving words that drive us to invent secondary conceptions in order to neutralize their suggestions and to make our actual experience again seem rationally possible.[49]

This does not mean that a given experience is therefore

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[48] James, <u>A Pluralistic Universe</u>, pp. 279-80

[49] William James, <u>Essays in Radical Empiricism</u> (New York: Longmans, Green and Co., 1922), pp. 48-49

necessarily true--only further experience can verify this--but it does mean that it is "real."[50] James is striving for a consistent empiricism. This allows him to remark that "we ought to say a feeling of and, a feeling of if, a feeling of but, and a feeling of by, quite as readily as we say a feeling of blue of a feeling of cold."[51]

As we see, James' radical empiricism is a return to, and continuation of, empiricism's original mandate; i.e., the uncompromising appeal to human experience in all its richness and diversity, accepting everything, rejecting nothing. And the cornerstone of radical empiricism is James' theory of relations. It is this, as we shall see in the next chapter, which allows him to affirm the reality of the relation of self. Thus, looking forward, we proceed from relations proper, to the relation of self, and hence, to the relation of selves known as the community.

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50 Sing-nan Fen, in "Has James Answered Hume?", The Journal of Philosophy, 49, (1952), p. 161, makes this same important distinction with respect to causal relations:

> It goes without saying that, to James, the "truth" of a specific causal relationship can not be verified by our feeling alone. However, the fact that we do have a direct feeling of causality is the most direct demonstration of the fact that causal relationship is "real," although it is not necessarily always "true."

Much of Fen's article, though brief, is an interesting attempt to apply James' theory of relations to a number of philosophy's thorniest issues.

51 William James, The Principles of Psychology, 2 vols, (New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1950), 1, pp. 245-46

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CHAPTER 2

THE RELATION OF SELF

Just as we can not speak of community without first giving an account of relations, it is likewise important that we give an account of the individual selves so related. I therefore proceed by exploring James' concept of the self.

As in the first chapter, we again begin with Hume. This is because it is primarily against the context of Hume's remarks concerning personal identity, that James' own notion of the self is developed. And in this light, it is interesting to note that Hume's treatment of the topic is not one with which even he is overly pleased. In his "Appendix" to the Treatise, he addresses this issue.

> But upon a more strict review of the section concerning personal identity, I find myself involv'd in such a labyrinth, that, I must confess, I neither know how to correct my former opinions, nor how to render them consistent.[1]

Evidently then, Humes wishes his remarks on personal identity to be seen as somewhat provisional, and considering he chooses to say nothing at all on the subject in the Enquiries, we may safely conclude that this was his position to the end. Nevertheless, his treatment of the self remains a powerful force within the philosophy of mind to

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[1] Hume, Treatise, p. 633

this day.

Hume agrees that for most people the existence of the self, and its continuance through time, is a commonplace. We seem to possess complete assurance in this matter, our conviction approaching a level of certainty usually reserved only for the demonstrations of logic or mathematics. But upon what evidence are such strong beliefs based? Hume searches for this evidence in the same way as he did regarding the status of relations, in our first chapter. There, we saw him concerned as to which impression our idea of relation or connection is a copy, and he asks of the self the same question:

> from what impression cou'd this idea be deriv'd?...'tis a question, which must necessarily be answer'd, if we wou'd have the idea of the self pass for clear and intelligible. It must be some one impression, that gives rise to every real idea.[2]

Hume takes a partial survey of his own stock of impressions, and reports upon what he finds:

> For my part, when I enter most intimately into what I call myself, I always stumble on some particular perception or other, of heat or cold, light or shade, love or hatred, pain or pleasure.[3]

Hume does not find any one impression which corresponds to the idea of the self as something simple, and maintaining its identity through time. And since every "real idea" is copied from an impression, we have no "real idea" of the self. The evidence points in only one direction, viz., that

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2 Hume, Treatise, p. 251

3 Ibid., p. 252

we "...are nothing but a bundle or collection of different perceptions, which succeed each other with an inconceivable rapidity, and are in a perpetual flux and movement."[4]

Although Hume views the terms mind and self as being roughly interchangeable, we might be tempted to substitute the concept of mind in place of the self in the hope of avoiding at least some of Hume's objections. And Hume does go so far as to compare the mind to a theatre, where perceptions, like the actors, come and go, reappear, mingle, and separate again.[5] But he just as quickly warns against stretching the analogy too far; the mind's ontological status is no different than that of the self, and the arguments used against the reality of the self, apply equally to the mind.

> I desire those philosophers, who pretend that we have an idea of the substance of our minds, to point out the impression that produces it, and tell distinctly after what manner that impression operates, and from what object it is deriv'd.[6]

We will have no more success here, than we did with respect to the self: "They are the successive perceptions only, that constitute the mind...."[7] Thus, whether we speak of the self, the mind, or even of substance in general, all are open to the same objection. But we should consider that our perceptions have no need of any substance for their

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4 Hume, Treatise, p. 253

5 Ibid., p. 253

6 Ibid., p. 233

7 Ibid., p. 253

support in the first place. They need nothing in which to inhere:

> since all our perceptions are different from each other, and from every thing else in the universe, they are also distinct and separable, and may be consider'd as separately existent, and may exist separately, and have no need of any thing else to support their existence.[8]

Indeed, given the nature of our perceptions, and defining substance as "...something, that can exist by itself, 'tis evident every perception is a substance, and every distinct part of a perception a distinct substance...."[9]

Why, then, this great propensity to ascribe unity to to diversity? Why do we insist on giving identity to that which has none? Again, much of the answer was given in the first chapter. Recall what occurs during a single instance of cause and effect. There, a close relation between two terms allows for an easy transition by the imagination from one to another. So effortlessly does this transition take place, that we come to believe that an actual connection exists, where there is none; we have confused connection with conjunction. In the case of personal identity, though, we have moved from the consideration of one conjunction, to an entire series of successive conjunctions, but the same associative principles are still at work.

> 'Tis, therefore, on some of these three relations of resemblance, contiguity and causation, that identity depends; and as the very essence of these relations

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8 Hume, Treatise, p. 233

9 Ibid., p. 244

consists in their producing an easy transition of ideas; it follows, that our notions of personal identity, proceed entirely from the smooth and uninterrupted progress of the thought along a train of connected ideas....[10]

The identity which we attribute to our changing perceptions depends upon these principles of association, but what is the exact nature of this "progress of thought" which is so important to the emergence of the self? It is obviously more than just the imagination at work. It it true, the imagination can join together any two ideas, and association does lend to its activities a certain uniformity and direction; but without a process of thought which is both remembering and selective, there can be no access to those perceptions which are past, and upon which so much of selfhood depends. This important task is carried out by the faculty of memory.

> As memory alone acquaints us with the continuance and extent of this succession of perceptions, 'tis to be consider'd, upon that account chiefly, as the source of personal identity. Had we no memory, we never shou'd have any notion of causation, nor consequently of that chain of causes and effects, which constitute our self or person....therefore, memory does not so much <u>produce</u> as <u>discover</u> personal identity, by shewing us the relation of cause and effect among our different perceptions.[11]

And so, in the case of personal idently, we are likewise guilty of confusing connection with conjunction, but more importantly still, we have "...confound[ed] identity with relation...."[12] This is a propensity which is both strong

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10 Hume, <u>Treatise</u>, p. 260

11 Ibid., pp. 261-62

12 Ibid., p. 254

and pervasive; it is one from which we are not easily dissuaded. Philosophical analysis reveals our mistake, but this can not be maintained for long. We soon lapse into the old, well-worn channels of thought, and the comfortable fiction of the self is back with us again.[13]

James praises the ground-breaking work done by Hume and subsequent associationists. And it is done in such a way as to immediately inform us what his initial presuppositions concerning the self are, and how he plans to proceed.

> it is to the imperishable glory of Hume and Herbart and their successors to have taken so much of the meaning of personal identity out of the clouds and made of the Self an empirical and verifiable thing.
>
> But in leaving the matter here, and saying that this sum of passing things is all, these writers have neglected certain more subtle aspects of the Unity of Consciousness....[14]

As Hume and others have shown, the self is something which is found in experience, and can be verified by all who choose to do so. It is not the existence of the self which is in question; it is its nature which stands in need of clarification. Introspection and direct observation are the tools which are used.[15] As we look inwards, we find many

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[13] Hume, Treatise, p. 254

[14] James, Principles, 1, p. 336

[15] A word on James' use of introspection is called for. Myers refers to James as "one of the last major introspective psychologists prior to the behaviorist take-over." Gerald E. Myers, "Pragmatism and Introspective Psychology" in The Cambridge Companion to William James, ed., Ruth Anna Putnam (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1997), p. 11. James' first important discussion of introspection, and of the failings of its early practitioners, is his article "On Some Omissions of Introspective Psychology," Mind 9 (1884), pp. 1-26. There, the failure of Hume and

thoughts and feelings, and as we observe the behavior of others, and listen to their reports, we infer that they too find this to be the case. So far, so good; but Hume finds only bundles of perceptions, while James finds much more, viz., the "Unity of Consciousness."

James views Hume's conclusions as wrong primarily because the procedure used to arrive at them is completely backwards. We do not begin with mental atoms, or bits of consciousness, and by compounding them, arrive at the self. He writes:

> Most books start with sensations, as the simplest mental facts, and proceed synthetically, constructing each higher stage from those below it. But this is abandoning the empirical method of investigation. No one ever had a simple sensation by itself. Consciousness, from our natal day, is of a teeming multiplicity of objects and relations, and what we call simple sensations are results of discriminative attention, pushed often to a very high degree....[16] The universal conscious fact is not 'feelings and thoughts exist,' but 'I think' and 'I feel.' No psychology, at any rate, can question the existence of personal selves. The worst a psychology

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others to adequately deal with the empirical reality of felt relations, is discussed for the first time. The article reads like a table of contents for many of the themes later dealt with at much greater length in Principles. In the chapter "The Methods and Snares of Psychology," his "general conclusion [is] that introspection is difficult and fallible; and that the difficulty is simply that of all observation of whatever kind." 1, p. 191. James sees no need to abandon introspection simply because it is not infallible. Its results are to be evaluated just as we would do with respect to any method. And this takes the form of a "consensus of our farther knowledge about the thing in question, later views correcting earlier ones...." p. 192. James ends the chapter by advocating a plurality of methods: "introspection, experimentation, and comparison," p. 197

[16] James, Principles, 1, p. 224

can do is so to interpret the nature of these selves as to rob them of their worth.[17]

Every thought, every feeling, is personal. They do not fly about loose. They are always owned by someone. On an electrochemical level, it is certainly proper to think of our mental lives in terms of this or that neuron or synapse, this charge or that charge, this chemical or that chemical; but just as no compounding of disconnected neurons, electrical charges, and chemicals ever produces a brain, no compounding or bundling of disconnected ideas ever produces awareness. A bundle of disconnected ideas is no thought at all, it is just a bundle. And so, such a priori distinctions as impressions and ideas are always "after the fact." They are the result of specific activities engaged in for specific purposes. They are not what anyone ever finds naturally given in experience.[18]

Why, then, was the original mandate of empiricism so quickly set aside in favor of the metaphysical constructs and principles of the theory of ideas? What was it about the theory of ideas which made it so attractive? The answer is to be found in the early empiricist's infatuation with, and emulation of, science and scientific method. Now, James holds that the essential feature of science is its reductionism.

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17 James, Principles, 1, p. 226

18 For more on the compounding of consciousness, see Principles, 1, pp. 158-162. Also, James' A Pluralistic Universe, pp. 181-221.

> The aim of science is always to reduce complexity to simplicity; and in psychological science we have the celebrated 'theory of ideas' which, admitting the great difference among each other of what may be called concrete conditions of mind, seeks to show how this is all the resultant effect of variations in the combination of certain simple elements of consciousness that always remain the same. These mental atoms or molecules are what Locke called 'simple ideas.'[19]

From the earliest days of Greek science to modern times, science has always sought to reduce the apparent chaos and confusion of the natural world to the simplicity and order to be found in the fewest possible number of general principles, and for Locke, Hume, and others, philosophy could do no better.[20] Science's nominalistic attitude, and empiricism, were, thus, early partners, but it was a collaboration which, though entered into with the best intentions, could only end in scepticism; for now, we are unable to speak of the self or ego without first engaging in empiricism's typical method of nominalistic reductionism, in this case, the felt need to reduce to order the present thought. The present thought's apparent unity and completeness is illusionary; it is really a compound of many bits and pieces, often chaotic. A reduction or

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19 James, Principles, 1, p. 230

20 See Edwin A. Burtt, The Metaphysical Foundations of Modern Physical Science, rev. ed. (Atlantic Highlands, New Jersey: Humanities Press, 1992), p. 34. Here, he writes:

> In these circumstances it is easy to understand how modern philosophy might have been led into certain puzzles....a penetrating study of post-Newtonian philosophers quickly reveals the fact that they were philosophizing quite definitely in the light of his [Newton's] achievements, and with his metaphysics especially in mind.

dissection must be performed before we can hope to arrive at the true nature of the self. The result is an easily studied and manipulated handful of elements, principles, and distinctions which can then only be reassembled by the addition of more of the same; e.g., various faculties of consciousness. But in our attempt to describe the self, no such reduction need be made. "What we see," is not only "what we get" it is also all there is to get.

> Our Thought is not composed of parts, however so composed its objects may be. There is no originally chaotic manifold in it to be reduced to order....If we are to have a dualism of Thought and Reality at all, the multiplicity should be lodged in the latter and not in the former member of the couple of related terms. The parts and their relations surely belong less to the knower than to what is known.[21]

Let us return to, and amplify, James' statement of a moment ago that the self is both "empirical and verifiable." Insofar as we can say that we have any knowledge of feelings at all, we can also say we have knowledge of self, because, as James is anxious to make clear, the experience of self is one which is felt.

> It may be all that Transcendentalists say it is, and all that Empiricists say it is into the bargin, but it is at any rate no <u>mere ens rationis</u>, cognized only in an intellectual way, and no <u>mere</u> summation of memories or <u>mere</u> sound of a word in our ears. It is something with which we also have direct sensible acquaintance, and which is as fully present at any moment of consciousness in which it <u>is</u> present, as in a whole lifetime of such moments....in the stream of consciousness it never...[is] found all alone. But when it is found, it is <u>felt</u>; just as the body is felt....[22]

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[21] James, <u>Principles</u>, 1, p. 363

[22] Ibid., pp. 298-99

Hume was one of the first to call the attention of philosophy back to the importance which our sentiments must have in any account of experience, when he proclaimed that the basis of all morality was sentiment, rather than reason. This notion of the readmission of the vague back into philosophy, is an important issue for James also: "It is, in short, the re-instatement of the vague to its proper place in our mental life which I am so anxious to press on the attention."[23] Feelings are hard to quantify, and science, with its nominalism, has always been uneasy as to how to deal with them. James' plea for philosophy though, is that, if it is to be thoroughly empirical, we can ill afford to ignore or reject whole areas of experience simply because they are imprecise, indistinct, and not easily conceptualized. And again, concepts are always "after the fact." They are things which we "do" to experience, rather than find "in" experience, though this distinction often becomes lost in the process of trying to understand what we have described. In the posthumously published work Some Problems of Philosophy, James addresses the distinction between perception and conception at length.

> Whenever we conceive a thing we define it; and if we still don't understand, we define our definition.... This habit of telling what everything is becomes inveterate. The farther we push it, the more we learn about our subject of discourse, and we end by thinking that knowing the latter always consists in getting farther and farther away from the perceptual type of

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23 James, Principles, 1, p. 254

> experience. This uncriticized habit, added to the intrinsic charm of the conceptual form, is the source of 'intellectualism' in philosophy.[24]

James goes on to propose a pragmatic resolution of the tension which exists between our percepts and concepts.

> Since it is only the conceptual form which forces the dialectic contradictions upon the innocent sensible reality, the remedy would seem to be simple. Use concepts when they help, and drop them when they hinder understanding; and take reality bodily and integrally up into philosophy in exactly the perceptual shape in which it comes. The aboriginal flow of feeling sins only by a quantitative defect.[25]

The self is felt, and therefore empirical and verifiable in that sense. Our descriptions of it will employ those concepts found to be useful to this end. So, of what does the feeling of self consist? James warns us that his description is, after all, only of himself. We should not expect it to apply to everyone in every detail; but he evidently believes enough commonalities do exist to the extent that his findings can be fruitfully discussed, and from them, a general account given of how others likewise experience selfhood. Introspection reveals much activity.

> A constant play of furtherances and hindrances in my thinking, of checks and releases, tendencies which run the other way....welcoming or opposing, appropriating or disowning, striving with or against, saying yes or no.[26]

Such activities are felt. And almost all attempts to describe them in more detail, simply end up as a

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[24] William James, Some Problems of Philosophy: A Beginning of an Introduction to Philosophy (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1948), p. 83

[25] Ibid., p. 95

[26] James, Principles, 1, p. 299

description of this or that feeling. Introspections of this sort are difficult, and often "all [James]...can ever feel distinctly is some bodily process, for the most part taking place within the head."[27] Other "head-feelings" are those associated with the eyeballs, eyelids, brows, and throat.[28] Sometimes "head-feelings" get "swallowed up" by feelings pouring in from other parts of the body.[29] James does not wish to say that this is all the feeling of self consists of, but this is that of which he is "most distinctly aware."[30]

An important part of the experience of self is, therefore, this largely undifferentiated mass of bodily feelings. James also discerns another feeling often reported upon, "an obscurer feeling of something more...."[31] Is this finally the feeling of thought viewing itself, or the true essence of the pronouns "I" or "me?" James has no definite answer, but wishes to keep the question open.[32] How, then, do all of these feelings, thoughts, and sensations get sorted out, claimed, and ultimately identified as me and mine? It is not by way of the soul, it is not due to the Humean faculties of consciousness, nor the transcendent arch-ego of the rationalists. None of the

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27 James, Principles, 1, p. 300
28 Ibid., pp. 300-301
29 Ibid., p. 301
30 Ibid., p. 301
31 Ibid., p. 305
32 Ibid., p. 305

above can actually be found in experience, and in the end, must be seen for the a priori creations that they are. Still, "common-sense insists, there must be a real proprietor" if our notions of personal identity are to have any real meaning.[33] James' answer will not please those seeking more than what is already given in experience, for the "proprietor" is none other than the present thinking thought: "The passing Thought then seems to be the Thinker...."[34] How can personal identity exhibit the unity which is its hallmark if this is actually the case? James offers the analogy of a herdsman and his herd. "The beasts stick together by sticking severally to him."[35] This "herdsman" or "proprietor" is

> the real, present onlooking, remembering, 'judging thought' or identifying 'section' of the stream. This is what collects, 'owns' some of the past facts which it surveys, and disowns the rest,--and so makes a unity that is actualized and anchored and does not merely float in the blue air of possibility. And the reality of such pulses of thought, with their function of knowing, it will be remembered that we did not seek to deduce or explain, but simply assumed them as the ultimate kind of fact that the psychologist must admit to exist.[36]

In associationism, all the thoughts and feelings simply get gummed together of their own accord. James, on the other hand, sees the present passing thought's ability to "appropriate," or, as it were, to make judgements and choices in

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33 James, Principles, 1, p. 337

34 Ibid., p. 342

35 Ibid., p. 337

36 Ibid., p. 338

light of the felt warmth, intimacy, and continuity of other thoughts and feelings, as constituting the real and verifiable unity of the self.[37] In Principles, James struggles to keep his metaphysics to a minimum;[38] therefore, the special attributes of this "pulse of thought...[or] vehicle of the judgement of identity,"[39] required for all of this to actually be the case, are, again, simply assumed.

> One must beg memory, knowledge on the part of the feelings of something outside themselves. That granted, every other true thing follows naturally, and it is hard to go astray. The knowledge the present feeling has of the past ones is a real tie between them, so is their resemblance; so is their continuity; so is the one's 'appropriation' of the other: all are real ties, realized in the judging Thought of every moment....The way in which the present Thought appropriates the past is a real way, so long as no other owner appropriates it in a more real way, and so long as the Thought has no grounds for repudiating it stronger than those which lead to its appropriation.[40]

As we have seen, the experience of self, or the feeling of self, is the feeling of relations. It is the feeling of things related, and of things being related. Considerations such as these lead James to refer to the "self-relation" as the "most intimate of all conjunctive relations...."[41]

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37 For more on James' notion of "appropriation," see Principles, 1, pp. 340-42.

38 James writes:
> as psychologists, we need not be metaphysical at all. The phenomena are enough, the passing thought itself is the only verifiable thinker, and its empirical connection with the brain-process is the ultimate known law.

Ibid., p. 346

39 Ibid., p. 337

40 Ibid., pp. 359-60

41 James, Essays in Radical Empiricism, pp. 46-52

Graham Bird writes that

> James's account of the self is the most obvious illustration of a conjunctive relation, and so of the traditional empiricist failure to admit such relations among the basic contents of experience.[42]

And if "Knowledge about a thing is knowledge of its relations.,"[43] may we not then say that in this context we definitely possess knowledge of self? But in the day-to-day business of living life in a world full of people, what form does such knowledge take, i.e., which concept of self are we most likely to really use? The rather technical one just recounted, or another? I think, another. And it is in this light, I believe, that James has provided us with what I see as a second account of the self. I refer to this second set of supplemental descriptions of the experience of self, as James' narrative concept of selfhood.[44] And by

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42 Graham Bird, William James: The Arguments of the Philosophers, ed., Ted Honderich (London and New York: Rouledge and Kegan Paul, 1986), p. 77

43 James, Principles, 1, p. 259

44 Recently, several philosophers have writen on the narrative concept of selfhood. Donald Livingston detects the concept of narrative in Hume, in Hume's Philosophy of Common Life, (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1984), pp. 115-149, 247-52. Alasdair MacIntyre, in After Virtue: A Study in Moral Theory, 2d ed. (Notre Dame: Univ. of Notre Dame Press, 1984), writes that

> Empiricists, such as Locke or Hume, tried to give an account of personal identity solely in terms of psychological states or events. Analytical philosophers, in so many ways their heirs as well as their critics, have wrestled with the connection between those states and events and strict identity understood in terms of Leibniz's Law. Both have failed to see that a background has been omitted, the lack of which makes the problems insoluble. That background is provided by the concept of a story and of that kind of unity of character which a story requires. p. 217

this, I simply mean that, for James, a large part of the experience of self consists of seeing ourselves, and how we relate to others and the world, in terms of narratives.

To begin, though the narrative concept of self is certainly a more general, or informal, perspective on the issue, I do not believe that it should therefore be relagated to the status of a Jamesean philosophical

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Charles Taylor, in Sources of the Self: The Making of the Modern Identity (Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 1989), writes

> Here we connect up with another inescapable feature of human life. I have been arguing that in order to make minimal sense of our lives, in order to have an identity, we need an orientation to the good, which means some sense of qualitative discrimination, of the incomparably higher. Now we see that this sense of the good has to be woven into my understanding of my life as an unfolding story. But this is to state another basic condition of making sense of ourselves, that we grasp our lives in a narrative....It has often been remarked that making sense of one's life as a story is also, like orientation to the good, not an optional extra; that our lives exist also in this space of questions, which only a coherent narrative can answer. In order to have a sense of who we are, we have to have a notion of how we have become, and of where we are going. p. 47

Barbara Hardy approaches the concept of narrative from the more traditional direction of the philosophy of literature, in her book Tellers and Listeners: The Narrative Imagination (London: Athlone Press, 1975) A good example of Hardy's view is the following:

> Nature, not art, makes us all story-tellers. Daily and nightly we devise fictions and chronicles, calling some of them nightmares, some of them truths, records, reports, and plans. Some of them we call, or refuse to call, lies. Narrative imagination is a common human possession, differentiating us, as Isocrates insisted, from the animals, and enabling us to 'come together and make laws and invent arts.' p. vii

Even so, none of the above authors makes the connection between James and this approach.

after-thought. It is significant that when we consider James' metaphor of a "stream of thought," we also consider that any portion of the stream upon which we may choose to focus our attention, can be seen as having a past, present, and future: where it has been, where it is now, and where it is going.

> Every definite image in the mind is steeped and dyed in the free water that flows round it. With it goes the sense of its relations, near and remote, the dying echo of whence it came to us, the dawning sense of wither it is to lead.[45]

In this sense, then, we can say that the stream of thought itself exhibits a basically narrative form, which is reinforced by the fact that every one of its many constituents is likewise so constituted. "The tiniest feeling that we can possibly have comes with an earlier and a later part and with a sense of their continuous procession."[46] This reflection, by both the stream and those parts of it which we isolate, of narrative form, is consequently, not an option; it is not, for example, artistic and therefore artificial or contrived. It is a fact of the human psyche. James quotes with approbation from William Clifford's Lectures and Essays.

> No one can tell by examining a piece of gold how often it has been melted and cooled in geologic ages, or even in the last year by the hand of man. Anyone who cuts down an oak can tell by the rings in its trunk how many times summer has warmed it into life. A living being must always contain within itself the history, not

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45 James, Principles, 1, p. 255

46 James, A Pluralistic Universe, p. 282

merely of its own existence, but of all its ancestors.[47]

The very "pulse of inner life," the nucleus of the self, displays these self-same characteristics.

> In the pulse of inner life immediately present now in each of us is a little past, a little future, a little awareness of our own body, of each other's persons, of these sublimities we are trying to talk about, of the earth's geography and the direction of history, of truth and error, of good and bad, and of who knows how much more? Feeling, however dimly and subconsciously, all these things, your pulse of inner life is continuous with them, belongs to them and they to it. You can't identify it with either one of them rather than with the others, for if you let it develop into no matter which of those directions, what it develops into will look back on it and say, 'That was the original germ of me.'[48]

James does not actually use the phrase "the narrative concept of self," though he does speak of "personal histories."

> Within each of our personal histories, subject, object, interest and purpose <u>are continuous or may be continuous</u>. Personal histories are processes of change in time, and <u>the change itself is one of the things immediately experienced</u>.[49]

Other designations which he uses are "aesthetic union," "a story," and "life-history."

> <u>Aesthetic union</u> among things also obtains, and is very analogous to teleological union. Things tell a story. Their parts hang together so as to work out a climax....Retrospectively, we can see that altho no definite purpose presided over a chain of events, yet the events fell into a dramatic form, with a start, a middle, and a finish. In point of fact all stories end

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47 William James, <u>The Will to Believe and Other Essays in Popular Philosophy</u> (New York: Longmans Green and Co., 1897), p. 231

48 James, <u>A Pluralistic Universe</u>, pp. 286-87

49 James, <u>Essays in Radical Empiricism</u>, p. 48

> ...The world is full of partial stories that run parallel to one another, beginning and ending at odd times. They mutually interlace and interfere at points, but we can not unify them completely in our minds. In following your life-history, I must turn my attention from my own.[50]

The relation of narrative, i.e., the relation of my past, to my present, to my future, is not identical to the relation of self, but is wholly embraced by it, and is its primary orientation. This situation flies in the face of most attempts at scientific reductionism, as it is extremely difficult to quantify a "biography."

> Psychologically considered, our experiences resist conceptual reduction, and our fields of consciousness, taken simply as such, remain just what they appear, even though facts of a molecular order should prove to be the signals of the appearance. Biography is the concrete form in which all that is is immediately given... Men of science and philosophy, the moment they forget their theoretic abstractions, live in their biographies as much as any one else....[51]

Let us return for a moment to the distinction which James makes between our percepts and concepts. To reiterate, percepts are simply the perceptions of our senses, while concepts are the "ideas or representations" thereof.[52] In our first acquaintance with this distinction, I focused on James' warning that the slavish worship of concepts, to the detriment of what is immediately given in experience, can result in a dangerous "intellectualism."[53] But I now want to also recall James' recommendation to this

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[50] William James, Pragmatism (Buffalo, New York: Prometheus Books, 1991), p. 64

[51] James, Some Problems of Philosophy, pp. 151-152

[52] Ibid., p. 47

[53] Ibid., p. 83

end: "Use concepts when they help, and drop them when they hinder understanding...."[54] Our concepts of narrative must also be evaluated by this injunction. So, how do they help? James asks us to consider: "Is not the sum of your actual experience taken at this moment and impartially added together an utter chaos?"[55]

> The real world as it is given objectively at this moment is the sum total of all its beings and events now. But can we think of such a sum? Can we realize for an instant what a cross-section of all existence at a definite point of time would be?...Does the contemporaneity of these events with one another and with a million others as disjointed, form a rational bond between them, and unite them into anything that means for us a world? Yet just such a collateral contemporaneity, and nothing else, is the real order of the world. It is an order with which we have nothing to do but to get away from it as fast as possible.[56]

If this is really the case, and it seems so more than ever, given the head-long rush of today's technology, any aid in helping to organize and deal with the mass of what is given, would be welcome. Indeed, it is a psycho-social necessity. How is it done? We do it the same way we have always done it: "we break it; we break it into histories, and we break it into arts, and we break it into sciences; and then we begin to feel at home."[57] In the early part of the chapter "The Consciousness of Self," in Principles, James makes a small concession to reductionism himself, when he divides the "history" of the self into four

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54 James, Some Problems of Philosophy, p. 95
55 James, The Will to Believe, p. 118
56 Ibid., pp. 118-119
57 Ibid., p. 119

"constituents:" "The materiel Self; The social Self; The spiritual Self; and The pure Ego."[58] The "material Self" has to do with the body, our possessions, and the practical aspects of life. The "social Self" is our response to other people, and all that that entails. The "spiritual Self" is the condition of subjectivity in us all; it is our mental lives as revealed to us by both introspection and retrospection. The "pure Ego" is the active principle of the "spiritual Self" it is the present passing "pulse of thought."[59] The notion of a narrative within a narrative is a useful concept here, and it certainly applies to the "social Self," of which, as James sees it, there are usually several coexisting together in one person.

> Practically [there] is a division of the man into several selves; and this may be a discordant splitting, as where one is afraid to let one set of his acquaintances know him as he is elsewhere; or it may be a perfectly harmonious division of labor, as where one tender to his children is stern to the soldiers or prisoners under his command.[60]

The nucleus of the self, the present passing thought, is the one real seat of personal identity, but the narrative of my life has many chapters, many facets. And the one which, at any one time, happens to be presented to the world, depends upon many factors. I shall discuss the four "constituents" of the self more fully in the next chapter. I wish, though, to briefly continue to pursue the question,

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58 James, Principles, 1, p. 292

59 Ibid., pp. 329-30

60 Ibid., p. 294

as to why such "breaks," or narratives, however many, are in use at all.

As James tells us, we use concepts to help us sort out and make sense of experience. The concept of narrative functions likewise. It functions pragmatically, in the original sense of that term. By which I mean, narratives aid us in the clarification of our ideas about who we are, and the actions we should take, given the situation at hand. If that situation happens to be the relation of a person to his or her future, certain fundamental conditions occur, for which the concept of narrative is best fitted regarding the subsequently successful resolution thereof. This is a stimulus-response situation which James views as having basic survival benefits for the individual. We should first of all consider that "there is one particular relation of greater practical importance than all the rest, --I mean the relation of a thing to its future consequences."[61] James is surprised that "the sense of futurity in the mind," given its constancy, has been so little explored and written about.[62] Consciousness is seldom if ever without some degree of expectancy.

> But in every novel or unclassified experience...we do not know what will come next; and novelty per se becomes a mental irritant, while custom per se is a mental sedative, merely because the one baffles while the other settles our expectations.[63]

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61 James, The Will to Believe, p. 77

62 Ibid., p. 77

63 Ibid., p. 78

The notion of seeing novelty, uncertainty, and doubt as a kind of "mental irritant" had previously been investigated by James' friend and colleague Charles Sanders Peirce, in his important essay "The Fixation of Belief."

> Doubt is an uneasy and dissatisfied state from which we struggle to free ourselves and pass into the state of belief; while the latter is a calm and satisfactory state which we do not wish to avoid, or to change to a belief in anything else....
>
> The irritation of doubt causes a struggle to attain a state of belief.[64]

James responds in a similar manner when he refers to the feelings associated with states of belief as "the sentiment of rationality." This is described as "A strong feeling of ease, peace, rest...The transition from a state of puzzle and perplexity to rational comprehension is full of lively relief and pleasure."[65] Whether we speak of the products of reason or of our "natural beliefs," the feelings involved, and their positive effects, are much the same. James gives two examples of how "the sentiment of rationality" has been achieved in philosophy. "Spinoza...[effected the] union of all things in one substance...Hume [saw the]...'looseness

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64 Charles Sanders Peirce, "The Fixation of Belief" in The Essential Peirce: Selected Philosophical Writings, Volume 1 (1867-1893) eds., Nathan Houser and Christian Kloesel (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana Univ. Press, 1992), p. 114 Also of interest should be Alexander Bain's chapter on belief in his The Emotions and the Will, 4th ed., (London: John W. Parker and Son, 1899), pp. 505-38 These and related issues are discussed by Max H. Fisch in his essay "Alexander Bain and the Genealogy of Pragmatism" in Peirce, Semeiotic, and Pragmatism: Essays by Max H. Fisch, eds., Kenneth Laine Ketner and Christian J. W. Kloesel (Bloomington: Indiana Univ. Press, 1986)

65 James, The Will to Believe, p. 63

and separateness' of everything...."[66] Two different ways of viewing reality, but each creating within their proponents these same salutary feelings. On a more practical level, these same effects are achieved through our use of narratives. This is a practical use of reason by us which we use to turn from the irritation and pain often generated by chaos, doubt, and indecision, to the calmness and satisfaction which we generally associate with order, simplicity, and direction. Narratives allow for the creation and maintenance of habits and customs, without which we could neither function nor act. Bain, Peirce, and James all stress that what a man or woman believes, they will act upon.[67] Narratives exemplify belief-systems which help initiate and guide our choices and actions, both now and in the future. The narrative concept of selfhood is the understanding of my life as an unfolding story; but as a way of structuring experience, it is not entirely the result of my own initiative, for, it seems, we can not but respond to experience in this manner. For again, "Biography is the concrete form in which all that is is immediately given...."[68] I now pass from the relation of self, to the relation of community.

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66 James, The Will to Believe, p. 67

67 Bain, The Emotions and the Will, p. 505; Peirce, The Essential Peirce, p. 114; James, The Will to Believe, p. 90

68 James, Some Problems of Philosophy, p. 151

CHAPTER 3

THE RELATION OF COMMUNITY

We have come from relations, to the relation of self, and finally, to the relation of community. We are now in a position to address the latter by way of this question: What is the status of the community in James' philosophy?

There are those who say that James has no social philosophy, much less a theory of community. Bruce Kuklick, for example, has this to say:

> James and Royce were not social and political thinkers of any stature....Whatever their concern for ethics and religion, James and Royce gave little time to social and political philosophizing. Their output in these areas was slight, their analyses lacked intellectual substance, and their applications were conventional and often trivial.[1]

Ronald Dworkin comments on pragmatism and the community, though his remarks are from a much more specific perspective than Kuklick's. In Law's Empire Dworkin is critical of pragmatism as a philosophy of law, and he offers a variety of reasons to support his view. One of these is his contention that "Pragmatism as a conception of law does not stipulate which...visions of a good community are sound or attractive."[2] The implication is that without an understanding of which notion of a "good community" is best,

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[1] Bruce Kuklick, The Rise of American Philosophy: Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1860-1930 (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1977), pp. 306-7

[2] Ronald Dworkin, Law's Empire (Cambridge: The Belknap Press, 1986), p. 152

pragmatism must also fail in its approach to the laws of the community. While this is not meant by Dworkin as a direct criticism of James, to the extent that pragmatism is seen to figure in a Jamesean account of community, it can certainly be taken as such. John McDermott also has misgivings, though his final judgement does offer some encouragement as regards the task at hand.

> From the outset, we should make it clear that readers of the writings of William James are hard put to find a doctrine of community therein....Nonetheless, James's version of the individual has much to teach us about a doctrine of community, especially as it is worked out in the fabric of American life.[3]

In what follows, I will proceed in the spirit of McDermott's remarks. I agree that James does not provide a theory of community in the sense that Marx, Mead, or Dewey can be said to have done so. Still, it is my belief that what James does have to say on the topic is far from "trivial." McDermott's reference to "James's version of the individual" is a point well taken; indeed, Chapter Two's treatment of James' concept of the self was a step in that direction. I continue in this vein, as promised, by a more detailed examination of James' notion of the four constituents of the self: the material self, the social self, the spiritual self, and the pure ego. My plan is to use these four characterizations of selfhood as a way of organizing James' remarks on community. These remarks, though

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[3] John J. McDermott, Streams of Experience: Reflections on the History and Philosophy of American Culture (Amherst: Univ. of Massachusetts Press, 1986), pp. 44-45

scattered, have a central focus: the individual, and his or her development. In grouping his observations on community under these four headings this emphasis is recognized, but it also recognizes the fact that for James, selfhood is always worked out in the midst of a group. So, as we explore the relations which hold between these four facets of selfhood and the community in which they develop and flourish, and as a Jamesean sketch of community begins to emerge, it is hoped that it is one which can be seen as naturally flowing from his philosophy, rather than as something artificial and imposed on it.

To the extent that our thoughts and actions are wholly occupied with our physical body, our immediate family, or our possessions, and in as much as these are identified as me and mine, we are manifesting that side of ourselves which James refers to as the "material self."[4] This reaching out and inclusion of so much that is initially other than me, into me, is a process described by James as follows.

> In its widest possible sense...a man's Self is the sum total of all that he CAN call his, not only his body and his psychic powers, but his clothes and his house, his wife and children, his ancestors and friends, his reputation and works, his lands and horses, and yacht and bank-account. All these things give him the same emotions. If they wax and prosper, he feels triumphant; if they dwindle and die away, he feels cast down,--not necessarily in the same degree for each thing, but in much the same way for all.[5]

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4 James, Principles, 1, pp. 292-93

5 Ibid., pp. 291-92

The word of emphasis in the above quote is the possessive pronoun "his." And the relationship between the material self and the community is definitely disjunctive and opportunistic in nature. We are, for example, often related to some members of the community by blood ties, but to most we are not so related. To a certain small group of people we grant the relation of being a neighbor; to everyone else in the community, though, we usually do not. My particular talents and labor skills procure certain benefits for me and mine not available to some or many other members of the community at large. The perspective is individualistic, and the relations to the community are highly selective and fewer in number. Such relations are further clarified by James in this manner.

> Surely the individual, the person in the singular number, is the more fundamental phenomenon, and the social institution, of whatever grade, is but secondary and ministerial. Many as are the interests which social systems satisfy, always unsatisfied interests remain over, and among them are interests to which system, as such, does violence whenever it lays its hand upon us. The best Commonwealth will always be the one that most cherishes the men who represent the residual interests, the one that leaves the largest scope to their peculiarities.[6]

The individual is fundamental, the social institution is secondary and ministerial. The first part of this statement is certainly true in a numerical sense, but how so

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[6] William James, From "Thomas Davidson," in Memories and Studies, quoted in The Philosophy of William James: Selected From His Chief Works, with an introduction by Horace M. Kallen (New York: The Modern Library, n. d.), p. 252

otherwise? To answer this we must ask ourselves another question: which is the more important factor in human character, ideals or virtues? Or, to put it another way, which is more essential, the ideal of community, however it may be conceived, or such human virtues as courage, endurance, perseverance, and fidelity? If James must choose, he chooses virtue.

> Now, taken nakedly, abstractly, and immediately, you see that mere ideals are the cheapest things in life. Everybody has them in some shape or other, personal or general, sound or mistaken, low or high; and the most worthless sentimentalists and dreamers, drunkards, shirks and verse-makers, who never show a grain of effort, courage, or endurance, possibly have them on the most copious scale.[7]

From this we should see that no ideal is absolute. An ideal is first and foremost a rational construction that provides the "outlook, uplift, and brightness that go with all intellectual facts."[8] Also, ideals bring a sense of "novelty" to our lives to a degree not generally possible without them.[9] And so, given that "ideals are relative to the lives that entertain them,"[10] it follows that in this narrow sense, community as an ideal is always relative and secondary to the individual holding it. James is not advocating, of course, that we should toss our ideals out the window, or, that they are important in only some trivial

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7 William James, Essays on Faith and Morals, ed., Ralph Barton Perry (New York: Longmans, Green and Company, 1947), p. 304

8 Ibid., p. 304

9 Ibid., p. 304

10 Ibid., p. 304

sense. Nor is he simply glorifying the will. The individual is fundamental, but from James' perspective what is best for the individual and individual development is a combination of both ideals and virtues. James makes this clear in two passages.

> The significance of a human life for communicable and publicly recognizable purposes is thus the offspring of a marriage of two different parents, either of whom alone is barren. The ideals taken by themselves give no reality, the virtues by themselves no novelty.[11]

The second passage reinforces the first.

> Ideal aspirations are not enough, when uncombined with pluck and will. But neither are pluck and will, dogged endurance and insensibility to danger enough, when taken all alone. There must be some sort of fusion, some chemical combination among these principles, for a life objectively and thoroughly significant to result.[12]

How then, does the social institution of community act in ways "ministerial" to the individual? We must first realize that while the community can satisfy and provide for the interests of many of its members, the interests of some, perhaps a sizeable number, will always go unsatisfied. Most members of the community will enjoy adequate food and shelter, some will not. The school system of the community will attempt to respond to and educate our children; but to those of a cultural minority, or to those with learning difficulties, or even to those seen as gifted, it does not respond so well. James opts for "personal freedom

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11 James, Essays on Faith and Morals, p. 305

12 Ibid., p. 306

and its spontaneities...."[13] He glories in the uniqueness of individual differences, and bemoans civilization's general response to them.

> [He feels] less unqualifiedly respectful than ever of "Civilization," with its herding and branding, licensing and degree-giving, authorizing and appointing, and in general regulating and administering by system the lives of human beings.[14]

James is convinced that the best commonwealth is the one which "cherishes" the men and women who represent these "residual interests." It is the one which encourages the special talents, perspectives, and peculiarities which the "system" is unable to satisfy. James makes an observation:

> Why, the very birds of the forest, the parrot, the mino, have the power of human speech, but never develop it of themselves; some one must be there to teach them. So with us individuals.[15]

Someone must be there to teach us what we need to know to grow. Each of us, teaching someone else, something different. And a community is "ministerial" to the degree that it encourages and makes possible just such an environment.

The best commonwealth cherishes those who represent the residual interests, but often a community must be pushed and goaded in this direction first, before it begins practicing such principles to an acceptable degree. This being the case, the relationship between the individual as material self, and the community, will often be exemplified by

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13 James, "Thomas Davidson," p. 251

14 Ibid., pp. 251-52

15 James, The Will to Believe, p. 229

such attitudes on the part of the member as "tough-mindedness," "strenuousness," and even at times a measure of "anarchy." Such attitudes must be adopted and maintained if we are to get these processes kick-started and running. All communities, if they have existed for any length of time at all, have certain ideals and goals already in place. Hopefully, these are positive; realistically, this is never the case one hundred percent of the time. The problem is that "What the whole community comes to believe in grasps the individual as in a vise."[16] Sometimes, when, for example, the nation finds itself in a state of war, this may well be the best state of affairs for both a community and its members; at other times though, when a community's ideals and goals are slanted toward one particular group, it is not so good. In Pragmatism, James contrasts the "tender-minded" with the "tough-minded."[17] On the level of academic philosophy, James views the tender-minded as rationalists, and the tough-minded as empiricists; but on the commonsense level of daily life, these distinctions simply refer to "two types of mental make-up," or "temperaments."[18] Of course James is interested in making the point that one's philosophical persuasion is not wholly the result of intellectual deliberation; it also has much to do with a person's emotional make-up. But as regards the relationship

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16 James, Essays on Faith and Morals, p. 324

17 James, Pragmatism, p. 9

18 Ibid., p. 9

between the material self and the community, tough-mindedness describes the attitudes and behaviors commonly at work. James gives a list of such traits: "Sensationalistic, Materialistic, Pessimistic, Irreligious, Fatalistic, Pluralistic, [and] Sceptical."[19] The member of the community as material self, and as evidencing such traits as the above, is more interested in facts than principles. Specific situations and occurrences are more important than the historical sweep of things. Our success and failure in the acquisition of wealth and material possessions, and the narrow focus upon me and mine, make us sceptical of what the community can and will do. Here, membership in the community is one of survival of the fittest. And the "tough-minded" have the advantage.

In his essay "The Moral Philosopher and the Moral Life," James speaks of "the strenuous mood."

> The deepest difference, practically, in the moral life of man is the difference between the easy-going and the strenuous mood. When in the easy-going mood the shrinking from the present ill is our ruling consideration. The strenuous mood, on the contrary, makes us quite indifferent to present ill, if only the greater ideal be attained. The capacity for the strenuous mood probably lies slumbering in every man, but it has more difficulty in some than in others in waking up. It needs the wilder passions to arouse it, the big fears, loves, and indignations; or else the deeply pentrating appeal of some one of the higher fidelities, like justice, truth, or freedom.20

We should not think that because James speaks of "the

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19 James, Pragmatism, p. 9

20 James, The Will to Believe, p. 211

moral life," "the strenuous mood" is an inappropriate characterization of the material self's response to community life. Myers points this out.

> He supposed that his social and political convictions were rooted in his ethical beliefs....James believed that morality, politics, and normative sociology are interrelated....[21]

Much of the time, perhaps most of the time, moral relations and social relations are not the clearly distinct categories which some philosophers, sociologists, and politicians would like for them to be. It is James' position that more often than not, they flow one into the other, or are woven together into strands difficult or impossible to separate. What is needed is "a pretext for living hard, and getting out of the game of existence its keenest possibilities of zest."[22] As indicated, a "pretext" can take the form of "big fears, loves, and indignations," or, an ideal such as "justice, truth, or freedom." Any of these can serve as a "pretext," but it seems more likely that the former, rather than the latter, would serve as the genesis for the "strenuous mood" as far as the material self is concerned. Certainly such community-based relations as employment, unemployment, wealth, and debt are quite able to generate such strong emotions. James saw evidence of the "strenuous mood" in operation as turn-of-the-century labor attempted

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[21] Gerald E. Myers, William James: His Life and Thought (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1986), p. 429

[22] James, The Will to Believe, p. 213

to organize and improve the lot of the common worker. And he welcomed it. James, always the champion of the common man and underdog, nevertheless implores both rich and poor to attempt to see things from the other's perspective.[23] His final conclusion on the matter is this observation:

> Society has, with all this, undoubtedly got to pass toward some newer and better equilibrium, and the distribution of wealth has doubtless slowly got to change: such changes have always happened, and will happen to the end of time....The solid meaning of life is always the same eternal thing,--the marriage, namely, of some unhabitual ideal, however special, with some fidelity, courage, and endurance; with some man's or woman's pains.--And, whatever or wherever life may be, there will always be the chance for that marriage to take place.[24]

The whole point of tough-mindedness and strenuousness, whether we are attempting to get what we see as our fair share from the community, or in any other area of life, is the realization that--at least as far as James is concerned--the lion's share of the meaning of life, and the excitement and joy of life, has to do more with the striving than the attaining of our goals.[25]

James' advocacy of anarchism is not the anarchism of extreme social disruption. On the contrary, James commends

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23 James, Essays on Faith and Morals, pp. 307-9

24 Ibid., pp. 308-9

25 Strenuousness is a common theme in James' writings. Here are two more examples: The Varieties of Religious Experience: A Study in Human Nature (New York: The Modern Library, n. d.), p. 359; "The Absolute and the Strenuous Life," in The Meaning of Truth, eds., Fredson Bowers and Ignas K. Skrupskelis, introduction by H. S. Thayer (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard Univ. Press, 1975), pp. 123-125

the civic habit "of fierce and merciless resentment toward every man or set of men who break the public peace."[26] James admitted to being an anarchist himself on at least two occasions. In a letter to his friend William Dean Howells, he writes "I am becoming more an individualist and anarchist...."[27] While in Pragmatism, in commenting on the writer Morrison I. Swift, he writes that "Mr. Swift's anarchism goes a little farther than mine does...."[28] James' version of anarchism has been described as a "polite anarchism," and as "anarchist communalism."[29] Individual freedom and individual rights are not only extremely important to that mode of community life characterized by reference to the material self, they are important to all modes of community life. James thinks the best way to encourage and maintain these ideals is first of all to move away from the tendency toward increase and bigness which seems to be the fate of most communities, and move instead, in the opposite direction. Hence, the description "anarchist communalism."

> [he encourages] lovers of the ideal [of freedom] to found smaller communities...through small systems, kept pure, lies one most promising line of betterment and

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26 James, "Robert Gould Shaw," in Memories and Studies, quoted in The Philosophy of William James, p. 315

27 William James to William Dean Howells, 16 November 1900, "Howells Papers," quoted in William James, Public Philosopher, George Cotkin (Baltimore, MD: John Hopkins Univ. Press, 1990), p. 174

28 James, Pragmatism, p. 16

29 Cotkin, William James, Public Philosopher, pp. 174-175

> salvation. Why won't anarchists get together and try it. I am too ill (and too old!) or I might chip in myself.[30]

Sentiments such as these were doubtless at work in James' initial evaluation of the experimental community of Chautauqua: a "middle-class paradise, without a sin, without a victim, without a blot, without a tear."[31] He "stayed for a week, [and was] held spell-bound by the charm and ease of everything,"[32] but upon leaving, he was astonished to find himself relieved. So much here was right; but something vitally important was missing. What was it? It was "the element of precipitousness, so to call it, of strength and strenuousness, intensity and danger."[33] Jamesean anarchism, again, is not a license for physical violence and the wholesale toppling of governments--although James always thinks it proper and our duty to fight political corruption whenever it is detected. It is, rather, another opportunity to practice and celebrate the tough-mindedness and strenuousness which he sees as indispensable to both the individual and the community's growth, development, and prosperity. To a great extent, to grow, develop, and prosper, is to change; but whether it is the individual member of the community, a group within the community, or the community at large, there must first of all be a willingness

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30 James to Ernest Howard Crosby, 23 October 1901, in Selected Unpublished Correspondence, quoted in William James, Public Philosopher, p. 174

31 James, Essays on Faith and Morals, p. 288

32 Ibid., p. 288

33 Ibid., p. 289

to try something new, or to do something differently. This is the message behind James' emphasis of the attitudes of tough-mindedness and strenuousness, and of those actions and behaviors exemplified by James' "polite anarchism." Chautauqua was guilty of too thoroughly resting upon its laurels; of not continuing to experiment and progress. And this he sees as negating those very sentiments and ideals which brought it into being in the first place.

Those conditions and episodes of community life which I have been discussing under the general heading of the material self, have tended to emphasize disjunctive relations rather than conjunctive relations. We should remember that for James and radical empiricism, this was exactly classical empiricism's great mistake. It is James' doctrine of relations which attempts to redress this imbalance, and give each side of the equation of human experience its just due. In one context, such as the present one, disjunctive relations are important. In another context, conjunctive relations are in the fore-front. And both are usually present to some degree whatever the context. The importance of this to the present situation is this: the difference and novelty exhibited by various members of the community should not be rejected out-of-hand by the community as either unimportant and trivial on the one side, nor as something dangerous and to be feared on the other. Such potentially disjunctive relations as race, religion, monetary worth, or physical handicap, should be seen and

embraced as necessary ingredients to a healthy community. James sums this up beautifully when he says "The community stagnates without the impulse of the individual. The impulse dies away without the sympathy of the community."[34]

I turn now to those features of the community best described by reference to the social self, and James offers this definition: "A man's Social Self is the recognition which he gets from his mates."[35] He goes on to tell us that we are "gregarious animals," and that "we have an innate propensity to get ourselves noticed, and noticed favorably, by our kind."[36] What does this suggest to us about the community? It suggests, first of all, that a great part of who we are and what we are is the result of the relations which hold between ourselves and others. Secondly, there is an "innate propensity" at work here: it is the need for people and for the community which makes adequate numbers of them available to us for such purposes as these situations require. Third, the community, therefore, has not so much come into being throughout the history of man by choice, as by need. Certainly, decisions are made, and communities of various sizes and purposes come into being all the time, as James' own so-called "anarchist communalism" might suggest. Fundamentally, though, they exist because we need them.

The importance of the influence which certain members

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34 James, The Will to Believe, p. 232

35 James, Principles, 1, p. 293

36 Ibid., p. 293

and groups of the community have upon us, is reinforced by a reference which James makes to John Locke.[37] In An Essay Concerning Human Understanding, Locke speaks of a "moral relation." It "is the conformity or disagreement men's voluntary actions have to a rule...."[38] There are three sorts of rules or laws: "the divine law, the civil law, and the law of opinion or reputation."[39] Many break God's laws, always supposing that they will ask for forgiveness at a later date. Those who break the laws of the land, do so thinking it unlikely they will ever be punished. The situation is completely different, though, as regards "this law of fashion," as Locke also refers to the third type of law.[40]

> But no man escapes the punishment of their censure and dislike, who offends against the fashion and opinion of the company he keeps, and would recommend himself to. Nor is there one of ten thousand, who is stiff and insensible enough, to bear up under the constant dislike and condemnation of his own club....nobody that has the least thought or sense of a man about him, can live in society under the constant dislike and ill opinion of his familiars, and those he converses with.[41]

In this, James concurs.

> No more fiendish punishment could be devised, were such a thing physically possible, than that one should be

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37 James, Principles, 1, p. 293

38 John Locke, An Essay Concerning Human Understanding, 2 vols, edited and with an introduction by Alexander Campbell Fraser (New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1959), bk. 2, ch. 28, sect. 4

39 Ibid., sect. 7-12

40 Ibid., sect. 12

41 Ibid., sect. 12

> turned loose in society and remain absolutely unnoticed by all the members thereof.[42]

The material self's focus is on me and mine. The social self's focus is on what others think about me and mine. Human nature being what it is, no community will survive for long without some laws and rules. This is a commonplace, whatever else one's scheme of community may entail. What James, and Locke before him, wish to call our attention to, is that the real driving force of community life is not so much our relation to its laws and rules--important as this may be--as it is our relation to its other members. The true extent of James' commitment to this view is shown when he tells us that "Everything we know and are is through men."[43] Granted, the laws and rules of the community are the products of men and women. Even so, it is the actual relations between people that James is interested in here, not those between people and their rationalistic constructions.

Our relationships with people take the form of a "network," and it is interesting how modern this sounds to us today.

> There are innumerable kinds of connection that special things have with other special things; and the ensemble of any one of these connections forms one sort of system by which things are conjoined. Thus men are conjoined in a vast network of acquaintanceship. Brown knows Jones, Jones knows Robinson, etc., and by

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42 James, Principles, 1, p. 293

43 James to Thomas W. Ward, in The Letters of William James, quoted in The Philosophy of William James, p. 249

> choosing your farther intermediaries rightly you may carry a message from Jones to the Empress of China, or the Chief of the African Pigmies, or to any one else in the inhabited world. But you are stopped short, as by a non-conductor, when you choose one man wrong in this experiment.[44]

There are many "ensemble[s]," many "system[s]," one of which is the community. As we have seen, one important example--perhaps the most important example, as far as the community is concerned--of the "connections" between people, consists of their opinion of each other. James goes so far as to say that a man

> has as many different social selves as there are distinct groups of persons about whose opinion he cares. He generally shows a different side of himself to each of these different groups.[45]

Opinion can take the form of the conjunctive relation of approval, or the disjunctive relation of disapproval. Opinion is constantly bringing people together, and at the same time driving them apart. As both Locke and James observe, such relations can exert a force so strong, that in certain instances we come to see them as a form of punishment as severe as almost any which the law itself could prescribe.

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[44] James, Pragmatism, pp. 60-61. The concept of social networks has been a fruitful one since the time of James. Here are several important sources: J. A. Barnes, "Class and Committies in a Norwegian Island Parish," Human Relations 7, (1954): pp. 39-58; Barnes, "Social Networks," An Addison-Wesley Module in Anthropology 26 (United States of America: Addison-Wesley Publishing Co., Inc., 1972) pp. 1-29; Elizabeth Bott, Family and Social Networks (London: Tavistock Publications, 1957); Bott, "Family Kinship and Marriage" in Man in Society: Patterns of Human Organization, eds., Douglas, Mary et al (London: Macdonald, 1962).

[45] James, Principles, 1, p. 294

We experience the relations which connect the members of of the community as being just as real as our experience of the members themselves.

> the relations between things, conjunctive as well as disjunctive, are just as much matters of direct particular experience, neither more so nor less so, than the things themselves....the parts of experience hold together from next to next by relations that are themselves parts of experience.[46]

We saw in Chapter Two how the experience of the conjunctive relation of self was one which was felt. This is equally the case with the conjunctive relation of community. The experience of community is one which is felt. "Through feelings we become acquainted with things...Feelings are the germ and starting point of cognition, thoughts the developed tree."[47] Whether we see the community as a "system, or as a "network of acquaintanceship," we either "feel" ourselves to be a part of it, or we do not. If we do not, it may be the result of too many "non-conductor[s]." We have seen that a "non-conductor" can be a person, or the opinion of a person important to us in some way. I suspect, though, that James would agree that a "non-conductor" could take many forms, e.g., emotions like hate or fear, character traits such as avarice or cruelty, or a rule or law which singles out certain racial, social, political, or religious groups. All these, and more, cause the alienation

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46 James, The Meaning of Truth, p. 7

47 James, Principles, 1, p. 222. For more on the general distinction which James makes between "knowledge of acquaintance and knowledge-about," see pp. 221-23.

which so many seem to feel in today's communities. It is much like depriving a certain area or organ of the body of oxygen and nourishment. It can occur for short periods of time without too many ill effects; longer periods, though, can cause great damage. This suggestion is in line with James' declaration that "A community is a living thing..."[48] as opposed to viewing it as a mechanical device. James does not want to stretch the analogy of the community as an organism too far. He does not see the concept of organism as an all-eneveloping metaphysical principle of human society. Still, it is a useful one when applied in a more modest fashion. It underlines James' contention that a social unit such as the community, unlike a machine, is not built up or put together from disconnected bits and pieces; it is a natural growth. Just as James views consciousness as unable to arise from the simple compounding of isolated mental elements, the community, as a real form of life, does not consist of people in a relational vacuum.

> Everything that exists is influenced in <u>some</u> way by something else, if you can only pick the way out rightly. Loosely speaking, and in general, it may be said that all things cohere and adhere to each other <u>somehow</u>, and that the universe exists practically in reticulated and concatenated forms which make of it a continuous or 'integrated' affair.49

James is not promoting absolute unity in all spheres of

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48 James, <u>The Will to Believe</u>, p. 230

49 James, <u>Pragmatism</u>, p. 61

human consciousness and activity, much less the community. His lecture "The One and the Many" in Pragmatism is an attempt to show that what we actually find in experience are many kinds of unity, not just one. Even so, it may appear that James' theory of relations does in fact point in the direction of some type of monism, or, in this case, toward the possibility of some one "best theory of community." This is definitely not James' intention.[50] As far as a "theory" of community is concerned, James offers only the barest sketch. What he is interested in, though, is the "experience" of community, and its relation to other aspects of experience in general. Throughout it all, it is not "absolute unity" which is revealed--either in the community itself, or between it and some other social entity--but continuity. This is an example of why James categorizes his philosophy as a "philosophy of pluralism with continuity."[51] And this approach is of the greatest practical importance to life in the community as we strive to enter into what James refers to as a "real relation"[52] with others. What such a relationship entails, and how it is

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50 James fought against all forms of monism in philosophy. He saw no possibility for an "absolutely final" theory of anything, including the community. One example of his opposition to monism is his essay "On Some Hegelisms," in The Will to Believe, pp. 263-98.

51 James, MS (Houghton Library), "Hegelianism," quoted in William James, by Bernard P. Brennan, Twayne's United States Authors Series, ed., Sylvia E. Bowman (New York: Twayne Publishers, Inc., 1968), p. 129

52 James to Thomas W. Ward, in The Philosophy of William James, p. 249

important to the community, I will now discuss in conjunction with the "spiritual self."

> By the Spiritual Self, so far as it belongs to the Empirical Me, I mean a man's inner or subjective being, his psychic faculties or dispositions, taken concretely ....our ability to argue and discriminate...our moral sensibility and conscience...our indomitable will....[53]

As we can see, this third constituent of selfhood covers a lot of ground, and, James informs us, may be considered from a variety of viewpoints. I will not enumerate all of James' examples; for our purposes here, I will concentrate on certain things which James has to say regarding "our moral sensibility and conscience."

To begin with, I do not believe James' use of the term "spiritual" is meant to be taken in a religious sense; instead, he is making the simple distinction that selfhood has both a physical and non-physical side. Likewise, our response to the community can be self-centered and materialistic--as in the case with the material self--or it can focus on other members and how we feel about them, which, in this context, I see the "spiritual self" as exemplifying. This connection between our sentiments and "our moral sensibility and conscience" was briefly alluded to in both Chapter One and Two. It refers to both Hume's and James' conviction that morality is based upon sentiment, rather than reason. In like fashion, the moral relations which exist between ourselves and others can not be based solely

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[53] James, Principles, 1, p. 296

upon either the rule of law, or a rationalistic theory of community. It must also entail something which is felt. This is the beginning of what James means by entering into a "real relation" with another. And that which is felt is sympathy; although, it is not sympathy as a species of pity, but as a form of communication.

> We long for sympathy, for a purely personal communication, first with the soul of the world, and then with the soul of our fellows. And happy are they who think, or know, that they have got them![54]

James is not the first to make the connection between sympathy and communication.[55] Hume had done so in the Treatise. Hume writes:

> No quality of human nature is more remarkable, both in itself and in its consequences, than that propensity we have to sympathize with others, and to receive by communication their inclinations and sentiments, however different from, or even contrary to our own....[56] Hatred, resentment, esteem, love, courage, mirth and melancholy; all these passions I feel more from communication than from my own natural temper and disposition.[57]

From the perspective of the "theory of ideas," "In sympathy there is an evident conversion of an idea into an impression."[58] Ideas we have of others get associated with ideas we have of ourselves. We feel strongly about ourselves, and

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[54] James to Thomas W. Ward, in The Philosophy of William James, pp. 248-49

[55] Alexander Bain's account of sympathy in chapter 6 of The Emotions and the Will (1859), is an earlier treatment which, along with James', also draws from Hume. Bain's version makes much of our "experience of...Signs." p. 113

[56] Hume, Treatise, p. 316

[57] Ibid., p. 317

[58] Ibid., p. 320

begin to feel likewise about others. What is really important here, is not Hume's associationist psychology; it is his observation that sympathy is a process of communication. And when communication occurs, a degree of understanding comes into being which was not there before. James goes so far as to say that in showing sympathy we have

> added to the property of the race, even if no one knows your name, yet it is certain that, without what you have done, some individuals must needs be acting now in a somewhat differant manner. You have modified their life; you are in real relation with them; you have in so far forth entered into their being.[59]

I believe what James is suggesting is that to enter into a "real relation" with another is to enter into a "moral relation" with another. And it is sympathy, more than any other relation, which offers us the greatest possible impetus to treat people in morally responsible ways. The link between sympathy and morality is made by James in the following passage.

> It seems to me that a sympathy with men as such, and a desire to contribute to the weal of a species, which, whatever may be said of it, contains All that we acknowledge as good, may very well form an external interest sufficient to keep one's moral pot boiling in a very lively manner to a good old age.[60]

What makes a community? What makes a nation? There have

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[59] James to Thomas W. Ward, in The Philosophy of William James, p. 249

[60] Ibid., p. 250. Two essays also dealing with sympathy and related issues are "On a Certain Blindness in Human Beings," and "What Makes a Life Significant?" in Essays on Faith and Morals.

been as many examples cited in this regard, as there have been writers interested in these questions.[61] One thing, at least, seems fundamental. The members of a community, and the citizens of a nation, feel a sympathy for each other that they do not feel toward those in other communities or other nations. This is what James is getting at when he remarks that "Every nation has ideals and difficulties and sentiments which are an impenetrable secret to one not of the blood."[62] Though sympathy at this level exists almost in spite of what we say or do, its importance to the continued existence of all social groups regardless of their size, can not be over-emphasized. At the same time, the sympathy at work in a "real relation" is much more intense. It requires a degree of commitment to others which most of us, under normal conditions, are unwilling to extend to a group the size of a nation or larger. James speaks of entering into the being of another. At least as regards a group the size of the community, this is, perhaps, a goal

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61 G. A. Hillery Jr. cites 94 definitions of community in his paper "Definitions of Community: Areas of Agreement," Rural Sociology, 20, (1955), quoted in Community Studies: An Introduction to the Sociology of the Local Community, Colin Bell and Howard Newby (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1972), pp. 27-29.

62 James to Mrs. Henry Whitman, in The Letters of William James, quoted in The Philosophy of William James, p. 253. Hume also makes this point:

> To this principle we ought to ascribe the great uniformity we may observe in the humours and turn of thinking of those of the same nation; and 'tis much more probable, that this resemblance arises from sympathy, than from any influence of the soil and climate, which, tho' they continue invariably the same, are not able to preserve the character of a nation the same for a century together. Treatise, p. 317

not beyond the reach of most of us if we can begin to become "more livingly aware...of the depths of worth that lie around...[us], hid[den] in alien lives."[63] Again, "a community is a living thing," but we should not allow it to become a beast which swallows up the individual. And sympathy as a process of communication is, for James, our best defense against just such an occurrence.

The last of the four constituents of the self is the "pure ego." This is the "pure principle of personal identity,"[64] and it was the focus of Chapter Two of the present work; so, with respect to our current considerations, instead of personal identity, I will discuss the identity of a Jamesean community.

The identity of a Jamesean community is not the result of some one theory of community. It has to do with the

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63 James, Essays on Faith and Morals, p. 307. Charles Horton Cooley (1864-1929) was one of America's leading sociologists. He was an admirer of James, and sought to develop several of James' insights from a sociological perspective. James' notion of sympathy as communication, is one of them.

> It [sympathy] denotes the sharing of any mental state that can be communicated, and has not the special implication of pity or other "tender emotion" that it commonly carries in ordinary speech. This emotionally colorless usage is, however, perfectly legitimate, and is, I think, more common in classical English literature than any other. Human Nature and the Social Order, (New York: Charles Scribners's Sons, 1922), pp. 136-137

For more on the James-Cooley connection, see The Two Major Works of Charles H. Cooley: Social Organization; Human Nature and the Social Order, introduction by Robert Cooley Angell (Glencoe, Illinois: The Free Press, 1956), p. xii. Also, Lewis A. Coser, Masters of Sociological Thought: Ideas in Historical and Social Context (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Inc., 1971), p. 305

64 James, Principles, 1, p. 330

practice of sympathy in the afore-mentioned sense; but it is also a special orientation, and this is an orientation which is pragmatic in nature. James describes it in the following manner.

> No particular results then, but only an attitude of orientation, is what the pragmatic method means. The attitude of looking away from first things, principles, "categories," supposed necessities; and of looking towards last things, fruits, consequences, facts.[65]

Significantly, James places this "attitude of orientation" squarely within the social realm when he speaks of it as "a corridor in a hotel."[66] Many rooms open out of this corridor. In each one we find someone with a different perspective, doing things differently. No one person owns the corridor. It belongs to all. Still, it is the most practical way for everyone to get to, and leave their rooms. This does not mean, of course, that this is the "only" way of access and departure. If the hotel catches fire, occupants may well find themselves leaving by way of the windows, climbing down fire-truck ladders. What is important, here, is that the pragmatic community evaluates situations and options by their practical consequences first, before it does so in light of someone's political agenda. The pragmatic community realizes, for example, that no amount of theorizing, planning, or wishing, in and of itself, is ever going to decrease injustice and outright evil within the

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[65] James, Pragmatism, p. 27

[66] Ibid., p. 27

community to any appreciable degree. Having made a plan, a community must then have the courage to take action and put it to the test.

> The way of escape from evil...is not by getting it "aufgehoben," or preserved in the whole as an element essential but "overcome." It is by dropping it out altogether, throwing it overboard and getting beyond it, helping to make a universe that shall forget its very place and name.67

James does not hesitate to apply this pragmatic orientation to the various social issues of his own day. It is not a systematic attempt, but it is illustrative of how both individuals and communities large and small can proceed. Let us look at several brief examples.

I have already introduced James' notion of sympathy as an indispensable condition of the life of any community actually committed to the well-being of its members. I will further enlarge upon the connection between sympathy, alienation, and the pragmatic community by noting that alienation in some form has no doubt been a part of community life from earliest times; but that does not necessarily mean that we are powerless to do anything about it. James relates his own sense of alienation regarding his visits to New York City. For 20 years no visit had lasted longer than 36 hours. On each occasion he had felt out-of-touch and repulsed by it all. During one visit, though, his stay was longer. He was able to meet people, move around, and experience first-hand the actual workings of the great

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67 James, Pragmatism, p. 130

city. His change of attitude was immediate: "I'm sure that once in that movement, and at home, all other places would seem insipid."[68] If, as McDermott observes, "For James, alienation is the inability to make relations,"[69] we can see that this was certainly what had occurred in James' case. And thus, the alienation of 20 years was resolved when James began to "make relations," or, to be at "once in that movement, and at home." Obviously James had previous knowledge of New York City and its inhabitants. But the relation of knowledge alone was not enough. Other conjunctive relations were also needed. James had to take action and get involved before the entire process of resolution could get fully under way. The pragmatic implication for the community is that to make connections with others, is a simple yet significant beginning to the overcoming of alienation. Relations, coupled with a pragmatic orientation, are powerful tools in the community's efforts to enhance the quality of life of its members. James is led to remark

> [that] The world stands really malleable, waiting to receive its final touches at our hands. Like the kingdom of heaven, it suffers human violence willingly. Man

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68 James to Henry James, 1907, in The Letters of William James, quoted in The Philosophy of William James, p. 294

69 McDermott, Streams of Experience, p. 105. Travelling through the mountains of North Carolina, James had a similar experience. There too, he recounts, he had felt out-of-touch and "blind" to the lives of the area's inhabitants. When he made an effort to learn about the people, and some of their hopes and dreams, his previous views changed. Essays on Faith and Morals, pp. 261-62.

engenders truths upon it.[70]

In his essay "The Moral Equivalent of War," James suggests how the pragmatic community might respond to certain issues regarding young people. He notes that "There is something highly paradoxical in the modern man's relation to war."[71] We deplore the brutality, bloodshed, and waste; yet we admire the heroism, discipline, and sacrifice which the young men and women who fight our wars so often display. James asks if it would not be possible to instill such ideals, and other beneficial habits of conduct, in the hearts and minds of the community's youth without the necessity of going to war. James' idea is

> instead of a military conscription a conscription of the whole youthful population to form for a certain number of years a part of the army enlisted against Nature...[James is convinced] numerous...goods to the commonwealth would follow.[72]

In other words, perhaps by getting our youth involved in various public service projects, character would be built while communities and the nation receive other more practical benefits as well. And history shows--particularly during President Franklin Delano Roosevelt's adminiatration--that projects like this were actually tried with varying degrees of success.

James also applies the pragmatic outlook to the

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70 James, Pragmatism, pp. 112-113

71 James, Essays on Faith and Morals, p. 311

72 Ibid., p. 325

question of group values. First, as he makes clear in "The Moral Philosopher and the Moral Life"

> the words 'good,' 'bad,' and 'obligation'...mean no absolute natures, independent of personal support. They are objects of feeling and desire, which have no foothold or anchorage in Being, apart from the existence of actually living minds.[73]

In a hypothetical universe of one person, then,

> So far as he feels anything to be good, he makes it good. It is good, for him; and being good for him, is absolutely good, for he is the sole creator of values in that universe, and outside of his opinion things have no moral character at all.[74]

Even so, while upon such a person there could be "no outward obligation," the relationship of past judgements to present ones would still constitute an inward obligation. And some scale of values would have to be devised for such an individual to remain completely happy.[75]

When we begin speaking of great numbers of people, the situation becomes much more complex, but the solution is much the same. It is still the case "that without a claim actually made by some concrete person there can be no obligation...."[76] But how are we to decide which claims are important and which are trivial? In this case, too, a scale of values is needed if we are to avoid confusion and inevitable conflict. Given that the study of value has been a special province of philosophy for several thousand years, one might assume that the philosopher is therefore best

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[73] James, Essays on Faith and Morals, p. 197

[74] Ibid., pp. 190-191

[75] Ibid., p. 191

[76] Ibid., p. 194

fitted for the construction of this "casuistic scale." But something far greater has beat the philosopher to the punch--human experience!

> So far then, and up to date, the casuistic scale is made for the philosopher already far better than he can ever make it for himself. An experiment of the most searching kind has proved that the laws and usages of the land are what yield the maximum of satisfaction to the thinkers taken all together. The presumption in cases of conflict must always be in favor of the conventionally recognized good.[77]

The community itself has provided the answer, and it is one arrived at by pragmatic means. Still, James is not recommending that the philosopher should abandon all efforts in this regard; only that his results are to be evaluated in the same manner as everyone else's: in the gristmill of experience. Thus, he offers to the philosopher these suggestions:

> The philosopher must be a conservative, and in the construction of his casuistic scale must put the things most in accordance with the customs of the community on top....if he be a true philosopher he must see that there is nothing final in any actually given equilibrium of human ideals....[Also,] the philosopher must allow that it is at all times open to any one to make the experiment, provided he fear not to stake his life and character upon the throw.[78]

In a sense, then, Dworkin is correct. Whether we are speaking of a pragmatic conception of law, or pragmatism generally, neither will stipulate absolutely which "visions of a good community are sound or attractive." Their vision of a good community is always one in the making, constantly

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77 James, Essays on Faith and Morals, p. 206

78 Ibid., p. 206

reinventing itself, sometimes slowly, sometimes quickly. The truly pragmatic community draws from the past, lives in the present, and hopes for the future. All of this reinforces my contention that James has little interest in constructing a "theory" of community; but he is quite interested in the exploration of our "experience" of community. I shall close this chapter with a reference to a philosopher considered by many to be the pragmatic community's most severe critic: Bertrand Russell.

In his essay "Pragmatism," Russell describes the pragmatic community in the following manner:

> if pragmatism were the accepted creed, public opinion would have to be guided by the interests of the community. To this there would be no objection if, as would be commonly done, the maintenance of justice could be taken as one of the ends which it is in the interest of the community to pursue. But in a pragmatist community this would be impossible, since justice is derivative from the interests of the community, and not an independent constituent of those interests....In the absence of any standard of truth other than success, it seems evident that the familiar methods of the struggle for existence must be applied to the elucidation of difficult questions, and that ironclads and Maxim guns must be the ultimate arbiters of metaphysical truth.[79]

According to Russell, then, the pragmatic community suffers from a dangerous epistemological bias: there are no standards of truth, because truth is simply whatever works in a given situation.

Fundamentally, Russell wants to say that the pragmatic theory of truth is not a theory of the meaning of truth; it

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[79] Bertrand Russell, Philosophical Essays (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1966), p. 109

is a psychological theory concerning our beliefs about what is true. The pragmatists have confused two senses of meaning. "We may say 'that cloud means rain', or we may say '*pluie* means rain'. It is obvious that these two senses of 'meaning' are wholly different."[80] In other words, they have confused the meaning of (A causes B), with the meaning of (A=B). Merely because (A) brings about certain useful consequences, does not mean that (A) and those consequences are the same. (A), meaning truth, is not the same as its consequences. In another passage Russell states that James and other pragmatists have confused "criterion" with "meaning."

> Now if pragmatists only affirmed that utility is a *criterion* of truth, there would be much less to be said against their view....The arguments of pragmatists are almost wholly directed to proving that utility is a *criterion*; that utility is the *meaning* of truth is then supposed to follow.[81]

Russell's point is that the pragmatist fails to distinguish the conditions that lead us to believe (A) from what it means to say that (A) is true.

James agrees that were there only one "universe of discourse"--such as that of logic and mathematics, for example--Russell's evaluation would be correct. But in point of fact, there are "different universes of discourse."[82] Hume's distinction between "relations of ideas,"

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80 Russell, *Philosophical Essays*, p. 97

81 Ibid., pp. 120-121

82 James, *The Meaning of Truth*, pp. 149-150

on the one hand, and "matters of fact," on the other, is a useful one here. James is willing to grant the abstract notion of truth as the agreement of our ideas with reality: "Truth with a big T, and in the singular, claims abstractly to be recognized, of course;"[83] but where does that alone get us? James can not accept that the correspondence theory of truth is the "only" theory of truth; neither does he believe that the pragmatic theory of truth is the "only" theory of truth. They in fact complement one another. If correspondence is the only sense of truth that is acceptable, then the pragmatic theory of truth is only a confused theory of meaning. But James maintains there is another sense of truth: the pragmatic one. If moral truths, aesthetic truths, or religious truths are not to be seen as nonsense, there must be a sense in which such as these are either pragmatically true or false. It is this condition which causes James to remark that "Our account of truth is an account of truths in the plural...."[84]

Russell refuses to allow the above distinction, and therefore never gets past the notion that true ideas work. In the essay "Two English Critics," James responds to this very point.

> Good consequences are not proposed by us merely as a sure sign, mark, or criterion, by which truth's presence is habitually ascertained, tho they may indeed serve on occasion as such a sign; they are proposed as the lurking <u>motive</u> inside of every truth-claim, whether

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83 James, <u>Pragmatism</u>, p. 102

84 Ibid., p. 96

> the 'trower' be conscious of such motive, or whether he obey it blindly. They are proposed as the causa existendi of our beliefs, not as their logical cue or premise, and still less as their objective deliverance or content. They assign the only intelligible practical meaning to that difference in our beliefs which our habit of calling them true or false comports.[85]

True ideas work, but not every idea which is seen to work is true. Truth does not equal "what works." Truth is the agreement of our ideas with reality. True ideas work, and the working is the only "practical meaning" which a true idea can have. That an idea is seen to work, does not automatically mean that it is true. Initially, it ought only indicate that the idea in question is a candidate for further testing and evaluation. That an idea is seen to work is, thus, only the beginning of the verification process, not the end. And finally, that an idea is seen to work does not necessitate its becoming the pragmatic community's next new standard.

In contradistinction to Russell, then, the pragmatic community does have "standard[s] of truth other than success." Such standards are the result of

> An experiment of the most searching kind [which] has proved that the laws and usages of the land are what yield the maximum of satisfaction to the thinkers taken all together.[86]

The community does not simply create truth as it goes in response to whatever situation it finds itself in; and its use of the pragmatic method does not force it to change its

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85 James, The Meaning of Truth, pp. 146-147

86 James, The Will to Believe, p. 206

standards every time a new idea is seen to work. On the other hand, if a rule or law is seen as no longer working, it is then reevaluated in light of past, present, and future considerations, with possible revision or even rejection as the next step. That such reevaluations will be this inclusive, and not focus on the "quick fix," can not of course be guranteed. But James' vision of the pragmatic community as "An experiment of the most searching kind," offers this hope.

CHAPTER 4

CONCLUDING REMARKS

I feel that in the years to come, the greatest impact of James' philosophy will be seen to be his work on the theory of relations, rather than his pragmatism. I also believe that one consequence of this will be a heightened appreciation of his social philosophy. This work is a reflection of both of these considerations.

Admittedly, the student of James' social philosophy is, for the most part, faced with a project of reconstruction. James provides no systematic statement; his remarks on the subject are scattered throughout the length and breadth of his entire philosophy. One point is abundantly clear: for James, the individual, and his or her development, is primary. The social institution, whatever its constitution or size, is secondary and ministerial. We must also realize, though, that true development always occurs within a social context.

The central focus of the present work has been to ascertain the status of the notion of community in James'' philosophy. James gives us no "theory of community." His thoughts on the topic take the form of a description of our "experience of community." I see two aspects of this description as offering great promise for the further enrichment of this experience. Recent philosophers have

greatly elaborated the narrative concept of selfhood; but none to my knowledge have mentioned James in this regard. I feel further investigation, when done within the context of James' theory of relations, will give new impetus to our quest to understand and improve our relations to others and the community as a whole. I also see James' notion of sympathy, understood as a process of communication, as another way in which real progress can be made in our continuing efforts to confront and heal the many traditional ills of community life.

I close with this reflection: James' version of pragmatism, when understood in its entirety, is not the crude power-oriented method that it has been portrayed as being for so long. That James was guilty of being less than rigorous in many of his arguments, can not be denied. But the many unsavory consequences which the method supposedly of necessity leads to, never materialize if we simply remember that while everything that is true works, not everything which is seen as working is true. And, it is in light of this, that the notion of a "pragmatic community" need not be looked upon with aversion.

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