***William James: Framing the Plurality of Green Values***

***by***

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**ABSTRACT**

Amidst the wider discussions of civic and environmental pragmatism the name of William James has seldom been invoked, and if anything the literature of the anti-pragmatists in environmental philosophy has especially excoriated him. In this paper, I look at the ways in which, contrary to these misleading characterizations, James’s philosophy may be seen to offer a framework of value theory in which a rich plurality of environmental values can be situated and articulated. I shall explain James’s accounts of value and transformative experience, rooted in his psychology but also found most notably in the essays “The Moral Philosopher and the Moral Life” and “On a Certain Blindness in Human Beings”, and connect these to his fascination with voluntary poverty and his strong opposition to economic reductionism, especially prevalent in the social critique of his later years. I shall then develop and apply the Jamesian perspective further, both historically and in terms of contemporary relevance. First I shall illustrate the ways in which James’s essay “The Moral Equivalent of War” has been misunderstood by green critics, and indicate its actual historic significance, which is very different: in fact, both Franklin Roosevelt’s Civilian Conservation Corps and Jimmy Carter’s attempts to wean the USA off its oil addiction drew on this essay for their inspiration. Finally, I shall draw all the diverse strands together to indicate how a Jamesian pragmatic naturalist perspective can explain and frame a green vision that can recognize and philosophically incorporate the value of wild nature whilst also speaking to urban political concerns and quality of life issues.

**William James: Framing the Plurality of Green Values**

INTRODUCTION

Ever since the publication of Anthony Weston’s essay “Beyond Intrinsic Value: Pragmatism in Environmental Ethics” in the journal *Environmental Ethics* in 1985, and the debate that resulted[[1]](#endnote-1), pragmatist thought has been a significant player in academic environmental philosophy. Indeed, arguably pragmatism was a significant player in environmental policy even before the familiar contemporary debates began: Ben Minteer has argued in his book *The Landscape of Reform* that a tradition of environmental pragmatism covering both the land and civic society was a key player in environmental policy, civic planning and land use legislation in American society through much of the first half of the 20th century, and can be seen in such figures as Liberty Hyde Bailey, Lewis Mumford and Benton MacKaye, as well as – much more controversially – Aldo Leopold[[2]](#endnote-2). For Minteer, the familiar construct of the history of American environmentalism as a debate between conservationism and preservationism that might perhaps be seen as synthesized in the Leopoldian land ethic is misconceived in that it leaves out the vital third player, civic pragmatism, which he sees as inspired especially by John Dewey and to a lesser extent by Josiah Royce. Other scholars have tracked the conceptual links between environmental concern and pragmatism back still further in US history and heritage: Paul Thompson and Thomas Hilde’s essay collection adds to Dewey and Royce by bringing in figures such as Thomas Jefferson and Benjamin Franklin as well as Emerson, Thoreau and even John Steinbeck amongst the field of agrarian thinkers with a pragmatist aspect, whilst Scott Pratt tracks a line of influence on pragmatism right back to Native American thought[[3]](#endnote-3). Though pragmatism is often attacked for its perceived anthropocentrism and/or instrumentalism, its core evolutionary focus on the self as being fundamentally relational and as engaged in continuous mutually impressing interactions with the surrounding environment makes it at the very least a plausible *candidate* for framing the values involved in a persuasive environmental ethics and politics.

Yet the discussion of pragmatism has until recently been marked by a curious absence. Reading these discussions, it would be easy not to realize that the primary promotion of the pragmatic philosophy at the 20th century’s beginning was done by none of these thinkers but instead by William James, who at the time of his death in 1910 was generally recognized not only as the leading American philosopher of his day but also as the finest psychologist in the United States’ history. So strange and pervasive has this invisibility of James in environmental scholarship been that even occasions that appear to be crying out for a Jamesian acknowledgment have seen him neglected. A good example of this is found in Bryan Norton’s book *Sustainability*[[4]](#endnote-4) where, drawing on the work of Ben Minteer and Curt Meine, Norton argues that Aldo Leopold was significantly influenced by Yale University president Arthur Twining Hadley. Norton uses the linkage as a vital touchstone, claiming that Leopold “was exposed to, and quoted, these pragmatist ideas and that his earliest account of a conservation ethic (written in 1923) embodied the pragmatist definition of truth” and that what “Leopold borrowed from Hadley was the key idea that longevity over multiple generations provides a second, independent criterion of the success of a culture”[[5]](#endnote-5). The pragmatist definition of truth in question, as given by Hadley and Leopold on this reading, is that truth is “that which prevails in the long run”, itself an adaptation of William James’s formulation in *Pragmatism* (1907) that truth is that which prevails “in the long run and on the whole”, and indeed Norton notes that Hadley described himself as “a follower of William James”[[6]](#endnote-6). On Norton’s argument it was, therefore, essentially a working out of Jamesian truth that animated Leopold’s 1923 essay “Some Fundamentals of Conservation in the Southwest”, yet no further investigation of the James connection follows in Norton’s treatment, and when he turns to a pragmatist reading of the Leopoldian heritage a few pages later, Norton invokes “Dewey’s particularly clear and compelling explanation of the not-yet-fully-understood consequences of Darwin’s revolutionary idea”[[7]](#endnote-7), after which the possibility of a James-Leopold link vanishes behind the Dewey-Leopold connection that Norton wants to forge and James, for no reason that is explained, drops entirely out of the picture. Whatever the merits of Norton’s claim of pragmatist influence on Leopold, he evidently assumes that any insights from James will be faithfully adopted and then improved by Dewey.

I have argued elsewhere that the assumptions of Dewey’s faithfulness and superiority to James in environmental thought are in at least some respects misplaced[[8]](#endnote-8), and I will not repeat all those arguments here. Rather, I suspect that some of the wariness towards James from environmental philosophers may come from misunderstandings of his views that were popularized by some of the original founders of the academic discipline of environmental ethics in the 1980s and whose inaccuracy not yet been popularly recognized in the field. Holmes Rolston especially picked out James as a figure for criticism whilst Eugene Hargrove made significant attacks on pragmatism as a philosophy that is both reductionist and economistic[[9]](#endnote-9). Two James passages and an essay, “The Moral Equivalent of War”, are Rolston’s bugbears, the last of which he interprets as a call for moral war against nature, and whilst I have dealt with all these criticisms in depth elsewhere[[10]](#endnote-10), it is worth briefly noting the broad character of the charges in relation to “The Moral Equivalent of War”. Rolston, who rather oddly chooses to support his criticism with a quotation from a completely different essay, appears to follow William Leiss in seeing James’s essay as a “Baconian scenario” in which “the aggressiveness involved in human ambition” can be “turned loose against the environment... without the sense of guilt”[[11]](#endnote-11), and thus regards it as an expression both of radically anthropocentric subjectivism and of a runaway instrumentalizing dynamic that many anti-pragmatist environmental thinkers appear to associate with pragmatism. Indeed, the interconnected suspicions that pragmatism is fundamentally subjectivist, anthropocentric, reductionist, and a form of freewheeling instrumentalism are all common amongst the anti-pragmatist camp, and whilst as stated I have dealt with them at length elsewhere, I mention them here as a backdrop because my treatment of James’s moral philosophy should indicate in passing how mistaken these views are in this context.

Against this view of pragmatism in general and James in particular, I intend to set the evidence of James’s psychological claims and his account of value emerging into the world. Since James wrote relatively little in terms of formal ethics despite the profound centrality of moral engagement to his character, my treatment will to some extent be speculatively interpretative and involve the cashing out of implications of Jamesian thought, but I think not in ways that grossly violate the spirit of his ideas. I shall further argue that James’s late arrival into political activism featured a strong latent critique of acquisitive industrialist expansionism as well as emphases on spontaneity and receptivity that fit well with green emphases on transformative values found in nature experience. With these aims in mind, I now turn to James’s account of value in both his ethics and psychology.

William James: Value, Sentience, Consciousness and Ethics

In his essay “The Moral Philosopher and the Moral Life”, James subdivides the business of ethics into three questions: the *psychological* question of the historical origin of our moral ideas and judgments, the *metaphysical* question of the meaning of moral terms such as “good”, “ill” “obligation” and so forth, and the *casuistic* question dealing with “the *measure* of the various goods and ills that men recognize”[[12]](#endnote-12). Since at this stage I am primarily concerned with indicating the basics of his account of value, I shall initially focus on the first two of these, connecting James’s ethical observations to the psychological views with which they are obviously connected.

In ethical terms, James sees the origins of moral ideas in physical states and their resultant associations, maintaining that empiricist thinkers like Bentham and Mill “have done a lasting service in taking so many of our human ideals and showing how they must have arisen from association with acts of simple bodily pleasures and reliefs from pain”, but at the same time, he acknowledges that more complex moral feelings, such as feelings of fitness or revulsion at discord and inconsistency, may be emergent but are not simply reducible to earlier simple forms: the “feeling of the inward dignity of certain spiritual attitudes, as peace, serenity, simplicity, veracity; and of the essential vulgarity of others, as querulousness, anxiety, egoistic fussiness, etc – are quite inexplicable except by an innate preference of the more ideal attitude for its own sake”, such that the “nobler thing *tastes* better, and that is all that we can say”[[13]](#endnote-13). His account is thus naturalistic but not reductionist, acknowledging that purely “inward forces are at work” in such cases, while maintaining that the “higher, more penetrating ideals are revolutionary” and that they “present themselves far less in the guise of past experience than in that of probable causes of future experience, factors to which the environment and the lessons it has so far taught us must learn to bend”[[14]](#endnote-14). Both inner forces and outer stimuli are thus implicated in the roots of all forms of value, a point to which we shall return, but the habitat where ethical values exist “can only be a mind which feels them” for “no world composed of merely physical facts can possibly be a world to which ethical propositions apply”. Accordingly, moral value enters the world with conscious life: “The moment one sentient being, however, is made a part of the universe, there is a chance for goods and evils really to exist. Moral relations now have their *status*, in that being’s consciousness. 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”[[15]](#endnote-15). James next expands the criterion to evaluate the beginning of genuine value claims and value conflicts, where a concrete claim can be made by a being on another. For him, these emerge from the demands of the beings involved and generate prima facie obligations; it is not that there is a pre-existing abstract moral order in which the superior validity of one claim over another is pre-established. Rather, the case is that obligations emerge from claims and “there is some obligation wherever there is a claim”. Genuine philosophical problems of ethics emerge when claims compete. “Take any demand, however slight, which any creature, however weak, may make. Ought it not, for its own sole sake be satisfied? If not, prove why not. The only possible kind of proof you could adduce would be the exhibition of another creature who should make a demand that ran the other way”. Accordingly, such words as “good”, “bad” “obligation” and the like do not denote abstract absolute items but instead “have no foothold or anchorage in Being, apart from the existence of actually living minds”[[16]](#endnote-16). If this is the case, however, then the task of the philosopher must be to find an impartial test by which to evaluate competing goods, perhaps by finding some common coin, such as utilitarian happiness, in terms of which all competing goods can be evaluated. James maintains that whilst the utilitarians have probably come closest in this quest, nonetheless there are “innumerable acts and impulses that never *aim* at happiness” and so he suggests instead the wider principle that “the essence of good is simply to satisfy demand”, with demand itself being pluralistically conceived because the “elementary forces in ethics are probably as plural as those of physics are”[[17]](#endnote-17). The fact that demands conflict with each other both within each individual life and between individuals takes us to the third question, the casuistic one of the proper measure of the various goods and ills. For James, it is evident that ideals conflict and that “there is always a *pinch* between the ideal and the actual which can only be got through by leaving part of the ideal behind”. Accordingly, since not all demands can be satisfied, James suggests that “the guiding principle for ethical philosophy” must “be simply to satisfy at all times *as many demands as we can*”; the best act, accordingly, must be that “which makes for the *best whole*, in the sense of awakening the least sum of dissatisfactions”, and “those ideals must be written highest which *prevail at the least cost*, or by whose realization the least possible number of other ideals are destroyed”, thus leading finally to James’s conclusion that “the victory to be prayed for is that of the more inclusive side – of the side which even in the hour of triumph will to some degree do justice to the ideals in which the vanquished party’s interests lay”[[18]](#endnote-18). We must, accordingly, “act as to bring about the very largest total universe of good which we can see”, voting “always for the richer universe, for the good which seems most organizable, most fit to enter into complex combinations, most apt to be a member of a more inclusive whole”[[19]](#endnote-19).

There are legitimate worries about this scheme, perhaps the most important of which is pointed out by John K. Roth, namely that James fails to build in qualitative distinctions about the weight or priority to be given to competing demands[[20]](#endnote-20). However, it does suggest some potentially positive green options: firstly, James’s attention to sentience and consciousness appears at least on the surface to mandate a nonanthropocentric approach to ethics, and secondly the injunction to maximal inclusivity might have encouraging implications for ethically charged models of sustainability. I shall turn here to the issue of nonanthropocentrism, for a neglected early paper in environmental ethics by Robert C. Fuller made precisely this argument. Fuller commends James's essay “The Moral Philosopher and the Moral Life” as a base for environmental ethics, regarding the prescriptive injunctions in it - the rejection of hedonic utilitarianism as incompatible with justice, advocating instead the fulfilling of as many claims for satisfaction as possible whilst leaving a maximal number of claims undamaged in their potentiality for actualisation - as being a promising rough map for our ethical treatment of both the human and the non-human world, whilst acknowledging that further work would be necessary to ground an ethic to deal with inanimate nature[[21]](#endnote-21). The problem with this effort of Fuller’s is that Fuller writes throughout as if sentience and consciousness were *interchangeable synonyms*, with all living things being sentient[[22]](#endnote-22), whereas James himself was more careful than this, as we shall see.

 Fuller's error can be seen in considering the active role that consciousness plays for James, in which selectivity is of the essence. First of all, in the *Principles of Psychology* James distinguishes living from non-living motion, contrasting the unvarying clinging of iron filings to a card-covered magnet with the varying attempts to get around an obstacle which are manifested by a frog seeking air when apparently trapped underwater. The critical point that James wishes to illustrate here is that of *selective activity*, of the spontaneity manifested by *conscious* living things in attaining their goals, leading him to the conclusion that it is the “pursuance of future ends and the choice of means for their attainment” which constitutes “the mark and criterion of the presence of mentality”[[23]](#endnote-23). This definition serves two purposes, for it distinguishes not merely animate from inanimate activity, but also spontaneous actions from reflex actions and simple stimulus response, since the latter respond in a fixed manner to stimuli, not a variable one.

 This effectively obliterates Fuller's conflation of sentience with consciousness. For sentience is merely the possession of *some* form of reactive perception to environment. A virus or an amoeba may be said to possess sentience in this basic sense, reacting as it will to the introduction of acid onto a microscope slide, yet it will not *choose* means. Sentience is thus a necessary but not a sufficient condition for the presence of consciousness, for whilst sentience is “reactive”, the addition of consciousness makes an organism “proactive”. It is important to be clear as to the meaning of the term “sentience” here, as it should not be confused with Singer's influential utilitarian account. The term for our present purposes is *not* being used in a *directly* moral manner, though it may be seen to have normative implications. Whereas Singer's account is based on creatures being morally considerable through possessing interests, and he sees the “capacity for suffering or enjoyment” as “a prerequisite for having interests at all”, nonetheless Singer appears to blur the line between sentience and consciousness by assuming that suffering must be felt in some more or less conscious way, by analogy with humans, on the grounds of “the similarity of the nervous system of the being to our own”[[24]](#endnote-24). Thus for Singer, sentience appears to mean more or less *conscious* “suffering”. It is for this reason that Singer draws the inevitably fuzzy “chimps not shrimps” line that he does in the area of dietary ethics. As against Singer's directly moral usage, the Jamesian account of sentience, on my reading, is primarily epistemological in its significance at this stage. The meaning of “sentience” here should be taken physiologically, for James transferred to psychology from physiology; it is derived from the Latin *sentire*, “to feel”, and its meaning is given in the *Oxford English Dictionary* as “responsive to sensory stimuli”. A sentient being, by definition, is capable of *sensing*, but it need not be capable of selecting means to ends. As such, Fuller's implication that *all* organisms would be morally considered under the scheme in James's essay is false, since for James it is only with the arrival of consciousness that an organism can issue an “imperative decree” for survival, and it is at this point that “*real* ends appear for the first time .. upon the world's stage”[[25]](#endnote-25). It is the active choice of means to ends that distinguishes conscious creatures from merely sentient ones. This does not deny that some suitably modified framework might indeed ethically serve in the manner that Fuller misinterprets James as suggesting - since consciousness includes and evolves from sentience, we could, for example, legitimately regard sentient non-conscious organisms as entitled to some ethical considerability as “moral patients” who cannot have conscious goals of their own, and so rank their status hierarchically lower than conscious creatures - but rather to explain that the function of consciousness as spontaneous, active and selective is far more central to James's thought than Fuller allows.

It is worth noting that although Fuller may have overblown James’s moral attentiveness to sentience, contemporary concerns about animal welfare were not absent from James’s mind. In fact, although he was not in principle opposed to the use of animals for scientific experimentation given its centrality to the beginnings and teaching of psychology, James was somewhat more morally concerned than most about the casual attitude to vivisection that was common in his profession at the time. In correspondence he complimented the Vivisection Reform Society for having asserted that “the rights of the helpless, even though they be brutes, must be protected by those who have superior power” and having by their work “gradually induced some sense of public accountability in physiologists, and made them regulate their several individual selves”[[26]](#endnote-26). This does not quite have the radical moral impacts that Fuller supposes, but it nonetheless illustrates James’s concern for nonhuman conscious life in a way that rather belies the more cavalier pictures of him as a runaway anthropocentrist. Moreover, marking the difference between simple sentience and consciousness not only illustrates the importance of the latter, but also points to the importance in Jamesian thought of the active selective component in consciousness. As such, it takes us to different orientations to sensory experience that can be found in James’s thought. I shall indicate two significant aspects of cognitive posture that may be seen to emerge from James’s scheme and be suitable for environmental values, before finally turning to issues of sustainability. The first of these orientations relates to James’s treatment of the quietly receptive domain of experience, when we move down to simple perceptions, the second to his emphasis on spontaneous energy and especially its relationship to his political writings.

For the first issue here, we should first recall the point that for James, the agent is always interactive with environment and constructed through ongoing interactions. Our perceptions are conditioned by past associations and the impact of this on selective consciousness so there is no wholly direct and unmediated sensory experience for any human adult, but whilst this means that the trail of the human serpent is over everything (in James’s phrase), it does not follow that the trail is *equally* over everything. For James is also the founder of radical empiricism, a rethinking of the empiricist tradition centered upon the idea of pure experience, but where such purity is “only a relative term, meaning the proportional amount of unverbalised sensation which it still embodies” since “only new born babes, or men in semi-coma from sleep, drugs, illnesses, or blows may be assumed to have an experience pure in the literal sense of a *that* which is not yet any definite *what*”[[27]](#endnote-27). In his essay “On a Certain Blindness in Human Beings”, of which he presented multiple versions to various audiences, James points in part precisely to the germinatory possibilities of such receptive experiences: life, he maintains, “is always worth living, if one has such responsive sensibilities” as to enable ‘the intense interest that life can assume when brought down to the… level of pure sensorial experience’[[28]](#endnote-28). Such experiences involve a certain receptivity and willingness to cognitively let be rather than impose preset patterns, yet for this very reason they can be the wellsprings of fresh acquaintance with reality and new understandings; indeed James tells us in radical empiricist mode that such experiences have ‘a depth… that constrains us to ascribe more reality to them than to all other experiences’[[29]](#endnote-29). Ralph Barton Perry captures well this broader Jamesian unity of the requirements for receptivity, fulfilment and philosophical success:

 There are occasional moments when experience is most fully tasted - in the exhilaration of a fresh morning, in moments of suffering, or in times of triumphant effort, when the tang is strong, when every nuance or overtone is present. James would arrest us at such moments and say, ‘There, *that* is it. Reality is like *that*.' But our worldly minds are filled with ready-made ideas, and when we experience reality it usually has these ideas already stamped upon it. Our minds are accustomed to various short cuts, omissions, and abbreviations dictated by practical convenience, and what these omit we do not commonly apprehend. Hence the metaphysical vision, like the seeing of the painter, involves a recovery of innocence, a capture of the elusive, an unnatural access of sensitiveness.[[30]](#endnote-30)

James himself, speaking of this dimension of experience, refers to such experiences in which preset patterns are minimised as having a “sense of hidden meaning” which often “makes an epoch in his history” for the subject and which “starts upon us often from non-human natural things”[[31]](#endnote-31). On these grounds, we may build further in value terms by saying that although what we may say about experiences is always socially mediated, direct experiences themselves are not all *equally* socially mediated or constructed: some experiences really are more pure, direct, more immediately sensory and thus more natural than others, and are so precisely to the extent that they are not yet verbalised into received ideas and instrumental shortcuts, a point to which I shall return shortly. Whereas pragmatism is all too often thought of by critics as a deeply instrumentalist and thus instrumentalizing perspective, James’s attention to introspection and greater concern for the purity of pure experience allows him to attend to and help account for such experiences rather better. This said, despite his affection for wilderness experience James does not explain why non-human natural things may be given to generating this effect, so I now suggest why natural things have this effect, and for how James’s account might be used to enrich environmental thought.

Given James’s attention to “non-human natural things”, I must begin by stating that I think it possible and desirable to define an ontological sphere of the natural that avoids the extremes of man-nature dualisms as well as the “death of nature” hypothesis and the monisms of naturalism and social constructionism; indeed, I have argued elsewhere that James’s philosophy can help us do this, and shall not repeat those arguments here[[32]](#endnote-32). Instead, I wish to indicate how a Jamesian account may help us better explain core environmentalist intuitions, and better recognise and conceptualize the values resultant from nature experience, especially the fragile non-instrumental values which anti-pragmatists often assume pragmatist thought cannot register. First, we should note that James’s introspective attention to quiet experience points to gaps in instrumentality, to moments that do not fit into either a means or an end side of an instrumentalist ledger of activity. Similarly, Anthony Weston has complained that intrinsic value theory is insufficiently radical and experientially sensitive in dealing with the valuing of nature as it actually happens in concrete experience, for shifting moral weight from the means to the ends side of the ledger misses the point if, as he suggests, our habit of examining relational webs of experience with a means-ends distinction and a loaded set of associations immediately in hand is itself a major part of the problem[[33]](#endnote-33). If a key part of what we value about nature is its spontaneity and patterns, its counterpointing of the everyday instrumental planning of our lives, then acknowledging a more radical gap in instrumental rationality itself is needed, and so Weston suggests what he calls “immediate values”, of either episodic or patterned types to better capture the reality of valuing nature. Immediate values are radically non-instrumental and can thus resonate with the familiar environmentalist critique of instrumentalism, but they are not synonymous with intrinsic values in that they do not merely shift the axiological emphasis from the means to the ends side of the spectrum, but rather try to undercut the idea that the means/end, instrumental/intrinsic distinctions are exhaustive of experienced value. Such values chime with James’s injunctions (although Weston himself is a Deweyan) and do not fit into either the means or ends side of the instrumental ledger; rather “they are more like surprises or gifts, not amenable to production on demand or to ordinary goal-seeking rationality”[[34]](#endnote-34).

I think Weston’s claims deserve far more discussion than they have received. When nature draws us out of ourselves, it seems odd to claim that this makes it either a means or an end. If we have our attention attracted by a squirrel's jump outside the window, or watch the movements of ants above ground in fascination, what is happening is not an instrumentalization or an acknowledgment of other “ends”. We think of these experiences as “drawing us out of ourselves”, but *what* we are drawn out of is narrowness of focus, a concern solely with prospects and plans (both manifestations of instrumental rationality) of ourselves or those close to our world of shared symbols. Iris Murdoch, coming from a different tradition in *The Sovereignty of Good*, captures one aspect of this well in observing that our “minds are continually active, fabricating an anxious, usually self-preoccupied, often falsifying *veil* which partially conceals the world” and yet simple immediate value experience of nature can break through this mindset:

I am looking out of my window in an anxious and resentful state of mind, oblivious of my surroundings, brooding perhaps on some damage done to my prestige. Then suddenly I observe a hovering kestrel. In a moment everything is altered. The brooding self with its hurt vanity has disappeared. There is nothing now but kestrel. And when I return to thinking of the other matter it seems less important.[[35]](#endnote-35)

Here a moment of immediate value become transformatively important in mood and thus significant for the quality of ethical reflection, and whilst we could think of such an experience instrumentally, thinking calculatively of nonhuman nature as a resource for keeping psychological balance, Murdoch notes that in direct personal terms it is more natural and proper that we should “take a self-forgetful pleasure in the sheer alien pointless independent existence of animals birds stones and trees”[[36]](#endnote-36).Moreover, immediate value experiences of this sort emerge from nature experience in part precisely *because* of nature’s ontological qualities, the fact that kestrels are not artifacts and thus possess an independent spontaneity lacking in human-designed items. As Mary Midgley observes, “if we found that we were in Disneyland, with plastic kestrels going up at carefully randomized intervals, the entire point would be lost”[[37]](#endnote-37) Similarly, the therapeutic effects of nature for the depressed are well-known, but still require the individual to have what James called “responsive sensibilities” to quieten the instrumentalist chatter of conventional thinking and associations; here as elsewhere the extraction of value is non-automatic, as Leopold insisted[[38]](#endnote-38). If the depression's cause is inability to cope with the pervasiveness of abstract instrumental rationality of contemporary life, then reclassifying nature as ‘end’ fails to capture the meaning and significance of the value involved. The experiential paradox is this: *nature can fulfil instrumental purposes of mental well-being only if we avoid initially approaching it with instrumental rationality in mind*. Self-consciously seeking such experience as an end is self-contradictory, like furiously trying to sleep, if the major attraction of the experience is its contrast to everyday instrumentalities. (Of course, there may be some initial instrumentality in seeking out a nature area for these purposes, but the point is that the effects attained once there only become possible insofar as sets of abstract categories and expectations are damped down; nature experience is quite unlike film or theatre experience in this respect)[[39]](#endnote-39). The depressive's troubles are healed by nature experience, if they are healed, through contextualisation, coming to matter less because the means-ends categories of instrumental rationality are themselves bracketed, and precisely because of James’s focus on receptivity, this appears to be a point which a Jamesian environmental ethic can incorporate best of any pragmatist perspective. Indeed, though we have only hints in his philosophical writings, in his personal writings James was prepared to go significantly further in ways that would seem to support my reading here. In two important letters to his close friend Pauline Goldmark during the last year of his life, James first urged Goldmark in a letter of June 22, 1909 to “lose no chance during all these young years to live with nature – it is the eternal normal animal thing in us, overlaid by other more important human destinies no doubt, but holding the fort in the middle of the security of all the rest”, a comment that would clearly fit with the idea of nature experience as offering coherence and the possibility of growth. Writing again on September 5 that year, he was still more specific about the special role of nature, observing that Goldmark’s lette from the West “gladdened my heart by awakening lively images of the bath in Nature’s beauties and wonders which you were about to have. I hope that you have *drunk deep*, for that goes to a certain spot in us that nothing else can reach, more ‘serious’ and ‘valuable’ though other things profess (and seem) to be”[[40]](#endnote-40). These were certainly not isolated statements, for as his biographer Robert Richardson observes, James expressed many everyday appreciations of natural simplicity, especially his “enthusiasm for the blessed austerities of the rustic Putnam camp and his passion for the outdoor life of the Adirondack high country”, and he “writes of those experiences over and over”,[[41]](#endnote-41) yet very few environmental ethicists have dug into the relevant material.

In dealing with this side of valuational experience then, a Jamesian environmental ethic looks backwards to the Romantics and the strong traditions of aesthetic, spiritual and experiential emphasis on nature, but does so without committing itself solely to any of these domains. For James, as Goodman observes, there is “a sense of mystery and wonder about such moments, but the mystery comes within human awareness itself, not from divine intervention and not from what Emerson called ‘a foreign addition’”[[42]](#endnote-42); as such, the experiential language of the non-instrumental values involved can capture the intuitions of both the secular and the religious without demanding dogmatic conversion from either. Moreover, we should note that this connection to immediacy and Romanticism is via the radical empiricist side of James’s thought, so nothing is lost on the more hard-headed pragmatist side of the issue, where the wide ranging and more familiar types of policy argument can still be advanced. It might, for example, be accurate to express and motivate local environmental action by reference to such Westonian immediate values, but campaign for federal laws by using the language of intrinsic value, since law is necessarily connected to and justifiable in terms of means-end managerial rationality, a point to which I shall return. What the Jamesian component gives is an anti-reductionist commitment to appreciate the non-instrumental elements in the experience of valuing nature, a commitment that may better capture the value of nature as experienced, and thus also help bring on board those environmentalists who now see pragmatism as too managerialist or technocratic to properly capture the valuing of nature.

So much for receptivity, the gentler side of the Jamesian experiential appeals that give the possibility of growth and transformation. We now turn to the other side, the emphasis on dynamism and energy. For James, consciousness is *active* and *selective*: we choose to attend to particular portions of our experience and act upon them. Individuals thus acquire distinct perspectives, priorities and sets of values, and channel their energies accordingly; the same could be said of cultures. In the moral domain, there are also general orientations of consciousness and levels of energy. Whilst receptivity of the type already discussed allows growth in one respect, energy of a more projective type is needed in actually battling for moral and political ends, and this is what James refers to as the “strenuous mood”. “The deepest difference, practically, in the moral life of man”, he writes, “is the difference between the easy-going and the strenuous mood”, for it is the strenuous mood that “makes us quite indifferent to present ill, if only the greater ideal be attained”[[43]](#endnote-43). The distinction that James thus drew in “The Moral Philosopher and the Moral Life” in 1891 was one that was to take a far more central role in his thinking in the final years of his life, as his politics were radicalized by the Spanish-American War and the resultant American de facto seizure of the Philippines. The strenuous mood could, in principle, be awakened in anyone when sufficiently stimulated, and most often through some form of moral challenge or exertion, but it needed, James said, “the wilder passions to arouse it, the big fears, loves and indignations; or else the deeply penetrating appeal of some one of the higher fidelities, like justice, truth or freedom”[[44]](#endnote-44). In many respects, it could be said that James’s radicalization in the 1890s also represents a shift in his own mood from the easy-going to the strenuous, precisely such a potent awakening, for James was disgusted and horrified at the greed and rapacity of a newly commercialized and imperialist United States of America. Indeed, so emotionally intense was his engagement in anti-imperialist activity that his doctor actually cautioned him to cut back on his engagement with the controversy for the sake of his mental and physical health, but James pressed on regardless[[45]](#endnote-45). Let us examine the components both of his philosophy and activism here.

Firstly, as his essay on ethics suggests, James is individualist and pluralist in approach, yet this is not to be confused with the type of possessive individualism associated with the neo-Lockean school today. On the contrary, James was scathing about the corrosive effects of merely materialist and capitalistic conceptions of success or fulfilment, not least because he associated them with greed, corruption and resultant moral flabbiness, as well as regarding them as part of an engine of what he called “bigness”, the pressures of contemporary society toward standardization, homogeneity and alienation, and away from spontaneity and genuine originality. “If we were asked that disagreeable question”, he says in 1903, “’What are the bosom-vices of the level of culture which our land and day have reached?’ we should be forced, I think, to give the still more disagreeable answer that they are swindling and adroitness, and the indulgence of swindling and adroitness, and cant, and sympathy with cant – natural fruits of that extraordinary idealization of ‘success’ in the mere outward sense of ‘getting there’, and getting there on as big a scale as we can, which characterizes our present generation”[[46]](#endnote-46). James, as befits a man brought up on the fringes of the New England Transcendentalists, sees true individual development and unfolding as hampered rather than promoted by an excessive emphasis on material goods, a point to which we shall return in our dealings with “The Moral Equivalent of War”. As against the propertarian idea of individualism his ethical focus is individualistic in that it features, as James Campbell puts it, an emphasis on individual fulfilment, on “personal responsibility and the creation of individual values”[[47]](#endnote-47). In many respects, James’s emphasis on the strenuous mood has much in common with Platonic *thymos*, spiritedness: it similarly involves an emphasis on energetic and spirited speech and deeds in defence of strongly held values and in resistance to unwanted attempts at domination by others. Following from this, James also saw rights of democratic self-determination as flowing from the distinctive perspectives and experience of a people; though strongly influenced by John Stuart Mill and in many respects indebted to him in philosophical outlook, James would never acquiesce in the idea of there being “backward states of society in which the race itself may be considered in its nonage”, as occur in Mill’s complacent apologetics for British imperialism[[48]](#endnote-48).

Accordingly, the arrival of the United States as an imperial power engaged in conquest and acquisition shocked and disgusted James to his core. To read the William James of this period is to read, in Deborah Coons’ words, “a man angry to the depths of his being because his own people, the American people whose older ideals he loved so well, were allowing an irremediable moral wrong to happen in their name”[[49]](#endnote-49). Though he had initially viewed the start of hostilities with Spain in a relatively calm light, he soon regarded the resultant rise in nationalism and apologetics for imperial conquest as a moral monstrosity that war had ushered into being within the national consciousness, writing to the *Boston Evening Transcript* in 1899 that: “We gave the fighting instinct and the passion for mastery their outing… because we thought that… we could resume our permanent ideals and character when the fighting fit was done. We now see we reckoned without our host. We see by the vividest of examples what an absolute savage and pirate the passion of military conquest always is, and how the only safeguard against the crimes to which it will infallibly drag the nation that gives way to it is to keep it chained forever; is never to let it get its start"[[50]](#endnote-50). That requirement for psychological chaining, however, could not and should not in James’s view be bought at the cost of moral engagement and strenuousness, as we shall see shortly in our dealings with “The Moral Equivalent of War”. On the contrary, much of the horror that James had at American policy towards the Philippines and its crushing of Aguinaldo’s nationalist movement there derived from the fact that it represented the needless destruction of another people and set of perspectives with their own consciousness, values and vigour. “Here were the precious beginnings of an indigenous national life, with which, if we had any responsibilities to these islands at all, it was our first duty to have squared ourselves” but instead “[W]e are now openly engaged in crushing out the sacredest thing in this great human world – the attempt of a people long enslaved to attain the possession of itself, to organize its laws and government, to be free to follow its own internal destinies according to its own ideals… No life shall you have, we say, except as a gift from our philanthropy after your unconditional submission, to our will… It is horrible, simply horrible… We must sow our ideals, plant our order, impose our God. The individual lives are nothing… Could there be a more damning indictment of that whole bloated idol called ‘modern civilization’ than this amounts to? Civilization is, then, the big, hollow, resounding, corrupting, sophisticating, confusing torrent of mere brutal momentum and irrationality that brings forth fruits like this!”[[51]](#endnote-51). This was the acquisitive, expansionist “bigness” that James so loathed, protesting in his correspondence of early 1899 that the “day of ‘bigness’… is sweeping every good principle and quality out of the world”[[52]](#endnote-52), and strikingly describing the US military’s defeat of Aguinaldo as “the infernal adroitness of the great department store, which has reached perfect expertness in the art of killing silently and with no public squealing or commotion the neighboring small concern”[[53]](#endnote-53). In June that year he famously declaimed in a letter to his friend Sarah Wyman Whitman that:

 I am against bigness and greatness in all their forms, and with the invisible molecular moral forces that work from individual to individual, stealing in through the crannies of the world like so many soft rootlets, or like the capillary oozing of water, and yet rending the hardest monuments of man’s pride, if you give them time. The bigger the unit you deal with, the hollower, the more brutal, the more mendacious is the life displayed. So I am against all big organizations as such, national ones first and foremost; against all big successes and big results; and in favor of the eternal forces of truth which always work in the individual and immediately unsuccessful way, under-dogs always, till history comes, after they are long dead, and puts them on top.[[54]](#endnote-54)

Such proclamations would naturally endear James to the eco-anarchist, the bioregionalist and the direct democrat, but whilst there is little doubt here about what James opposes – on such evidence it is hard any longer to think of him as the kind of capitalist booster or thoughtless instrumentalist that green critics have all too often assumed - one is still left asking what, politically speaking, he is *for*. Interpretations vary, with James T. Kloppenberg interpreting him as a proto-social democrat whilst Deborah Coon draws on a welter of material to argue that he may best be viewed as a form of 19th century communitarian anarchist, but with the “relative emphasis… on the *individuals* banding together in communities, rather than on the *communities* of individuals”[[55]](#endnote-55). I certainly agree with Coon that James’s emphasis is consistently on the individual, but have my doubts as to whether the self-description of “anarchist” that James occasionally deployed was wholly consistent. Coon focuses primarily on James’s writings connected to anti-imperialism, but in the process overlooks his concurrent writings on a topic which also evoked his moral disgust, that of lynching, and on this topic James sounds far more like a law and order enthusiast than an anarchist. “The question is: Shall law or the mob rule?” he thundered in his “Epidemic of Lynching” article of 1903, in which he demands that “when the mob threatens, the sheriff should fire instantly and effectively” for a “mob is cowardly” and “represents the many led by the few”; as such, the “proper execution of the law is the only thing we can look to for relief with any degree of hope”[[56]](#endnote-56). James’s moral disgust is manifest and obviously righteous here, but his solutions would sound rather odd from a truly full-blown anarchist. The likelihood, I suggest, is that James was politically torn as many greens are today: ideally he would like a decentralized and smaller scale democratic society in which the individual truly counts, but the complexity of social problems often pulls in the opposite direction, and he was uncertain about the extent to which the best – communitarian anarchism – might be allowed to become the enemy of the good, namely intelligent forms of social regulation.

James, then, saw the “strenuous mood” as the vital component in moral struggles, and as held by individuals, though it could be strengthened both by social associations and religious faith. On the one side, he asserted the need for receptivity to direct experience, including other human perspectives, as vital principle of human growth, whilst on the other, he regarded the need for strain and testing as a vital component of ethical improvement in society: evils were not to be wished away or explained as parts of a higher ultimate synthesis, as his neo-Hegelian opponents believed, but to be fought against with maximal strength and determination. There is thus a receptively appreciative side to James’s moral philosophy and a combative side that is its complement. It is against this background that we turn to evaluate his essay, much criticized by environmentalists, “The Moral Equivalent of War”.

The Moral Equivalent of War: Equivalence through Nature, not War on Nature

Most if not all of the environmentalist criticism of James’s essay “The Moral Equivalent of War” have completely ignored its context, which is this: James is attempting to mediate between declared pacifists and those who regard military activity as incorporating vital training in vigorous virtues. James takes a median position between these pacifists and the believers in “martial virtue”, citing his belief in “the reign of peace” and “the gradual advent of some sort of socialistic equilibrium”, but holding that peace neither “ought nor will be permanent on this globe, unless the states pacifically organised preserve some of the old elements of army-discipline”, since “a permanently successful peace-economy cannot be a simple pleasure-economy”.57 James’ argument was that war, historically speaking, had helped successfully train human collectivities to social integration and individual self-respect, and his fear was that the absence of such stimuli could create greed, decadence and collapse. This was a common fear of the time, as Victorian optimism that evolution and the ideology of progress were harmonious came under sceptical scrutiny. Thomas Huxley, for example, suggested in *Evolution and Ethics* (1893) that society was developing in ways antithetical to human nature, perhaps leading eventually to civilisation’s downfall. In similar vein, stories such as H.G. Wells’ “The Time Machine” (1895) and E.M. Forster’s “The Machine Stops” (1909) expressed a growing scepticism towards luxury and technological dependence at the very time that James himself was protesting at America’s materialistic excesses, and indeed, Huxley and Wells were amongst James’ acquaintances.58 Pragmatically attempting to take the best from both pacifism and supporters of martial qualities, James complained that “the luxurious classes now are blind” to “man’s relations to the globe he lives on, and to the permanently sour and hard foundations of his higher life”, and proposed “a conscription of the whole youthful population to form for a certain number of years a part of the army enlisted against *Nature*”. As may already be starting to become clear the purpose of this, contra Rolston, was *not* to destroy or attack nature per se, but rather to ensure that certain virtues were preserved by direct experience of earning one’s corn: “military ideals of hardihood and discipline would be wrought in the growing fibre of the people; no one would remain blind as the luxurious classes now are blind, to man’s relations to the globe he lives on, and to the permanently sour and hard foundations of his higher life”. Afterwards those who had played their part would have “done their own part in the immemorial human warfare against nature” which would “preserve in the midst of a pacific civilisation the manly virtues which the military part is so afraid of seeing die out in peace”.59

As will become clear, the “manly virtues” that James refers to here are essentially those of resilience in the face of hardship and endurance against severe material pressures – that is, the virtues of moral struggle that accompany the strenuous mood. I shall not discuss the potentially murky gender politics implications beyond observing that much of what James has in mind is not exclusively masculine to a contemporary eye,60 but I shall focus on the relation to nature involved. James was no believer in natural bounty, and he proposed some evening out of harsh work in agriculture and industry by ensuring that all had to do their share. In typical pragmatist fashion he aims to maintain the best and richest balance of goods, and holds that human existence involves struggle as part of the natural evolutionary state of affairs. As such, he is expressing the psychological need for *necessary* experience of struggle and instrumentality toward nature for continued human flourishing and development of moral character, not a moral crusade *against* nature as Rolston supposes, and indeed his view is much closer to that of Leopold and Rolston himself, along with many other environmentalists, than Rolston believes. There is, for instance, a striking parallel between James’ reference to such dealings with nature as a “blood-tax”, Leopold’s view that “it must be poor life that knows freedom from fear” and Rolston’s description of hunting as “a *sacrament* of the fundamental, mandatory seeking and taking possession of value that characterizes an ecosystem and from which no culture ever escapes”.61 The reason why James’ suggestion is a moral *equivalent* of war, rather than actually *being* a war against nature, lies in its production of character virtues through disciplined struggle, just as apprenticeships or military service taught skills and self-discipline in earlier history. As we shall now see, it is this and not any form of anti-nature self-aggrandizement which is *moral* about the proposal.

The key here is given by Robert D. Richardson, whose biography of James explains that the interface of James’ ethics with his spiritual views is found here; it was vitally informed by nature experience, connects James’ profound belief in human liberty to his concerns with spirituality and politics, and takes the form of his great interest in voluntary poverty. These themes are most clearly explored in *The Varieties of Religious Experience* (1902), and explicitly prefigure and inform the essay under discussion. “Voluntary poverty is for James the subject of subjects”, writes Richardson, acting both as “the final proof… of the reality of religious feeling” and as a phenomenon which “marks the age old difference between those who *have* and those who *are*”.62 For James, “lives based on having are less free than lives based either on doing or on being”, and connecting the spiritual to the political in *The Varieties of Religious Experience*, he sees the “loathing of ‘capital’ with which our laboring classes today are growing more and more infected”, as indicating “this sound sentiment of antipathy for lives based on mere having”.63 Indeed James goes further, maintaining that the “dreams of social justice in which many contemporary socialists and anarchists indulge” are importantly “analogous to the saint’s belief in an existent kingdom of heaven” in that both “help to break the edge of the general reign of hardness and are slow leaven of a better order”.64 But struggling for a better order requires courage, which is precisely what the love of wealth undermines in favour of servility:

Elsewhere the desire to gain wealth and the fear to lose it are our chief breeders of cowardice and propagators of corruption. There are thousands of conjunctures in which a wealth-bound man must be a slave, whilst a man for whom poverty has no terrors becomes a freeman. Think of the strength which personal indifference to poverty would give us if we were devoted to unpopular causes. We need no longer hold our tongues or fear to vote the revolutionary or reformatory ticket. Our stocks might fall, our hopes of promotion vanish, our salaries stop, our club doors close in our faces; yet, while we lived, we would imperturbably bear witness to the spirit, and our example would help to set free our generation. The cause would need its funds, but we its servants would be potent in proportion as we personally were contented with our poverty… it is certain that the prevalent fear of poverty among the educated classes is the worst moral disease from which our civilization suffers.65

The cure for this disease, in James’ eyes, is the strenuous life - that is, the life lived in maximally direct experience of the primal facts of existence, minimally cluttered with possessions, bringing with it resilience and the capacity to aim directly at ideals without fear. It is in this respect that the morally strenuous life resembles the military life, for we “glorify the soldier as the man absolutely unencumbered” who owns “nothing but his bare life” and being “willing to toss that up at any moment when the cause commands him” represents a form of “unhampered freedom in ideal directions”. Significantly, James quotes the English poet Edward Carpenter – an early eco-socialist whose mystic socialism was geared to bonds with the land and who saw a return to nature as vital to social renewal - in persuasive support of the analogy, just as he earlier cited Thoreau on divine kinship with nature as illustrating “moments when the universal life seems to wrap us round with friendliness”.66 Like Thoreau, James’ concern with simplicity of life here has a spiritual dimension and naturalistic roots: he rejects materialistic accumulation as a bar to true human freedom and spiritual growth, and is inspired by the ideal of simple living close to the sources of life. But whilst military life has the advantages of unencumbered directness and “war is a school of strenuous life and heroism”, it cannot serve as a moral example for James because “the aim of the soldier’s life is… destruction, and nothing but destruction”. As such, what “we now need to discover in the social realm is the moral equivalent of war: something heroic that will speak to men as universally as war does, and yet will prove to be as compatible with their spiritual selves as war has proved itself to be incompatible”, and James suggests that “voluntarily accepted poverty” may precisely represent “the strenuous life” required but “without the need for crushing weaker peoples”.67 Thus both the title and central concerns of the essay “The Moral Equivalent of War” were prefigured in *The Varieties of Religious Experience*, and the point made clear there that the “moral equivalent” in question involved the building of a better society upon a *reduction* in wasteful, corrupting and greedy nature-destroying consumption. The aspect of struggle would be represented in direct personal experience through basic and *necessary* instrumental activity towards nature, especially as a learning experience, and not through a war against nature as Leiss and Rolston suppose. Indeed, James literally applied this philosophy at home: Gerald Myers notes that he “encouraged his two eldest sons, Henry III and William, Jr., to get a taste for the moral equivalent by working in the summer for the United States Forestry Service in Washington” and that *“*James’ letters to Henry III during that time indicate that he thought the wilderness experience would do his sons good”.68

Moreover, in this respect James’ personal example was followed at national level, for the nearest immediate take-up to his suggestion of a civilian conscription was Franklin Roosevelt’s Civilian Conservation Corps. This was not only a far cry from being a war against nature, but in many respects an important pragmatic development in American environmentalism. Still more recently, the Jamesian notion of a “moral equivalent of war” was deployed at the one post-war moment before our own time when a sitting US President made a real effort to turn conservation into a national priority and link it to American autonomy, strenuousness and far-sighted reform: Jimmy Carter’s speech of April 18th 1977. In it, Carter addressed the American energy crisis, decrying the fact that the USA was “the most wasteful nation on earth”, wasting “more energy than we import” and using “twice as much energy per person as do other countries like Germany, Japan, and Sweden” with a similar standard of living. Outlining an extended 10 point plan, he acknowledged that “these measures will be easy, nor will they be popular” but argued that “a policy which does not ask for changes or sacrifices would not be an effective policy” and that the “plan is essential to protect our jobs, our environment, our standard of living, and our future”. In thoroughly Jamesian fashion, Carter called for individual initiatives and support at the level of ordinary citizens, as the plan’s success or failure ”will be decided not here in Washington, but in every town and every factory, in every home and on every highway and every farm”, and even used the same specific phrase and replacement analogy as James in appealing to moral character in struggle and sacrifice: “energy will test the character of the American people and the ability of the President and the Congress to govern” but the “effort will be the ‘moral equivalent of war’ - except that we will be uniting our efforts to build and not destroy”69. Given that this speech is even known in popular parlance as the “Moral Equivalent of War” speech, it is remarkable indeed that environmentalists have so consistently misunderstood the essay from which it drew inspiration.

Conclusion

Few thinkers have been as misunderstood and misrepresented in environmental thought than William James. His value framework offers a structure whereby the most fragile values of nature experience can be validated and defended, whilst his individualism offers a moral perspective that combines the best of democratic liberal individualism whilst repudiating its consumerist excesses precisely on the grounds of their failure to fulfill the potential of the individual, and their tendencies to crush diversity and spontaneity in others when combined with mass industrial dynamics. Even his most maligned essay, “The Moral Equivalent of War”, turns out to have very different meanings and significance to that ascribed by his critics, whilst the rough draft of his ethical theory offers at least the potential for sketching a new concept of sustainability. An inspiration to conservationist policies by Presidents Franklin Roosevelt and Jimmy Carter, James’s writings need to be rediscovered for inspiration by environmentalists today. It would be a just and appropriate rediscovery of a thinker who, in his own words favoured “the eternal forces of truth which always work in the individual and immediately unsuccessful way, under-dogs always, till history comes, after they are long dead, and puts them on top”.

1. For Weston’s debate with Eric Katz and a commentary by Andrew Light, see Andrew Light & Eric Katz (eds.), *Environmental Pragmatism*, (London: Routledge, 1996), pp.285-338. [↑](#endnote-ref-1)
2. Ben A Minteer, *The Landscape of Reform: Civic Pragmatism and Environmental Thought in America*, (Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press, 2006). [↑](#endnote-ref-2)
3. Paul B. Thompson & Thomas C. Hilde (Eds.), *The Agrarian Roots of Pragmatism*, Nashville, TN: Vanderbilt University Press (2000); Scott L. Pratt, *Native Pragmatism: Rethinking the Roots of American Philosophy*, (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2003). [↑](#endnote-ref-3)
4. 4 For evaluation of the book, see Piers H.G Stephens, ‘Sustainability, Democracy and Pragmatism: Bryan Norton's Philosophy of Ecosystem Management’, *Organization and Environment* 20, 3, (2007): pp.386-92. [↑](#endnote-ref-4)
5. 5 Bryan G. Norton, *Sustainability: A Philosophy of Adaptive Ecosystem Management* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2005), pp.64,70. [↑](#endnote-ref-5)
6. 6 Norton (2005), p.65; William James, “Pragmatism” in William James, *Pragmatism and the Meaning of Truth* (London: Harvard University Press, 1978), p.106. [↑](#endnote-ref-6)
7. Norton (2005), p.77. [↑](#endnote-ref-7)
8. Piers H.G. Stephens, “Toward a Jamesian Environmental Philosophy”, *Environmental Ethics*, 31, 3, (2009): pp.227-244. [↑](#endnote-ref-8)
9. Holmes Rolston III, , *Philosophy Gone Wild*, (Buffalo, NY: Prometheus Books, 1989) pp.30-31, 91-2; also Holmes Rolston III, *Environmental Ethics: Duties to and Values in the Natural World*, (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1988) pp.33, 111. Eugene C. Hargrove, *Foundations of Environmental Ethics*, (New York: Prentice-Hall Inc., 1989), pp.208-9. [↑](#endnote-ref-9)
10. Piers H.G. Stephens, “The Turn of the Skew: Environmental Philosophy and the Ghost of William James”, *Contemporary Pragmatism*, 9, 1, (2012), pp.25-52. [↑](#endnote-ref-10)
11. William Leiss, *The Limits to Satisfaction: On Needs and Commodities*, (London: Marion Boyars, 1978), p.51. [↑](#endnote-ref-11)
12. William James, “The Moral Philosopher and the Moral Life”, in William James, *The Will to Believe and Other Essays in Popular Philosophy*, (London: Harvard University Press, 1979), p.142. [↑](#endnote-ref-12)
13. William James, “The Moral Philosopher and the Moral Life”, in William James, *The Will to Believe and Other Essays in Popular Philosophy*, (London: Harvard University Press, 1979), pp.142-3. [↑](#endnote-ref-13)
14. William James, “The Moral Philosopher and the Moral Life”, in William James, *The Will to Believe and Other Essays in Popular Philosophy*, (London: Harvard University Press, 1979), p.144. [↑](#endnote-ref-14)
15. William James, “The Moral Philosopher and the Moral Life”, in William James, *The Will to Believe and Other Essays in Popular Philosophy*, (London: Harvard University Press, 1979), pp.145-6.

 [↑](#endnote-ref-15)
16. William James, “The Moral Philosopher and the Moral Life”, in William James, *The Will to Believe and Other Essays in Popular Philosophy*, (London: Harvard University Press, 1979), pp.148-9, 150. [↑](#endnote-ref-16)
17. William James, “The Moral Philosopher and the Moral Life”, in William James, *The Will to Believe and Other Essays in Popular Philosophy*, (London: Harvard University Press, 1979), pp.152-3. [↑](#endnote-ref-17)
18. William James, “The Moral Philosopher and the Moral Life”, in William James, *The Will to Believe and Other Essays in Popular Philosophy*, (London: Harvard University Press, 1979), pp.152, 154. [↑](#endnote-ref-18)
19. William James, “The Moral Philosopher and the Moral Life”, in William James, *The Will to Believe and Other Essays in Popular Philosophy*, (London: Harvard University Press, 1979), p.158. [↑](#endnote-ref-19)
20. John K. Roth, *Freedom and the Moral Life: The Ethics of William James*, (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1969), p. 67. [↑](#endnote-ref-20)
21. .Fuller, R.C. (1992), “American Pragmatism Reconsidered: William James's Ecological Ethic”, *Environmental Ethics*, 14, 2, pp.159-76. [↑](#endnote-ref-21)
22. . The conflation is compounded by Fuller's extremely liberal usage of the term “organisms” to cover all animate creatures throughout the article, but is shown most clearly in the following critical paragraph: “In an insentient universe, there would be no such thing as goods or evils because there would be no conscious recognition that needs, desires or interests are either being promoted or thwarted. In this view, nothing can be considered good or right unless some consciousness deems it to be good or right. Thus, the moment that even one sentient being is introduced into the universe, there is a chance for goods and evils really to exist”. Fuller, (1992), p.165. [↑](#endnote-ref-22)
23. . William James, *The Principles of Psychology* (2.Vols), (London: MacMillan & Co. Ltd, 1918), Vol. 1, 8. [↑](#endnote-ref-23)
24. . Singer, P. (1976), *Animal Liberation*, Jonathan Cape, New York, pp.9, 185. Cited as Singer, (1976). [↑](#endnote-ref-24)
25. . James, (1918), 1, 141. [↑](#endnote-ref-25)
26. William James, “On Vivisection”, in William James, *Essays, Comments and Reviews*, (London: Harvard University Press, 1987), p.191. [↑](#endnote-ref-26)
27. 27 William James, *Essays in Radical Empiricism* (New York: Longmans Green & Co, 1912), pp.93-4. [↑](#endnote-ref-27)
28. 28 William James, ‘On a Certain Blindness in Human Beings’, *Selected Papers in Philosophy* (London: Everyman, 1929), pp.17-19.

 [↑](#endnote-ref-28)
29. 29 James (1929), p.9. [↑](#endnote-ref-29)
30. 30 Ralph Barton Perry, *The Thought and Character of William James* (2 Vols), (Boston: Little, Brown & Co., 1936), Vol. 2, pp.683-4. [↑](#endnote-ref-30)
31. 31 James (1929), p.9. [↑](#endnote-ref-31)
32. 32 See Piers H.G Stephens, ‘Nature, Purity, Ontology’, *Environmental Values* 9, (2000): 267-94. [↑](#endnote-ref-32)
33. 33 Anthony Weston, ‘Between Means and Ends’. *The Monist* 75, (1992): 236-49. [↑](#endnote-ref-33)
34. 34 Weston (1992), p.237. [↑](#endnote-ref-34)
35. 35 Iris Murdoch, *The Sovereignty of Good* (London: Routledge, 1989), p.84. [↑](#endnote-ref-35)
36. Murdoch (1989), p.85. [↑](#endnote-ref-36)
37. 37 Mary Midgley, *Beast and Man: The Roots of Human Nature* (London: Routledge, 2002) p.346. [↑](#endnote-ref-37)
38. Aldo Leopold, *A Sand County Almanac* *and Sketches Here and There* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989) p.179. [↑](#endnote-ref-38)
39. 39 I thank Sarah Wright for helping me clarify this point. [↑](#endnote-ref-39)
40. William James, cited in James T. Kloppenberg, “James’s *Pragmatism* and American Culture, 1907-2007”, in John J. Stuhr (Ed), *100 Years of Pragmatism: William James’s Revolutionary Philosophy*, (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2010), p.40. [↑](#endnote-ref-40)
41. Robert D Richardson, *William James in the Maelstrom of American Modernism*, (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 2007), p.412. [↑](#endnote-ref-41)
42. Goodman, *American Philosophy and the Romantic Tradition* p.60. [↑](#endnote-ref-42)
43. William James, “The Moral Philosopher and the Moral Life”, in William James, *The Will to Believe and Other Essays in Popular Philosophy*, (London: Harvard University Press, 1979), pp.159-60. [↑](#endnote-ref-43)
44. William James, “The Moral Philosopher and the Moral Life”, in William James, *The Will to Believe and Other Essays in Popular Philosophy*, (London: Harvard University Press, 1979), p.160. [↑](#endnote-ref-44)
45. Deborah J. Coon, “’One Moment in the World’s Salvation’: Anarchism and the Radicalization of William James”, *Journal of American History*, 83, 1, (1996) p.76. [↑](#endnote-ref-45)
46. William James, “The True Harvard”, in William James, *Essays, Comments and Reviews*, (London: Harvard University Press, 1987), pp.75-6. [↑](#endnote-ref-46)
47. James Campbell, “William James and the Ethics of Fulfillment”, *Transactions of the Charles S Peirce Society*, 17, 3, (1981), p.225. [↑](#endnote-ref-47)
48. John Stuart Mill, “On Liberty”, in John Stuart Mill, *Utilitarianism, On Liberty and Considerations on Representative Government*, (London: Everyman, 1984), pp.78-9. [↑](#endnote-ref-48)
49. Coon, (1996) p.78. [↑](#endnote-ref-49)
50. William James, “The Philippine Tangle”, in William James, *Essays, Comments and Reviews*, (London: Harvard University Press, 1987), p.154. [↑](#endnote-ref-50)
51. William James, “The Philippine Tangle”, in William James, *Essays, Comments and Reviews*, (London: Harvard University Press, 1987), pp.155-7. [↑](#endnote-ref-51)
52. Cited in Coon, (1996) p.79. [↑](#endnote-ref-52)
53. William James, “The Philippine Tangle”, in William James, *Essays, Comments and Reviews*, (London: Harvard University Press, 1987), p.158. [↑](#endnote-ref-53)
54. Cited in Coon, (1996) p.80. [↑](#endnote-ref-54)
55. James T. Kloppenberg, *Social Democracy and Progressivism in European and American Thought, 1870-1920*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988); Coon, (1996), p.84. [↑](#endnote-ref-55)
56. William James, “Epidemic of Lynching”, in William James, *Essays, Comments and Reviews*, (London: Harvard University Press, 1987), pp.174-6.

57. William James, “The Moral Equivalent of War”, *Memories and Studies*, (London: Longmans Green & Co., 1912), pp.286-7.

58. The Wellsian influence on James”s thought is confirmed by Richard Hofstadter, *Social Darwinism in American Thought*, (New York: George Braziller Inc., 1969) p.135.

59. William James, “The Moral Equivalent of War”, pp.289-91.

60. On gender relations, James was sympathetic to female emancipation, especially politically, but less radical than J.S. Mill, and thus a man of his time but no reactionary. See Gerald E. Myers, *William James: His Life and Thought*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1986), pp.424-29.

61. William James, “The Moral Equivalent of War”, p.291; Aldo Leopold, *A Sand County Almanac, and Sketches Here and There*, (London: Oxford University Press, 1987), p.216; Holmes Rolston III, *Environmental Ethics: Duties to and Values in the Natural World*, (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1988), p.91.

62. Robert D Richardson, *William James in the Maelstrom of American Modernism*, (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 2007), pp.410-11. For an early evaluation of this having/being distinction from an ecologically sensitive left perspective, see Erich Fromm, *To Have or To Be?*, (London: Abacus, 1979).

63. William James, *The Varieties of Religious Experience*, (London: Longmans Green & Co., 1952), pp.312-3.

64. William James, *The Varieties of Religious Experience*, (London: Longmans Green & Co., 1952),, pp.352.

65. William James, *The Varieties of Religious Experience*, (London: Longmans Green & Co., 1952), pp.360-61.

66. William James, *The Varieties of Religious Experience*, (London: Longmans Green & Co., 1952), pp.312-3, 269.

67. William James, *The Varieties of Religious Experience*, (London: Longmans Green & Co., 1952), pp.358-9.

68. Gerald E. Myers, *William James: His Life and Thought*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1986), p.602.

69. <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/americanexperience/features/primary-resources/carter-energy/> Retrieved 3/26/2013 [↑](#endnote-ref-56)