WILLIAM JAMES IN RUSSIAN CULTURE
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Acknowledgments


A Note on Transliteration, Translation, and Bibliographies

Russian names and other words appear in anglicized form in the text and notes. In the bibliographies they are given in Library of Congress transliteration. Russian titles are translated into English in text and notes but appear in Russian, with translation, in the bibliographies following each chapter. A bibliography of William James's works, with standard abbreviations used in references throughout the text, appears on pp. 243–44.
"A man's vision is the great thing about him," wrote William James in *A Pluralistic Universe* (1909). James's own vision constantly evolved as he wrestled with problems that also profoundly stirred his contemporaries at the turn of the twentieth century. He continues to energize a varied audience now, at the start of the twenty-first. Russian readers, too, from the 1890s to the present day, have found in the work of America's preeminent philosopher and psychologist much to ponder, admire, and debate. Unquestionably, if the course of Russian affairs has been dynamic and unpredictable since the Soviet Union's collapse in 1991, its vision of itself has undergone drastic change. To many observers, the flux of Russia's recent spiritual history has proven a fascinating spectacle, punctuated as it has been by energetic efforts to reclaim the cultural and intellectual riches of its pre-Soviet past. In this process, some intriguing Russian--Western connections have come to light, begging to be explored: among them the early Russian attraction to William James.

To our retrospective gaze William James stands out among thinkers of his time as a man strikingly at home in our day. "Unlike many other nineteenth-century intellectuals, buttoned into their stiff white collars, calcified in our collective memory, James strides easily, inquisitively, into our own time, urging us to notice him": so his biographer Linda Simon pictures him in her recent work *Genuine Reality* (p. xviii). Yet, as Simon also shows in the opening essay of this volume, James was very much of his own time and place, an American intellectual of the pre–World War I era who brought his ideas and his fresh approach to European contemporaries, eager for exchange but always his own man.
James believed that "each part of the world is in some way connected, in some other ways not connected with its other parts" (PU, p. 41). The present work examines the intriguing question: What happens when ideas of a thinker like James, who, despite his originality, was deeply rooted in his own traditions, are refracted through a culture that draws in large part on a heritage profoundly different from his own? It includes studies of reception and interpretation of James's major writings, along with analyses of their impact on certain Russian writers and thinkers. It also reveals some striking parallels and convergences (and divergences) between his thought and that of Russian writers who, at different times, grappled with similar intellectual and spiritual issues. Aided by a few lucky finds and some determined digging, our authors reached a collective assurance that James and Russian culture have something to say to each other. If this dialogue has often enough been at cross purposes, the confrontation is revealing of both parties and may help us know both of them better.

Arising at the turn of the century, Russian interest in James burgeoned in the early 1900s, peaked, and then was largely forced underground with the rise of Stalin. During much of the Soviet period James was unacceptable, denounced in the official press as a mere puppet of American capitalism and lampooned as the "Wall Street Pragmatist." The Gorbachev years opened new perspectives, and the breakup of the Soviet empire made the change in cultural climate irreversible. Now that Russia is free to explore its past, James emerges as a fresh and penetrating voice that commands attention among thoughtful readers concerned with shaping a new identity for their country and uncovering treasures long hidden from sight. "William James is a figure who simply won't go away," remarked Hilary Putnam in his elegant little book Pragmatism (p. 5). The James revival in Russia in the post-Soviet 1990s shows this to be true for Russians as well. The Varieties of Religious Experience, The Will to Believe, and Pragmatism have reappeared, and some shorter pieces have been translated for the first time. After the distorted and disfigured James of Soviet times, readers are rediscovering his "heuristic wealth of ideas" (Pavlova et al., p. 401). Moreover, as Edith Clowes demonstrates in her essay, there are important currents in contemporary Russian spiritual thinking to which James's ideas and insights offer strong support. The reason for his renewed appeal in present circumstances, in Russia and elsewhere, may have been pinpointed by Hilary Putnam: the fact that "for James, as for Socrates, the central philosophical question is how to live" (p. 22).

James arrived in Russia originally at a propitious moment. The social and political turmoil of the 1890s and early 1900s was matched by ferment in the country's intellectual, artistic, and spiritual life. It is hardly news by now that the period 1890–1910 was a time of brilliant cultural productivity there. It was
also an era of renewed activity in philosophy, when resurgent idealism energetically challenged the positivist cult of scientific facts. The first of James’s works to appear in Russia was *Psychology*, the shorter, textbook version of *The Principles of Psychology*. Aiming as it did to transform the “science of the soul” into an exact science (with loopholes left for metaphysics), James’s psychology went against the grain for some, while others saw its author as the pioneer of a third way between positivism and idealism. And still others—like the poets and mystics treated in the Grossman and Obtnin essays below—found support in James’s text for altogether different lines of thought.

For all his European travels, William James, unlike John Dewey, his successor as the veritable embodiment of American thought, never visited Russia in person. However, he did have professional contacts with Russians as his international career was gathering momentum. At the Congress of Physiological Psychology in Paris in August 1889, James was named America’s representative to the group’s permanent Committee of Organization, set up to facilitate contacts between psychologists in different countries engaged in similar research (EPs, pp. 245–246). Among members of the committee he mentions “Grot of Moscow.” Head of the Moscow Psychological Society and editor of its journal *Questions of Philosophy and Psychology*, Nikolai Grot was part of the relatively large Russian delegation at the congress. In their respective reports on the congress he and James each noted the other’s active participation in the proceedings. Returning from Paris, Grot tried to interest Russian colleagues in the American’s work. However, apparently no further contacts between the two developed: James’s exposure to a wider circle of Russian readers took place by other means.

The fact that *The Principles of Psychology* was never translated into Russian may tell something about the contemporary state in Russia of what David Joravsky calls “the ‘problematic science’ of psychology, divided into warring camps from its earliest beginnings” (Joravsky, p. 95). James’s collaboration on what would become the James-Lange theory of emotion was later of great interest to the psychologist and literary historian D. N. Ovsianiko-Kulikovsky in his writings on memory and feelings in the 1890s. However, at the time of its first appearance in Russia, *Psychology* carried a distinctive message to various and diverse audiences. It also established its author in Russia as a voice to be heeded.

A few more James writings were translated in the next several years, including *The Will to Believe* (1904), which engaged the interest of the Russian writer Maxim Gorky. (Meeting James during his American visit in 1906, Gorky described him as “a wonderful old man.”) Barry Scherr’s account of “Gorky and God-Building” follows the parallels between the idiosyncratic and individual faith-states recorded and celebrated by James, and
the “people-power” envisioned by Gorky in his novel A Confession and elsewhere as a phase in the communal transformation of society. However, James’s religious philosophy had its real Russian introduction with the 1910 translation of The Varieties of Religious Experience, the appeal of which may have been enhanced by the contemporary revival of religious thought and feeling and the increasingly intense interest in the religious thinking of the novelist Dostoevsky. Robin Feuer Miller’s essay explores the loss of inner faith and the consequent quest for unification that sets Dostoevsky’s heroes and James’s “gnawing, carking, questioning” souls, the narrators of his The Varieties of Religious Experience, on “journeys to conversion.” Along the way, as Miller demonstrates, Dostoevsky’s crisis-ridden heroes test homeopathic medicine and various mind-cures, illuminating a hitherto unexamined affinity between the author of The Brothers Karamazov and the subjects of the case studies compiled by James, himself no stranger to alternative medicine.

If James never indicated acquaintance with Dostoevsky’s writings, the same was not true of the “other” great Russian writer, Leo Tolstoy, whom James regarded as the world’s consummate novelist. Tolstoy’s greatest novels, War and Peace and Anna Karenina, appeared long before The Principles of Psychology. Indeed, Donna Orwin remarks in her essay that James had little to offer Tolstoy about the workings of the human psyche. “James’s wildly appreciative 1896 reaction to these novels as perfectly representative of life—i.e., the dynamics of human psychology—,” she writes, “suggests that he saw in them a prescient imaging of his own ideas.” Moreover, Orwin finds much to probe in their common concern about “what men live by.” Andrew Wachtel in his essay weighs the extent to which Tolstoy attempted to overcome an irrepressible glorification of war that informs his later fiction, most notably Hadji Murat, during the very years when he was writing the impassioned pacifist tracts that align the great novelist with William James.

It was in 1910, the year of James’s and Tolstoy’s deaths, that William James’s fame in Russia reached its high point. Not only The Varieties of Religious Experience but Pragmatism appeared in Russian translation that year, initiating intense debate and discussion among intellectuals, religious figures, philosophers, and scientists. Randall Poole’s essay in this volume features the Moscow Psychological Society (of which James was an honorary member) as a forum for these exchanges. Its journal, Questions of Philosophy and Psychology, was a leading vehicle for comment from many perspectives.

One of those perspectives proceeded from what could be called the religious “left” for its insistent demand for renewal in Russian Orthodoxy and its sometimes drastic reinterpretation of traditional religious thinking. A major feature of the “Russian religious renaissance” that began after 1905, this movement as-
sured a receptive readership for Varieties. One of the group's leaders, the
philosopher and "God-seeker" Nikolai Berdyaev, greeted it exuberantly:
"Reading James's book, one feels that a stream of fresh air is entering the stuffy
atmosphere of rationalist culture . . . The unconscious 'I,' the life of will and
feeling, experience, widened into the mystical and religious sphere—there
lie the riches released from under the yoke of rationalist experience" ("On the
Broadening of Experience," p. 381). Semyon Frank, another prominent thinker
whose intellectual and spiritual path took him from Marxism to "God-
seeking," took a similarly enthusiastic view. For Frank the appearance of The
Varieties of Religious Experience marked an epoch, embodying as it did "the
deep need being felt everywhere for the renewal of religious life." Moreover, its
author was "a scholar of world renown [who] openly and categorically gave sci-
cientific sanction to this need" ("James's Philosophy of Religion," pp. 155–156).
Among James's more restrained admirers was the religious philosopher Lev
Shestov, who sought in James, as Brian Horowitz points out, "a knight of free
creativity," but found instead a thinker unable to overcome rationalism. That
conservative churchmen took a radically divergent view from any of these
philosophers is borne out in Alexander Etkind's account of a dramatic theo-
logical clash that involved James's psychological theories as well.

When it appeared in Russia, Pragmatism elicited a particularly heated re-
sponse from critics and commentators who offered widely varying interpreta-
tions. Among them was a group of thinkers identified in these years with
neopositivist orientations in philosophy and eclectic Marxism in political the-
ory. Their thought had been prepared in the early 1900s, first, by concepts from
Einsteinian physics that called into question all philosophical systems relying on
absolute certainties, and, second, by the epistemologies of Ernst Mach and
Richard Avenarius. Mach and Avenarius held that knowledge of the world
comes through immediate experience consisting of "neutral elements," and that
science therefore does not deal with the uncovering of abstract truths, but with
the construction of hypotheses that are accessible to continuous refinement.
The response to James on the part of a Russian thinker little known in the West,
Pavel Yushkevich (1872–1945), is of particular interest. Yushkevich's theory of
empirio-symbolism won him, as did James's Pragmatism itself, the damnation
of Lenin, for whom all eclectic theories of truth, from Berkeley to Kant to Mach
and company, opened the door to the idiosyncratic and the religious. Among all
of James's Russian interpreters, it was Yushkevich who came closest to exposing
the performative or skaz element in the Pragmatism text as, more than a mediation
between schools of thought, an outright game with the reader.

One of the chief serious journals, Russian Thought, devoted a large part of
its May 1910 issue to an article by Semyon Frank, "Pragmatism as a Philo-
osophical Doctrine," followed by "A Debate about Pragmatism," the transcript
of an extended discussion of Frank's article in a prestigious Moscow philosophical circle. Most of the speakers, who represented a significant range of positions, found fault with Frank's severely critical analysis. Nor did James go unchallenged, though most spoke in highly respectful tones of him as a thinker. Some, however, urged the importance of considering James's pragmatism in the total context of his work. The acquaintance with James's work and with modern Western thought shown by many participants in the pragmatism debate points up an important fact. Interest in James developed at a moment of special openness among Russia's educated classes to Western cultural trends and ideas. More generally, this was a time of redefinition on many levels—a process where encounter with outside forces and ideas tended to generate lively, even acrimonious, debate or worse. (A cold front advancing against a pool of warm stationary air may produce a similar turbulence.)

Russia had been through this before. Arising simultaneously with these periodic spasms has been one of the perennial "vexed questions" of Russian history: her position vis-à-vis the West, or, put otherwise, Russian identity. First raised long before the reign of Peter the Great, that question crystallized in the mid-nineteenth century in the debate, at first gentlemanly, later less so, between Slavophiles and Westernizers. Early in the twentieth century the discussion centered around notions framed in the expression "the Russian idea." A term with an illustrious genealogy going back to a lecture so titled by the philosopher Vladimir Solovyov in 1888 (published in 1911), it was the subject of an important 1909 essay by poet and thinker Vyacheslav Ivanov, "On the Russian Idea." Much later, Nikolai Berdyaev elaborated the notion in his book The Russian Idea, the goal of which, he told his readers, is, through meditation on Russia's history, to arrive at "the thought of the Creator about Russia" (p. 1).

Once again, since 1991 and the fall of Communism, the process of redefinition proceeds apace on all levels of society, with the question of Russia's relation to the West playing a prominent role. Among serious-minded readers efforts to pick up threads of past thought has led to reexamination and revival of the long-standing Slavophile-Westernizer debate. Not surprising in this context is the appearance of a book entitled The Rebirth of the Russian Idea (1991). This volume advances what James Scanlan, a leading specialist on Russian philosophy, called "an ill-concealed conviction of, not simply the value and uniqueness, but the superiority of 'Holy Russia' over Western society and culture" ("Slavophilism," p. 45). Commenting on this revival of national self-examination, the British historian Aileen Kelly recently formulated the "Russian idea" as follows: "This is the belief, first promoted by the czarist state in collaboration with Orthodox theologians, that Russia's distinctive religion and culture leave it destined to follow a path separate from the materialistic West and spiritually superior to it" (NYT p. 11). However, in
her 1999 book *Views from the Other Shore*, Kelly finds the post-Soviet intelligentsia deeply split on the question of “self-image and values,” with debate centering on “the past and future role of the messianic tendency commonly known as the Russian Idea” (p. 217).

The reception of William James throughout the entire Soviet period was closely linked with tectonic shifts in Soviet cultural politics. Thus, in the early 1920s, in the relative freedom of cultural expression that characterized the years of the New Economic Policy, some of Russia's most searching thinkers and writers hearkened to the promise and optimism of James's writings. Among them was the literary critic L. V. Pumiansky (1891–1940), author of *Dostoevsky and Antiquity* (1922), who in 1924–1925, during his association with the Nevel-Vitebsk group around his good friend Mikhail Balshin, brought into their conversations his earnest commentaries on the American philosopher.2 Within a few years that openness was stifled. In the making was what might be called a “revisionist” version of the “Russian idea.” Elimination of the religious element from this idea—or the substitution of dialectical materialism and the Communist regime—produced a curious parody, with emphasis on Western—specifically American—moral inferiority. Interestingly, here again William James played a role.

The first major article on James after the 1917 Revolution appeared before the ideological tightening that marked Stalin’s consolidation of power. The July–August 1927 number of the authoritative journal *Under the Banner of Marxism* carried an article by V. F. Asmus entitled “The Alogism of William James.” Linking him closely with Bergson, Asmus took James to task at length for “anti-intellectualism,” irrationalism, and the general prizing of intuition over logic. Valentin Asmus was a prominent professor of philosophy at Moscow State University.3 His arguments here are those of a professional philosopher, defending the intellectualist position attacked by James and Bergson; some of these arguments resemble criticisms by James’s contemporaries. Then, taking up a more distinctive stance, Asmus drew a straight line from Schopenhauer, “first in the parade of philosophical decadents,” to James (along with Bergson, the names of Maeterlinck and Rudolf Steiner occur) (pp. 78, 81–82). However, in his view James exceeded any of these by putting philosophy directly at the service of religion. Here, while writing from the Marxist standpoint, Asmus found himself in the paradoxical position of contrasting favorably the medieval scholastics constructing rational arguments for the existence of God with the anti-intellectualist bourgeois thinkers James and Bergson. Medieval clerics, standing at the feudal stage of development, showed that “they understood far better than James the meaning of proof” (p. 83). Asmus concluded: “James's philosophy will long stand as a sad memorial of the decline of bourgeois theoretical thought” (p. 84).
After the late twenties, any sign of intellectual argument disappeared from treatments of James (as of many others), and propaganda took over. During most of the Soviet period, as we know, names of past or present writers construed as incompatible with Marxism-Leninism were often expunged from the public record, and their works became generally inaccessible. Even John Dewey, who, in his "Impressions of Russia" (1928), extolled what he perceived as a native spirituality sustaining the Soviet educators whom he met during his visit, was subsequently subjected to the standard anti-American cant. Some foreign writers were targeted as examples of decadent bourgeois culture, their works sequestered, their ideas and their careers shamelessly distorted. Both Dewey and James fell into this category.

Since politically correct information often reached the general public through publications like the multitome Great Soviet Encyclopedia, the GSE in its successive editions served as official barometer of James's fortunes in the Soviet Union. The first edition (1926–1947) contained unsigned articles on "William James," (vol. 21, 1931) and "Pragmatism" (vol. 46, 1940). The James article, while not totally negative, is critical. The article on "Pragmatism," in a volume published nine years later, is much cruder and shorter. By 1940 portrayal of pragmatism simply as antiscientific and pro-religion was standard.

When D. Kvitko's Sketches of Contemporary Anglo-American Philosophy appeared in 1936, the Stalinist party line was firmly in place and anti-American sentiment in full flower. From the time of its first publication Pragmatism was seen by many in Europe and America as a peculiarly American philosophy. If James's personal "Americanism" was a neutral, or even a positive, feature for Asmus, America's bourgeois stage of development obviously was not. Now, in this work in the 1930s, the standard Marxist interpretation of pragmatism is on its way to the formulaic phrases of subsequent writers. Incidentally, Kvitko's fourteen-year residence in the United States (1913–1927) presumably gave him authority based on firsthand experience.

The Great Soviet Encyclopedia's second edition, spanning the 1950s, bristled with anti-American Cold War fervor. The article on William James, capped by a quotation from Lenin, is a masterful collation of the abusive clichés routinely applied to thinkers from capitalist countries, especially the United States. "American reactionary philosopher and psychologist, ideologue of the imperialist bourgeoisie, one of the founders of the anti-scientific philosophy pragmatism, defender of religion. . . . James fully justified the expansionist plans of the American bourgeoisie, its fight against Socialism and the workers' movement" (14: 219).

Throughout the Stalin and Cold War years James routinely served as an exemplar of negative Western values, his works known to Soviet readers only second- and thirdhand, if at all, from encyclopedia articles and philosophy
handbooks. The question occurs: why were his name and ideas not simply "repressed," as were those of many others? The answer surely lies in the inviting target he made. The quintessential American reactionary capitalist bourgeois ideologue with a fondness for religion: Once the template was fashioned, James's alleged popularity and influence in his native land served to characterize the decadence of American character and values.

Two books issuing from the Department of Philosophy at Moscow State University in 1957 and 1964, respectively, show James as he appeared in the days when, the Khrushchev thaw notwithstanding, the old stereotypes still served. The first, *American Pragmatism*, was originally a course of lectures by philosophy professor Yuri K. Melvil. The chapter on James opens with a question showing a strikingly personalized approach: "What was the social persona of James, the ideologue of early American imperialism?" Citing cardinal points on which Jamesian notions clashed with Soviet orthodoxy, the author freely misquotes, quotes out of context, and otherwise misconstrues (the text being unavailable to the general readership). The resultant "James" was easily linked to Nietzsche, and from there it was only a step to making him (in Soviet terms) the favorite of Nazism and fascism. Lest the point be missed, the author summarizes: "Such are several views held by James, marking him as a racist and convinced enemy of the human masses. Such is the man who advances the philosophy of pragmatism" (p. 30). More nuanced, less vehement, but still carrying the obligatory ideological baggage was A. S. Bogomolov's *Anglo-American Bourgeois Philosophy in the Epoch of Imperialism* (1964). Again one reads of James's "defense of the religious world view, and, through it, of the social structure that uses religion as its ideological weapon" (p. 125).

The third edition of the *GSE* (1969-1981) carried a signed article on James (vol. 8, 1972). Thoroughly revised in style and tone, it yet repeats the chief "objectionable" points found in the American philosopher: tendency toward individualism, mysticism, defense of religion from the standpoint of pragmatism. Reading through the books and articles on James and pragmatism published in the Soviet Union from the thirties through the seventies and even into the eighties is a dreary task, yet no surprise to anyone acquainted with the history of that time. Post-Soviet accounts throw light on a dark time, deploring especially "the monstrous dearth of theory and information" of that era (Sadovsky, p. 62).

Meanwhile, as we then suspected and now know, cracks developed after Stalin, in philosophy as in many other areas. The atmosphere lightened perceptibly between 1960 and 1970 as successive volumes of the five-volume *Philosophical Encyclopedia* appeared. Finally, a change in the political climate and a 1988 Communist Party Politburo decision led to a full-scale effort to reclaim the Russian philosophical tradition. Volume followed volume as hitherto proscribed
works by Russian thinkers were reissued. James Scanlan observes: "What seemed moribund had in fact merely been dormant, or in a state of suspended animation, and given the opportunity Russians returned to their philosophical heritage with alacrity" ("Overview," p. 6).

How did all this affect James? The name of an American thinker, subject of controversy among prerevolutionary Russian intellectuals and of obloquy in Stalinist times, might pique the curiosity of independent thinkers, but it would hardly lay first claim to attention under those difficult circumstances. Yet James's name and ideas obviously were diffused by one means and another through several generations of actual or potential Russian readers. As the debates over pragmatism that roiled the intellectual and religious scenes in 1910 and beyond resurface in the writings of Berdyaev, Frank, Peter Struve, Pavel Yushkevich, and others, James has again become a presence to reckon with. Significantly, as James Scanlan reminds us, the early-twentieth-century thinkers being so enthusiastically welcomed by present-day Russian readers were in large part "of a religious, Russian Orthodox cast of mind, and as such they have found a sympathetic audience in a society that is not only newly freed of restraints on religion but positively drawn toward it" ("Overview," p. 8). Nonetheless, in 1910 James's unconventional approach to religion attracted Frank and Berdyaev by its freshness and openness to all human experience. The same qualities may contribute to its attraction today.

The first James work to be republished in toto in post-Soviet times was The Varieties of Religious Experience, which appeared in several formats in 1992 and 1993. This event came, Edith Clowes writes, as "a welcome relief after decades of singleminded (Soviet) scientific thinking." Moreover, in the current interest in mysticism Clowes sees "a continuing theme among leading Russian thinkers and writers concerned with questions of spirituality in a secular, scientific world." This concern has led to intense—and highly justified—interest in Russia's own religious-philosophical heritage, particularly from the turn of the last century. Some voices have urged an even more inclusive view. In his afterword to the 1993 republication of Varieties, P. S. Gurevich hailed Russians' re-exposure to William James's thought as a chance for them to reconnect with world mystical experience after decades of cultural isolation.

Four years later, in 1997, a volume edited by Gurevich offered The Will to Believe and Pragmatism (originally published in Russian in, respectively, 1904 and 1910). In addition, it includes four articles, three of which appear in Russian translation for the first time: "The Energies of Men," "The Pragmatic Account of Truth and Its Misunderstanders," and "A World of Pure Experience." (The fourth, "Does Consciousness Exist?" first appeared in Russian in 1913.) As has been seen, of all James's works the one most continuously linked with
his name in Russia is Pragmatism. And the aspect of that work most consistently singled out for attention, though to different effect in different eras, has been pragmatism’s connection with religion.

The earlier (1993) reprinting of the chapter “What Pragmatism Means” in a serial publication of Moscow University’s Department of Philosophy was apparently intended to rehabilitate and redefine a term that for decades appeared only as a term of contempt.6 As may be remembered, the last third of that chapter deals with pragmatism’s potential “usefulness” in the area of religion. As James sums it up, “In short, she widens the field of search for God” (p. 44). The cover and title page of the 1997 volume where Pragmatism appears mention only The Will to Believe. However, the afterword is entitled “The Good News (Blagovestie) of Pragmatism”—a title that bears, in Russian even more than in English, the distinct suggestion of “religious message.” Given the sinister alliance of pragmatism with religion stressed throughout the Soviet era, this is a deliberately bold reversal of values.

James held no brief for formal religion, any more than he did for academic philosophy. Yet he wanted to bring philosophy close to living experience, which included religious faith. And he was concerned with the possibility of faith and religion coexisting in a world that has relegated them to a sphere apart from everyday affairs. As the afterword’s authors note: “[In] the debate over the existence of God pragmatism advances no ready-made credo; it merely makes clear what is the practical sense of believing in God” (p. 404). Finally they conclude: “The pragmatic point of view, which orients the individual toward achieving life success and purposeful behavior, paradoxically leads to the recognition of mystical experience which, in [James’s] opinion, focuses the grumblings of the soul and assures the vitality (zhiznestoikost’) of religion itself” (p. 408).

These authors are careful to point out one particularly significant historical allusion that might otherwise pass unnoticed by many readers: the 1910 “Debate over Pragmatism.” As they shrewdly observe, that debate showed that pragmatism “touched a tender spot in the tradition of Russian thought” (p. 394). Moreover, they are at some pains also to underline parallels between the time when pragmatism emerged, which they characterize as a period of transition and clash of ideas, and the present. Invoking the names of modern Western pragmatists (“R. Rorty and others”), they assert that “pragmatism has caught an essential philosophical tendency that will surely strengthen with time—namely, the tendency to break with stereotypes, absolutes, ‘the spirit of solemnity’ and unbending righteousness” (p. 399).

A major part of the message James’s pragmatism brought to Russian thinkers in 1910 and, by implication, to their present-day heirs, is a message about philosophy itself. “James saw the chief fault of philosophy as it hitherto
Introduction

existed in its separation from life, in its failure to understand human beings” (p. 395). He wished to bring philosophy back to its human context. Or as one prominent participant in the 1910 debate Lev Lopatin put it: “Pragmatism returned thought to its proper channel... proposing an extremely simple attitude toward the eternal questions about the meaning of life, the moral order, and others” (quoted, “Good News,” p. 397).

Now, at a time when, after long years of Communism, freedom of thought and belief has become an actuality, rediscovering the heritage of Russian thought, particularly the religious philosophers of the beginning of the twentieth century, has become a major enterprise. Moreover, the long-closed gates to Western ideas and modes of thinking are open, and the East-West relationship is again being energetically debated in Russia. In this context, William James speaks with particular poignancy to the post-atheist society of the former Soviet Union, to the culturologist Mikhail Epstein’s “poor believers,” whose “minimal belief... appears to be as indivisible as spirit itself” (p. 363).

We may ask: is philosophical thought itself destined to receive a new lease on life? Is contact with the “other,” that well-known definer of positions, to function actively in this new environment? Some commentators would say that William James is at his active best in such situations. As Richard J. Bernstein writes in the introduction to A Pluralistic Universe: “James has the rare gift of transcending local restrictions of time and place and speaking directly and intimately to our own present philosophic situation” (p. xiii). The test of course comes when he addresses readers in a philosophic ambience and tradition very different from his own. David Joravsky in this volume’s concluding chapter calls attention to “the paradoxes that animate James’s writing, keeping it alive with different meanings for different audiences during a century of intellectual fragmentation, of frustration for seekers of coherent vision.” Clifford Geertz may be speaking for all James readers, Russian and others, when he says: “We need the sort of inquiry he pioneered, the sort of talents he possessed, and the sort of openness to the foreign and unfamiliar...he displayed” (p. 12).

Notes

1. “Scientists have argued greatly as to whether or not there is such a thing as the memory of a feeling,” he wrote, in “The Psychology of Thought and Feeling” (1909), in D. N. Ovsianiko-Kulikovskii, Literaturno-kriticheeskii raboty v 2-x tomakh, vol. 1 (Moscow: Khudozhestvennaia literatura, 1989), p. 37.

2. Information to Ruth Rischin from Caryl Emerson, 2 September 1999. See also M. M. Bakhtin kak filosof, ed. L. A. Gogotshvili and P. S. Gurevich (Moscow: Nauka, 1992); Caryl Emerson, The First Hundred Years of Mikhail Bakhtin (Princeton, N.J.:
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3. Asmus is remembered variously. For a positive view, see N. V. Motroshilova, “In Memory of a Professor,” Soviet Studies in Philosophy, 28, no. 2 (fall 1989): 59–65. Another writer notes that “even one of the best professors” (i.e., Asmus) became tainted by the regime under which he worked (Sadovský, p. 69).

4. Addressing a meeting of the Transnational Institute in Moscow in March 1993, Caryl Emerson perceptively analyzed the reception of American pragmatism in Russia. In her paper, Emerson wrote: “In good American fashion, Dewey treats his impressions as well as his projections as empirical—and the Russian people themselves as inspired pragmatists” (“American Philosophers, Bakhtinian Perspectives: William James, George Herbert Mead, John Dewey, and Mikhail Bakhtin on a Philosophy of the Act,” unpublished paper, p. 8, n. 2).

5. The Will to Believe was published in 1904 in the translation of S. I. Tsereteli, and Pragmatism in 1910 in that of P. S. Yushkevich.


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religióznogo opyta (Varieties of Religious Experience), by William James, pp. 411–424.


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William James in the Moscow Psychological Society: Pragmatism, Pluralism, Personalism

Randall A. Poole

William James was elected an honorary member of the Moscow Psychological Society in 1901, thereby becoming formally associated with the main center of the remarkable accomplishments in philosophy that helped make the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries the "Silver Age of culture." Already praised in Russia for his seminal Principles of Psychology, James was on the verge of producing his other major works, notably The Varieties of Religious Experience, Pragmatism, and A Pluralistic Universe. These works, which developed ideas raised earlier in The Will to Believe and Human Immortality, were seen as highly relevant to the tasks confronting the Moscow Psychological Society as it sought to advance the development of Russian philosophy.

Founded in 1885 at Moscow University, the Society owed its name "Psychological" to its founder, M. M. Troitsky (1835–1899), an empirical psychologist. Although the society did sponsor significant psychological research, its greater importance in the history of Russian philosophy began to emerge by 1888, when Nikolai Ia. Grot (1852–1899) took over its direction. In 1889 the Psychological Society began publication of Russia's first regular specialized philosophical journal, Questions of Philosophy and Psychology. Published five times a year until 1918, the journal was invaluable in promoting the growth of philosophy in Russia. Grot characterized its prevailing direction as idealist or, "in respect to method, metaphysical" ("More on the Tasks of the Journal," p. i). In 1910, when the Psychological Society celebrated its twenty-fifth anniversary, one of its officers could evaluate the society as a "profoundly significant fact in the life of Russian society, where in general philosophical questions could be-
come the object of free and, to the extent possible, objective discussion only relatively recently” (Vinogradov, pp. 261–262).

In pursuit of its goal of the free development of philosophy, the Psychological Society needed to mount an effective theoretical challenge to positivism. It met this need through advancing a distinctive neoadivist critique. As a general outlook, positivism was remarkably pervasive in Russia from the middle of the nineteenth century. In its popular naturalistic and scientific forms, positivism asserted that philosophy had no special methodology and thus no legitimate right to exist as its own type of scientific (nauchnyi or wissenschaftlich) discipline. Empirical sciences were the only sciences; philosophy could serve, at best, as a field that systematized empirical research. The measure of reality was empirical experience: positively given, external sense data. Against these reductionist claims, Psychological Society idealists sought to defend the autonomy of philosophy by arguing that the positivist criterion of reality was far from exhaustive, and that what it did not exhaust comprised the special domain of philosophy. This domain was human consciousness itself, to the extent it could be shown to be irreducible to sense experience (the positivist sphere). Beginning with this defense of the autonomy of philosophy, the Psychological Society proceeded to make, by the end of its activity in 1922, perhaps the most important contributions thus far to the history of Russian philosophy. This legacy has come down to us as Russian neoadivism.

In 1890, the same year it was published, Nikolai Grot wrote a short review of James’s The Principles of Psychology for Questions of Philosophy and Psychology. Grot believed James’s work could further, in its comprehensive coverage of the state of the field abroad, the “progress of our spiritualist psychology and philosophy” (p. 90). He appealed (unsuccessfully, as it turned out) for the necessary funds for the Psychological Society to undertake a translation. Two years later, Principles was reviewed at greater length by Georgy I. Chelpanov (1862–1936), the society’s leading experimental psychologist and an idealist in philosophy. Chelpanov claimed that James himself was a spiritualist in his philosophical views on the nature of the soul (i.e., that he accepted the idea of the substantiality of the soul), even though he kept such views out of psychological research, which he thought should be strictly positivistic (in the methodological, antimetaphysical sense) (p. 72). Most of all, Chelpanov valued James’s work for discrediting the widespread opinion that empirical psychology leads inevitably to (naturalistic) positivism and materialism. It is true that James thought materialism an “impertinent” conclusion from the available evidence (Myers, p. 56), but clearly Chelpanov goes too far in claiming that “James, using all the data of current experimental and physiological psychology . . . openly declares himself a metaphysician of the spiritualist school” (p. 76). Obviously Chelpanov was eager to appropriate James, not
only for the philosophical critique of positivism but also for the strong spiritualistic current within Russian neoidealism. The problem of how James fit that current would resurface in the Psychological Society.

Apart from reviews and some further consideration by Chelpanov, James received no significant attention in the Psychological Society until after the appearance of Pragmatism in 1907. However, when both Pragmatism and The Varieties of Religious Experience appeared in Russian in 1910, William James's name became the center of intense discussion and debate. His death that August was announced in Questions of Philosophy and Psychology by an obituary placed prominently at the front of the September–October issue, and a special commemorative meeting of the Psychological Society was held. Two of the society's most significant figures delivered papers on this occasion: Chelpanov, now deputy chair, spoke on "James as Psychologist," while Sergei Andreevich Kotliarevsky (1873–1939), a leading social philosopher and liberal theorist, addressed the topic "James as Religious Thinker." Among the society's prominent philosophers, Sergei Kotliarevsky was James's greatest admirer. He wrote about James and pragmatism in two additional essays, "Pragmatism and Tolerance" (1910) and "On the Relative and the Absolute" (1912), the latter appearing in a Festschrift for Lev Lopatin (1855–1920), chair of the Psychological Society from 1900 until 1919. Lopatin, himself very interested in James, helped turn the society's attention toward him.

Lopatin, Kotliarevsky, and Chelpanov closely related James to the development of neoidealism in the Psychological Society. Lopatin and Kotliarevsky, in particular, embraced pragmatism because it offered a much broader conception of experience than did positivism, and so could be enlisted in the neoidealist defense of the autonomy of philosophy. They thought that the pragmatist approach to the truth-value (in the general sense of "truth-bearing") of the full range of human experience, including morality and religion, could advance the search for an integral and balanced worldview, one that helped meet the needs of the whole person and the deeper self. The articulation of such a worldview had been an important goal of the neoidealistic program ever since Grot announced the task in the first issue of Questions of Philosophy and Psychology.

Lopatin: The Crisis in Philosophy and Its Pragmatic Solution

At the twenty-fifth anniversary celebration of the Psychological Society in March 1910, Lev Lopatin delivered a major address, "The Present and Future of Philosophy." On this important occasion in the life of Russia's first philosophical society, Lopatin called James one of today's greatest thinkers and declared
that the future of philosophy belonged to pragmatism. Surveying the overall direction of contemporary European philosophy, Lopatin finds philosophical thought to be suffering a prolonged and deep crisis. He sees in pragmatism an exit from its current moribund state.

Philosophy, according to Lopatin, is in crisis because it has subordinated itself to science, which it wants to make its own foundation and model of development. It has largely renounced the possibility of any distinctive object or method of philosophical knowledge. True, philosophy has taken up epistemology as its own special task, but this has generally amounted only to the justification of scientific knowledge. Perhaps never before has philosophy been so deprived of autonomy, and this at a time when the positive sciences are reexamining their own epistemological premises. In short, the way philosophy presently relates to science is hardly normal ("Present and Future," pp. 4–6). In his account of philosophy's internal reaction to the extraordinary success of science, Lopatin may well have had in mind James's words in Pragmatism, a work he knew well (as he makes clear later in his essay). Referring to man's diminished sense of importance in the enlarged material universe of modern science, James wrote, "The result is what one may call the growth of naturalistic or positivistic feeling. ... Ideals appear as inert by-products of physiology; what is higher is explained by what is lower and treated forever as a case of 'nothing but'—nothing but something else of a quite inferior sort" (P, p. 15). This was precisely the type of reductionism that pragmatism tried to resist.

As early as 1889, Grot observed that the outstanding progress of the natural sciences had led to an exclusive emphasis on one source of knowledge, sense experience, to the neglect of the other, internal experience. Redressing this imbalance is the task of philosophy, he announced in setting the agenda for Questions of Philosophy and Psychology ("On the Tasks of the Journal," pp. viii–ix). Twenty years later, Lopatin clearly thought that, whatever progress Russian philosophy had made, European philosophy had failed at this task. The source of the continuing crisis is positivism's claim that all knowledge must be based on verifiable sense experience. In Lopatin's definition, positivism strictly confines the sphere of real knowledge to the limits of the precise sciences ("Present and Future," p. 9). Positivism tends, moreover, to conflate the concept of experience itself with its external, empirical sphere; inner experience, rejected as subjective feeling, cannot provide adequate grounds for knowledge. It is already clear how pragmatism, by overcoming positivist restrictions on what counts as valid experience and by ascribing truth-value to types of experience that positivism dismisses, could be seen as a solution to the crisis in philosophy and a defense of its autonomy. And this is just the approach Lopatin (and Kotliarevsky) took. James gave a concise formulation of
it in his second chapter, “What Pragmatism Means”: pragmatism’s “only test of probable truth is what works best in the way of leading us, what fits every part of life best and combines with the collectivity of experience’s demands, nothing being omitted” (P, p. 44).

Positivism, in its scientistic and reductionist forms, is monistic, a tendency which Lopatin identifies as a main characteristic of the contemporary philosophical outlook (“Present and Future,” p. 7). This suggests an important connection to James, through his famous critique of monism in A Pluralistic Universe. The matter is, however, more complicated: Lopatin, himself a convinced monist, thought that either the truth is in monism, or it is nowhere. “It is possible to search for philosophical truth only in monistic systems,” he asserted (“Spiritualism,” p. 449). But monism comes in different forms, only one of which can be true. Lopatin called the true form “spiritualistic monism” and never missed an opportunity to champion it as his own philosophical system. (In “Monism and Pluralism” he wrote that spiritualistic monism “alone contains philosophical truth” [p. 89].) James, too, used spiritualism to describe his own Weltanschauung, although in a more general sense than the ontological focus it had for Lopatin and other Psychological Society neodidealists. James and Lopatin also shared a commitment to ethical personalism, the belief that human beings are persons because they are morally responsible agents, “ends-in-themselves” in Kant’s terminology (Myers, pp. 375–376, Zenkovsky, p. 651). (Lopatin’s personalism was not only ethical but also explicitly ontological in its affirmation of the substantiality of the soul, a step James was reluctant to take.) But James thought “pluralistic” was the best designation for a spiritualistic universe of free persons, although he admitted that spiritualism contained a monistic element in its premise (which he accepted) of the internal uniformity of all reality (see below, “The Varieties of Spiritualism”).

Lopatin’s criticism of the main currents in European philosophy is not so much that they are monistic, but that their monism takes the form of immananism, that is, the reduction of being to consciousness. Lopatin’s spiritualistic monism is distinctive in that it recognizes the principle of transcendence: although all being may be spiritual in essence, the forms of being are not all reducible to, or contained in, one another. Lopatin thus affirmed an external reality which is (in other words) transcendent to human consciousness. This was unusual among contemporary monists in Europe, who were generally immanentists. Lopatin singles out neo-Kantianism as most prone to this tendency, but he is careful to distinguish Kant’s self-proclaimed successors from Kant himself (“Present and Future,” pp. 8–9). The immanentists have dispensed with Kant’s thing-in-itself (noumenal being, transcendent to consciousness), and so are in a position to contend that “there is nothing apart from what is given in experience” (p. 11). This
makes possible their claims to absolute knowledge. Of the positivist thesis that everything is accessible to science, Lopatin remarks: "This is a fully natural conclusion from the rejection of any independent reality outside our cognizing mind and from the characteristic identification of our experience with the content of science. As a result positivists have unexpectedly assumed the position of the metaphysician-idealists at the beginning of the last century" (pp. 11–12). The monism of absolute idealism consists in the connaturality of all being and the human mind, while the monism of positivism consists in the connaturality of all being and empirical experience. Both cases share an essential immanentism, which accounts for what James called "intellectualism," in the rejection of which he and Lopatin fully agreed.

Not surprisingly, therefore, Lopatin declares that the renewal of philosophical thought is to be found in the new movement of pragmatism (its "great names" from contemporary philosophy include both James and Bergson). He sees pragmatism as a fresh breeze blowing new life into the long-stagnant intellectual atmosphere ("Present and Future," p. 35). First, Lopatin contrasts positivism (immanentist and intellectualist) to the general pragmatist understanding of science. For pragmatism, the empirical generalizations of natural science are relative and approximate. They predetermine nothing in the metaphysical sphere. "The great guarantee of the emancipation of philosophical thought, in all its quests and eternal problems, lies in the serious understanding of this truth" (p. 34). Science and philosophy, Lopatin writes, act on different planes and cannot replace each other (p. 35). This aspect of the pragmatic defense of the autonomy of philosophy, which is related to but distinct from affirming the possible truth-value of nonempirical forms of experience, develops one dimension of Jamesian pluralism.

Lopatin (and even more so Kotliarevsky, as we shall see) stressed that in an integral and balanced worldview, science and philosophy had to coexist and acknowledge each other's separate domain of inquiry. This respect for the autonomy of parts and delimitation of boundaries is a type of pluralism. James generally used pluralism in a metaphysical, not an epistemological, sense. But in one contrast between empiricism and rationalism, he described as pluralistic the empiricist way of explaining wholes by parts (PU, p. 9), of starting from parts to make a whole of the collection (P, p. 13). Lopatin and Kotliarevsky shared this sense of pluralism when they urged that an integral worldview required careful delineation of the equal rights of science and philosophy. Their defense of the autonomy of philosophy was thus both pragmatist and pluralist: pragmatist in that it relied first of all on an expansive idea of truthful experience, pluralist in that it could then resist the monistic pretensions of scientific positivism.
James's critique of monism (in both absolute idealist and positivist forms) was that its intellectualism displaces experience (in the widest sense) as the best guide to truth and that its determinism constrains personal moral endeavor. Lopatin, in the last part of his essay, turns in more detail to these ideas, first to James's general conception of truth and then to his approach to morality and religion. The exposition relies largely on Pragmatism and The Will to Believe. Lopatin wants to defend pragmatism against accusations of skepticism, easy American "practicism," crude and superficial utilitarianism, and even of complete contempt for truth (p. 36). To support his contention that pragmatists believe in positive truth no less than their opponents do, he concentrates on the view of knowledge held by James, "who in all justice can be called the most subtle and profound of psychologists and one of today's most outstanding thinkers" (p. 37).

For James, the measure of the truth of an idea is its adequacy to the fullest possible range of human experience. As Lopatin puts it, "What we accept as truth satisfies us more fully, the more broadly it answers every living aspiration of our spiritual make-up." It cannot flagrantly contradict either moral feeling or theoretical understanding, but must strive to harmonize the various ways we experience reality. "Only that truth captures us which satisfies the whole person in all his vital motives" (p. 37). Empirical generalizations are working hypotheses, not infallible truths. They must not constrict our experience of the diversity and inexhaustible richness of reality. In this connection Lopatin refers to the pragmatist idea of the infinite plasticity of reality: the more open we are to reality, the more it reveals (p. 38). The British pragmatist F. C. S. Schiller used this idea to convey the creative potential in our search for truth, a process in which a cooperative reality to some extent realizes in itself our ideals and our human image, if only we look for them. For this reason, Schiller called his theory of truth, "humanism." James explained it with the help of Rudolph Hermann Lotze, whose ideas in fact much influenced Lopatin (Zenkovsky, p. 646).

Reality, we naturally think, stands ready-made and complete, and our intellects supervene with the one simple duty of describing it as it is already. But may not our descriptions, Lotze asked, be themselves important additions to reality? And may not previous reality itself be there, far less for the purpose of reappearing unaltered in our knowledge, than for the very purpose of stimulating our minds to such additions as shall enhance the universe's total value. (P, p. 123)

Reality responds to our search for an even more adequate truth, one in accordance with our fullest and deepest experiences. Therefore, pragmatism is not merely an epistemological matter: "it concerns the structure of the universe itself" (p. 124).
If so, our choice of worldview is a rather important one. Among various worldviews (naturalism or spiritualism, atheism or theism, determinism or free will), if no alternative has the clear logical or theoretical advantage—to grant the best-case scenario for naturalism—then our choice ought to be guided by moral consciousness, which itself gives rise to the great weltanschaulich search for meaning in life. In general, Lopatin writes, truth is determined here by what most fully meets all the demands of spiritual personhood [dukhovnaia lichnost'] (pp. 39–40). Moral rationality was, he stresses, a decisive consideration for James. (Here Lopatin paraphrases James’s argument in Pragmatism [pp. 60–61] and “The Dilemma of Determinism” from The Will to Believe [p. 115].) This was emphatically so in the case of his approach to theism, which alone guarantees an ideal, everlasting world order. “Materialism means simply the denial that the moral order is eternal, and the cutting off of ultimate hopes,” James wrote; “spiritualism means the affirmation of an eternal moral order and the letting loose of hope” (F, p. 55, “Present and Future,” p. 41). And yet James did not maintain that belief in God was only a moral postulate; inner personal experiences provided immediate testimony. Lopatin hails The Varieties of Religious Experience as producing a profound transformation in the psychology of religious feeling (p. 42). James’s work shows that certain irreducible religious and mystical experiences are indubitably convincing to those who have them. “And James himself thinks that the only probable explanation of the relevant facts consists in the hypothesis of actual contact between the deepest layers of our spiritual life and the real divine world” (p. 43, cf. VRE, pp. 406–407). In Jamesian psychology of religion, it was most clear that pragmatism expanded our ideas of experience far beyond the positivist domain, and so gave new life to philosophy. Pragmatism might not be the last word in philosophy, Lopatin cautions, but Psychological Society philosophers could take encouragement from James’s belief that “a new dawn is breaking upon us philosophers” (p. 44; F, p. 10).

The Varieties of Spiritualism

Seven years after “The Present and Future of Philosophy,” Lopatin returned to the pragmatic approach to religious experience in a second major review of the contemporary philosophical scene, “The Urgent Tasks of Present-Day Thought,” which also functions as a statement of his own philosophy of “spiritualistic monism.” The essay was read at Moscow University in January 1917, in the midst of the Great War and on the threshold of revolution. The world war had heightened Lopatin’s sense of grave crisis in European culture and philosophy (pp. 1–3). He saw the war as a direct consequence of the internal
crisis in philosophy and was especially critical of German philosophical culture (pp. 4–9), echoing Vladimir Ern’s notion that a straight line could be drawn “From Kant to Krupp.” As in his 1910 essay, Lopatin stresses the scientific character of the current philosophical outlook. The main problem remains the illegitimate identification of knowledge as such with the contents of empirical science. “Empirical knowledge and philosophy have very different objects, or, at least, investigate completely different aspects of reality” (p. 15). The tendency of contemporary thought (“especially in Germany”) is, however, to declare that the only reality is the world we perceive in sense phenomena, immanent to consciousness (p. 16).

Lopatin, we know, valued pragmatism for its resistance to this type of reductionism. In the 1917 essay, he makes the pragmatic case for spiritualism as a philosophical worldview that best meets the full range of human experience. James emphasizes that religious feeling and experience are the source and subject of religious philosophy and theology, which are intellectual “over-beliefs” and as such “secondary products” of the experiential basis (VRE, p. 341). Our intellectual constructions do, however, affect the quality of the primary experience and even more do they determine how that experience is interpreted and evaluated (pp. 341–342, 404–405). Lopatin makes these same points, especially the influence of philosophical outlook on religious experience and its meaning (“Urgent Tasks,” pp. 74–76). His account clearly draws on James (although without acknowledgment). “Some philosophical views broaden and deepen religious experiences, and are themselves internally enriched by them,” Lopatin suggests. “Others, on the contrary, restrict and constrain them, relegate them to the unconscious sphere, and distort and impoverish them” (p. 75). This determines the “main significance” of spiritualism: it affords free and unimpeded access to religious experience and creativity, and so brings out features of the world (external and internal) which other philosophical views leave obscure and incomprehensible. Here, once more, is the pragmatist idea of the plasticity of reality. “It is necessary to recall,” Lopatin writes, “that contemporary pragmatists have pointed to an important truth: reality is plastic . . . in the sense that we discover in it only what we seek, and, on the contrary, it is closed off to us precisely to the extent we turn away from it” (p. 77).

Lopatin’s pragmatist justification of spiritualism is the conclusion to an essay devoted mainly to detailing the spiritualistic worldview itself. The central tenet of spiritualism is that “all reality, in us and outside us, is in its inner essence spiritual. . . . In our soul, in the immediate experiences and acts of our inner self . . . authentic reality is revealed to us” (p. 23). Spiritualism is monistic because it asserts that all reality is internally, ontologically uniform in its spiritual foundations. Spirit is the absolute reality that gives everything its being. Lopatin believes that the monistic principle solves the problem of how
consciousness can know anything at all about the outside world, about something not-self or other (pp. 25–26, "Spiritualism," pp. 451–456). How can anything transcendent to consciousness be at the same time an object of consciousness? Spiritualism answers that transcendent being is itself mind-like or spiritual, and that this inner ontological similarity to the self enables it to be perceived by consciousness. Otherwise, the world would not exist for us, but would be completely other. In its very capacity for perceiving and knowing, the self seems to reflect the ontological nature of the rest of the world.

The differences between Lopatin's metaphysics and James's should not be minimized, but neither should the similarities. Both are spiritualistic and personalistic. James specifies his spiritualism in A Pluralistic Universe. He first makes the generic distinction between spiritualism and naturalism or materialism, then distinguishes two types of spiritualism: theism, which is dualistic in separating man and God, and pantheism, which is monistic or "more intimate," in that it identifies man and God. James declares that only pantheism is worthy of attention, "the vision of God as the indwelling divine rather than the external creator, and of human life as part and parcel of that deep reality" (p. 19). He then distinguishes two types of pantheism, one "more monistic," the other "more pluralistic": the first is the philosophy of the absolute (or absolutism), and the second is "radical empiricism," James's own preference. He leaves no doubt that the similarity between the two types of pantheism consists in their spiritualism, "in that both identify human substance with the divine substance" (p. 20). That is a significant area of agreement with Lopatin (whether or not it means James accepted the substantiality of the soul).

James calls the absolute type of pantheism the "all-form," while his own type is the "each-form." In the "all-form," reality becomes fully divine, or realizes its ultimate potential as spirit, only in the form of totality, while the "each-form" is willing to believe "that the substance of reality may never get totally collected, that some of it may remain outside of the largest combination of it ever made" (p. 20). James's defense of the "each-form" is based largely on a stringent ethical personalism that feared that any conception of the absolute limited man's freedom and opportunity for personal moral endeavor. The result is a pluralism of persons in which God is no longer absolute (i.e., God) but finite, "only one of the caches," primus inter pares (PU, p. 26, P, 143). For some reason, James thought this a necessary condition of a universe open to possibility and real cooperation with the divine in one's own salvation and in the world's. For James, not only do human persons not require an absolute God (in whom, theists typically contend, personal substantiality ultimately consists), but such a God might even infringe on human personhood. Thus, James's personalism tended toward his well-known interest in polytheism.
Lopatin was also a personalist. He called his spiritualism “concrete” to designate its strong personalism and to distinguish it from absolute idealism, which he criticized for “abstract” immanentism (Positive Tasks, II: 311–317). Like James, Lopatin derived his personalism from ethics, but goes further than James in directly drawing ontological conclusions from moral experience. His argument is straightforward: only spiritual substance has the capacity for self-determination, which we experience in ourselves as free will. Human beings are therefore persons in the metaphysical sense, that is, substantial souls.⁷ Lopatin did not, of course, see any incompatibility between personalism and the absolute God of traditional theism. In a 1913 essay, “Monism and Pluralism,” he combined a (sometimes) generous characterization of James with criticism of his eclectic pluralism (pp. 76–80). Still, as we have seen, there remains a large area in which the differences between Lopatin and James on monism and pluralism are mostly semantic. Both thinkers were ultimately concerned to defend the absolute value and dignity of the person. James feared it would be crushed under the weight of a monistic metaphysics, while Lopatin feared it would be fragmented without a higher philosophical unity. Lopatin’s strong personalism has even led to classification of his spiritualism as “pluralism,” despite his own insistence that it was a type of monism (Zenkovsky, pp. 648–652, 655–656). In any event, Lopatin himself admitted a “relative justification of the pluralistic principle,” in view of the idea of creation: it is God’s nature as love to create, and this fact introduces an infinite diversity into reality (“Urgent Tasks,” p. 45).

The substantiability of the soul was a main tenet of the spiritualistic current in Russian neo-idealism, which included not only philosophy but also psychology (for Lopatin, Grot, and Chelpanov). Whether or not James ever accepted the idea of the substantial soul in his metaphysics, he did not think it was a useful hypothesis in psychology, lest alone a possible object of psychological research.⁸ His psychological method was phenomenalistic: psychology was a positive science about the phenomena of consciousness. Such phenomena do not inform us about personal identity, unity, or substantiability. Lopatin resolutely opposed James on these points. One of his most cherished ideas was that the soul, in all its substantiability, was directly accessible in introspection.⁹ His 1917 essay “The Urgent Tasks of Present-Day Thought” criticized phenomenalism in psychology (without, however, naming James) and recommended a “spiritualistic psychology” (pp. 51–52).¹⁰

Georgy Chelpanov was also a spiritualist in psychology and philosophy.¹¹ Like Lopatin, he disputed James’s exclusion of the idea of the soul from psychology. In “James as Psychologist,” he suggests that this exclusion is paradoxical in view of James’s own account that consciousness is spontaneous, causal, goal-directed, selective, and a single entity, not a composite of simpler parts
(of, for example, "mind-stuff" or "mind-dust"). For Chelpanov, these properties (especially the last) mean that "James is a defender of the spiritualistic position regarding the nature of the soul" (pp. 439–446). Yet James tried to explain the self without recourse to the hypothesis of the soul by treating it as a generalization from successive states of consciousness (pp. 449–451). Chelpanov thinks James has fallen into a clear contradiction: "on the one hand, he describes consciousness as only a spiritualist can; on the other hand, he in every way rejects the 'soul'" (p. 456n.). The contradiction results from what Chelpanov nonetheless sees as James's main significance as a psychologist: the fact that he approached psychology as a science in its own terms (the science of the phenomena of consciousness) and furthered its autonomy vis-à-vis metaphysics as well as other sciences. This autonomy must, however, be relative, keeping constant sight of psychology's interest in perennial philosophical questions about human nature. And in this respect Chelpanov says that perhaps no contemporary psychologist had done more than James to affirm that psychology is a philosophical science (p. 456). Such a science is inevitably spiritualistic, according to Chelpanov's logic: Those who acknowledge in one way or another the existence of the soul, as James does and as it seems anyone must in thinking about the mind, "acknowledges its substantiality as well, if not directly, then indirectly."  

Although James had little use for a spiritualistic psychology, in religion and metaphysics he took a different approach, one that bears a certain similarity to Lopatin's formulation of the idea that, in the soul, true reality is revealed in its spiritual foundations. In The Varieties of Religious Experience, James writes that science, necessarily general and impersonal, operates only with symbols of reality, while personal experience can have contact with reality itself (p. 393). This is especially true of religious experiences. "By being religious we establish ourselves in possession of ultimate reality at the only points at which reality is given us to guard" (pp. 394–395). What is the nature of this reality? In religious experience, we become conscious of a higher part of the self and discover that it is "conterminous and continuous with a MORE of the same quality, which is operative in the universe" (p. 400). This "MORE" is true reality. It is spiritual because it is "of the same quality" as the self. For this reason, James also speaks of the "MORE" as a "wider self," with which the conscious person is continuous (p. 405). In psychological terms, he describes the "MORE" as connected to us through the subliminal consciousness, a concept he used to help account for religious, mystical, and "psychical" experiences. Lopatin thought that the "whole enormous sphere of so-called mystical facts" (in the occult or parapsychological sense) deserved serious attention, while Chelpanov devoted considerable space to James's interest in the idea of the subliminal consciousness and in "spiritism" (or mediumism), as well as to his

Kotliarevsky: James and Russia

Sergei Kotliarevsky embraced even more of James’s thought than did Lopatin. Like Lopatin, Kotliarevsky valued pragmatism for restoring an expansive idea of human experience in place of monistic constrictions, and thus for helping to meet our need for a balanced and integral worldview. Both philosophers saw the best example of this restoration in pragmatist openness to religious experience, in “religious pragmatism.” But Kotliarevsky and Lopatin differed somewhat on Jamesian pluralism. While Lopatin felt obliged to criticize it as metaphysics, Kotliarevsky was content to concentrate on its implications in social philosophy (including the place of religion in society), where he found it quite congenial to his own ideas.

"James as Religious Thinker" is the paper Kotliarevsky delivered before the Psychological Society's meeting memorializing James in October 1910. For Kotliarevsky, pragmatism is most interesting in its religious dimensions, when placed in connection with the answers James gave to the perennial questions about the eternal and its relation to man. These answers deserve attention not only as material for the intellectual biography of this “great American thinker,” whose spiritual outlook is so attractive in its freshness but also because they are organically tied to the great currents in religious-philosophical thought. "They have there a past and, it is to be thought, a future" (p. 697). James's originality consists in his pragmatic method, applied most characteristically in The Varieties of Religious Experience, but defended in his other works as well. His approach is based not on abstract deduction from metaphysical premises, but on experience and observation, although not as they exist in the preconceptions and prejudices of those who pretend to the strictest empiricism (p. 698). Pragmatism is a method, not a theory, and it strenuously resists pretentious rationalism and dogmatism. Kotliarevsky, like Lopatin, defends pragmatism against charges of crude utilitarianism, charges which are, he said, far removed from its true spirit (p. 702). In James, that spirit was the fruit of many years of psychological research that combined, in Kotliarevsky's words, exactitude with a brilliant intuition for reconstructing mental life (p. 698). Nowhere is this genius more evident than in James's reconstruction of the varieties of religious experience.

It is no accident, Kotliarevsky suggests, that James has generated so much attention and interest in Russia (p. 717). This is not just another case of Russian susceptibility to the latest trend in Western philosophy and science. Jamesian
pragmatism appeals to certain peculiarities in Russian intellectual development. Russians might take a certain satisfaction in, for example, never having been overburdened by the type of scholastic intellectualism that James found so constraining. (It is true, Koltiarevsky admits, that Russia's freedom from scholasticism may have been a consequence of inadequate logical training and too little interest in purely epistemological problems, of not clearly separating the sphere of theoretical reason from practical reason.) Koltiarevsky even thinks that points of contact could be established between James and Slavophilism. But the best and most precious traditions in Russian higher learning include its attraction to natural science, its high estimation of empiricism, not in the sense of philosophical pretensions, but of fruitful use of experience and observation. And here, Koltiarevsky writes, Russians are inevitably drawn to James's own constant striving to avoid encumbering empirical science with metaphysical hypotheses (p. 717).

It has not been long, however, since the monistic tendencies of scientism were ascendant, when the Russian traditions of true empiricism were apparently in eclipse and in need of recovery. Koltiarevsky refers to the recent dominance of so-called philosophical realism, a partly materialistic, partly positivistic worldview. By the end of the nineteenth century, Russian neodialism had emerged as a powerful critique of this worldview. "The defense of idealism was then in itself a certain act of courage, a defense of freedom against hardened dogmatism. Now idealists no longer need to prove their rights to existence—they are generally recognized" (p. 718). But, Koltiarevsky asks, does external recognition mean internal assimilation? People who sincerely value the progressive movement of idealism could not but experience profound doubt and heavy disappointment now, when victory over one-sided empiricism is too often taken to mean freedom from any scientific methodology and even from elementary logic (p. 718). James strikes the necessary balance. He manages to combine freedom and responsibility, the greatest tolerance with the greatest exactness. "We are accustomed to neither," Koltiarevsky writes, "but do we not distinctly sense that here James comes very close to the most urgent problems of our contemporary culture?" (pp. 717–718).

Koltiarevsky played an important role in the idealist revival he describes here as only partially successful. The comparison he wants to draw between pragmatism and Russian neodialism is that both approaches, as I have argued in the case of Lopatin, seek to delimit science and philosophy (and religion as well) to their own respective spheres of experience and inquiry. The conflation of these distinct spheres, or the hypostatization of one at the expense of the other, is monism. Respect for their mutual autonomy, recognition of their legitimate rights to coexistence, is pluralism (in one important di-
mension of the concept). This side of Jamesian pragmatism received special emphasis by Kotliarevsky, who closely related it to the liberal principles of tolerance and freedom of conscience.

Monism, “True Realism,” and the Quest for an Integral Worldview

In “James as Religious Thinker,” Kotliarevsky declared that James’s struggle with monism, which is “so pernicious for both religious and scientific freedom,” constitutes by itself his great cultural contribution (p. 716). Earlier in 1910, a few months before James’s death in August of that year, Kotliarevsky described the psychology of monism in another essay, “Pragmatism and the Problem of Tolerance.” The article was written in response to the “indisputable fact” of contemporary interest in pragmatism (p. 368), and appeared in the same issue of Questions of Philosophy and Psychology as Lopatin’s speech, “The Present and Future of Philosophy.” Lopatin, we know, was a monist in philosophy. Kotliarevsky was therefore obliged to observe, before beginning his critique, that “unity of substance can be combined with an infinite multiplicity of attributes and modes in which the world appears” (p. 373). But most monists are not this subtle. Their monism consists rather in thinking that natural scientific methods apply to all fields of knowledge. In practice, this often amounts to no more than taking verbal metaphors for fruitful scientific analogies. Such monists see themselves as true realists. Their “naive objectivism” has become very widespread, thus reinforcing their sectarian cast of mind (p. 374).

Kotliarevsky was concerned to defend the autonomy not only of science and philosophy but also of religion. Monism characteristically collapses science and religion into one system (Ernst Heinrich Haeckel and Auguste Comte are Kotliarevsky’s examples). With this, scientific truths take on a supra-empirical character: science becomes a religion. But “the impossibility of an external unification of science and religion is obvious to anyone who has passed through the school of scientific criticism and who is capable of sensing the absolute autonomy of any religious conviction” (p. 376). Such unification always reproduces, in one form or another, the medieval idea of philosophy as the maidservant of theology, and it is always achieved at the cost of a great loss of spiritual and intellectual freedom. Our sense of an irreducible difference between the empirical and religious aspects of the world cannot be suppressed by verbal formulas. Nor can religious needs ever be satisfied by the claims and promises of a monistic orthodoxy [pravoverie]. Kotliarevsky refers here to the example of contemporary Social Democracy, which economic determinism has infected with the “virus of atheism.” Neither this virus nor promises of the
kingdom of freedom have prevented the emergence of religious searchings among Social Democrats, much to the chagrin of the would-be keepers of orthodoxy.\textsuperscript{16} In these searchings, Kotliarevsky sees a healthy protest against monistic attempts to limit the rights of the human spirit (p. 377).

Against monistic orthodoxies of all types, Kotliarevsky values pragmatism for what he called its liberating role, mentioning in particular James's ideas about free will and the plasticity of the world. Instead of finished dogma, pragmatism presents the image of ongoing intellectual and spiritual work. No single link in this process can pretend to absolute or exclusive significance, for each embodies the absolute striving of the human spirit forward to its eternal ends. In this, Kotliarevsky writes, it is clear that the pragmatist understanding of life cannot be reduced to biology, as James himself made clear in the significance he attached to religion (p. 378). If philosophy is experiencing a deep crisis, as Lopatin indicates (Kotliarevsky refers to him in concluding his essay), then it could do no better than to stop chasing after "scholastic virtuosity" and return to the broader path along which people have always sought answers to the perennial questions. This is the path of living instinct, of pragmatism, and of renewal (p. 379). (I will return below to Kotliarevsky's development of a pragmatic basis for tolerance).

Several years earlier, soon after neoidealism had become a movement in Russian social thought but before pragmatism was enlisted in the service of defending the autonomy of philosophy, Kotliarevsky went further in analyzing the type of monism James opposed. In 1904, a group of leading Russian positivists published a manifesto of sorts, \textit{Essays in the Realist Worldview}. Kotliarevsky reviewed the volume in an essay entitled, "On True and False Realism," which critiques positivistic monism as a false realism. His argument shows why he would soon find James so congenial a thinker.

Kotliarevsky's review essay is a forceful statement of the neoidealistic principle of autonomy and delimitation. "Conflict between science and metaphysics, as between science and religion, begins only when mutual usurpation begins" (p. 627). Such usurpation is the mark of positivist realism. Kotliarevsky and his Psychological Society colleagues often used the term (or, when not the term, the concept) "contraband" to describe the distortion and muddling that result when elements from one area of thought (ethical, metaphysical, or religious) are smuggled into or usurped by another (empirical or natural scientific).\textsuperscript{17} Kotliarevsky's criticism of the realist worldview is that, as a worldview, it has not been consciously (i.e., philosophically) constructed and is full of contraband. Realists fail to recognize that constructing a worldview is itself a metaphysical project (p. 627). No less than everyone else, they cannot help asking metaphysical questions, only they do not do so squarely and honestly. Metaphysics thus enters their thinking on an unconscious level, leading to dis-
tortion and conflation. Realism presents itself as a true worldview in its claim to be an empirical one, free of the old superstitions of metaphysics. But an empirical worldview is an impossible contradiction, for any worldview inevitably goes beyond the bounds of empirical data and includes metaphysical elements. Recognizing this is the first requirement of "true realism." Meanwhile,

monism, as it is usually understood, is based on a false conception of human nature, in which natural, irreducible disharmonies exist. Religious, aesthetic, and ethical ideas cannot be reconciled by the criteria of empirical knowledge. To create harmonious personhood from this disharmony comprises the greatest task of Bildung (vospitanie), for both the individual human being and the human species as a whole. But such harmony is not at all created by the artificial stretching of our nature on the Procrustean bed of monism. (p. 634)

The attempt results in "spiritual amputation," and in this monism resembles not the spirit of true realistic science at the end of the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth centuries, but rather the spirit of medieval theocracy—a frequent analogy for Kotliarevsky, and an allusion to the history of church-state relations in Russia, a history characterized by its own type of monistic conflation.

It is the nature of the human mind, Kotliarevsky argues, to transcend each of the relatively distinct areas of its activity and aspire to an ever higher unity. This aspiration is metaphysical, an aspiration to a worldview. Failure to acknowledge it leads to contraband, to the conceptions and distortions of monism, to false realism. At the same time, an integral and balanced worldview requires the free expression and development of each side of our intellectual and spiritual nature. Metaphysical speculation cannot replace scientific work, any more than science alone can satisfy our ideal of a transcending unity. "In delineating the functions of the human spirit, in giving each of them full scope for development, and in not trying to reduce to unity the organically irreducible, we obtain the totality of man's relations to the whole, which are reflected in his consciousness as a worldview" (p. 642). This is Kotliarevsky's conception of true realism. It is already cast in terms of the pragmatic conception of truth as adequacy to the widest possible range of human experience, not as fidelity to a part which mistakes itself for the whole.

In his 1904 review essay, Kotliarevsky dwells on monism as a consequence of lack of philosophical clarity about our inherent aspiration toward a worldview, but he does not mention pragmatism as a way toward self-lucidity. Not until 1912, in an essay entitled "On the Relative and Absolute," does he specify pragmatism as an approach that squarely faces the metaphysical needs of reason and thus brings greater self-consciousness to the task of constructing a
worldview (the idea implicit in his 1910 essays). Though Kotliarevsky does not, of course, deny the value of specialized philosophical research, he does see pragmatism as a way of once again bringing philosophy to bear on the most profound problems of life. Pragmatism can help work philosophy into a general worldview, "to the extent that the pragmatic method flows from the deepest, most fundamental requirements of the mind, and to the extent that any person, as a participant in life, is a pragmatist. The significance of philosophical pragmatism thus lies most of all in recollecting the root properties of our spirit" (p. 98). One of these properties is the mind's natural striving to find a proper balance between the relative and the absolute. Kotliarevsky proposes to examine these categories from the perspective of pragmatism.

First of all, he suggests that the very presence of these categories is something remarkable. They are basic to all experience and thought. Without them, we could not begin to describe consciousness itself. To evaluate (in the broadest sense) means to distinguish between the absolute and relative. Freedom and moral life presuppose these categories (p. 99). Kotliarevsky stresses the necessary interdependence of the two categories: they need each other to be what they are. Pure relativism is thus an impossibility, since it would have no awareness of itself as relative. Even within the category of the relative, we distinguish between degrees (in the sense of "more" or "less" relative): "but what could give this perspective, if not recognition of the absolute" (p. 100). Relativism, which Kotliarevsky thought was then enjoying great popularity, contains in itself at least a latent consciousness of the absolute. By making this clear, pragmatism, Kotliarevsky hoped, could facilitate the recovery of the absolute from relativism, help restore the proper balance between the categories, and arrive at the equilibrium of a true realism. In this, pragmatism can also draw, following James, on religious experience, the essence of which is experience of the absolute (p. 101).

An integral worldview, in its self-consciousness about the relative and absolute, avoids the creation of false absolutes (or idols), characteristic of monistic orthodoxies. For Kotliarevsky, this has special relevance to social philosophy, where relative means (electoral laws, parliamentarianism, proportional representation, the state itself, etc.) must not be taken as absolute ends, opening the doors to the kingdom of freedom and perfect social justice (p. 105). Social and legal means must rather be sanctioned by that which is truly absolute, in religion and morality. This does not imply, of course, that the value of religion and morality consists only in their ability to provide such sanction. "The value of religious-moral principles," Kotliarevsky writes, "depends entirely on their real value in themselves, on the fact that they carry their own sanction." He makes this point to contrast pragmatism with utilitarianism, which does reduce religion and morality to instruments for maintaining so-
cial order (p. 103). The sanctioning power of the absolute comes from its greater degree of autonomy over the relative. Since it is the absolute which is the source of the higher significance of everything relative (which is also why nothing is merely relative), the relative must not be made into its own absolute. As Kotliarevsky puts it, "the world of the relative must be decisively secularized, freed from the conflation of spiritualia and temporalia, which (to be sure, not quite in medieval form) so often comes back to life in science and art, politics and the social sphere, in all branches of human activity" (p. 106). Keeping the right balance between the relative and the absolute can also inspire our everyday work. In this hint at an idealist work ethic, Kotliarevsky suggests that in the light of the absolute, everyday work does not stand on its own but is invested with higher (ultimately transcendent) purposes. Here Kotliarevsky speaks of the pragmatic value of a combination of realism and idealism (p. 107)—the combination of an integral worldview.

The Distinctiveness of Religious Experience

The nature of religious experience was the main subject of Kotliarevsky's essay "James as Religious Thinker." Here he pursues the argument that Jamesian psychology of religion expands the concept of experience beyond positivistic limits. Throughout the essay, he stresses the distinctiveness of religious experience and thus its resistance to false monistic unities. This distinctiveness is largely the result of the individuality of religious experience, conveyed in James's famous definition (which Kotliarevsky quotes) of religion as "the feelings, acts, and experiences of individual men in their solitude, so far as they apprehend themselves to stand in relation to whatever they may consider the divine" ("James as Religious Thinker," p. 698, VRE, p. 34). Religious experiences, according to James, have their bases in psychology and physiology, as does all mental life. This should not influence our evaluation of such experiences, which need to be assessed on their own terms. James was not at all afraid to recognize the relative value of what he called "medical materialism." But, as Kotliarevsky observes, he thought such materialists were naive in imagining that they dispense with St. Paul by explaining his vision on the road to Damascus as an epileptic seizure (p. 699, VRE, p. 20). James's analysis of these conversion experiences comprises, in Kotliarevsky's estimation, an outstanding contribution to religious history (p. 700). The mystery of conversion consists not in the psychological process behind the experience but in the result, in the spiritual state called saintliness. James's description of this state makes perfectly clear the difference between religious and ethical experiences, between exalted inspiration and Kant's categorical imperative (p. 701). It is this distinctiveness that Kotliarevsky wants to emphasize.
For all the pragmatic value James attached to saintliness, he did not neglect the basic question of all religious philosophy: on what is the recognition of religious truth based? Kotliarevsky dwells on his answer: mystical experience determines religious truth (p. 705). Mystical states are absolutely authoritative for those who have them, but this certainty is subjective. "Yet," as James wrote, "the existence of mystical states absolutely overthrows the pretension of non-mystical states to be the sole and ultimate dictators of what we may believe" (VRE, p. 338). This type of testimony against reductive positivism was what Kotliarevsky and Lopatin most valued in James, especially in their defense of the autonomy of philosophy. In A Pluralistic Universe, James himself linked the "great awakening of a new popular interest in philosophy" to religious demands. Jamesian radical empiricism, Kotliarevsky notes, is a more natural ally of religion, and so ultimately of philosophy, than is any dialectic, which only constricts the scope of experience (pp. 706–707; PU, p. 142). ¹⁸ Rationalism and intellectualism, abstract and symbolic, do not have immediate access to reality. The individuality of religious experience makes it invulnerable to science and opens it to ultimate reality. James’s argument (which I outlined in connection with Lopatin) impressed Kotliarevsky (pp. 708–709). The essence of religious experience is prayer, through which we enter into communion with the spiritual world. "Therefore," Kotliarevsky writes, "in the final account the truth of religion depends on whether consciousness in its prayerful state is deceptive or not" (p. 707; cf. VRE, p. 367). The relevant test is a pragmatic one, and here it cannot be denied that prayer releases energy that causes real changes in the world. James’s pragmatic approach to religion strives for criteria of truth based on unimpeded receptivity to the fullest range of experience. "It clears the barriers which stand before the creative energy of the believer" (p. 715).

Kotliarevsky, as an astute student of religion in society, was interested in James’s place within the historical context of religious life in America.¹⁹ Referring to Alexis de Tocqueville and James Bryce, he highlights the exceptional importance of religion in American society and democracy. The most striking characteristic of American religious life is its great diversity. But there is a certain unity in this diversity, not least of all because the dogmatic element is overshadowed by the moral and social influence of religion on the country. "These traits have made possible a development of tolerance, in an atmosphere of indestructible moral unity, incomprehensible to old Europe. . . . Even Catholicism . . . shows a surprising capacity to harmoniously fit the new environment of mutual tolerance and social cooperation" (pp. 710–711). In this Kotliarevsky suggests an association among pragmatism, pluralism, and liberalism, an important topic to which we will return.

Meanwhile, he shows how James drew on the American tradition of "distinctive religious syncretism" (Kotliarevsky sees Ralph Waldo Emerson and
William Ellery Channing as two of the greatest representatives of this syncretism). First, the emphasis within this tradition on morality at the expense of dogma does not mean poverty of religious experience. America could teach James about the social-pragmatic function of religion, but it was his own “incomparable psychological insight” that enabled him clearly to distinguish religious from purely moral experiences. “Faith is capable of being a source of enormous moral energy and of fruitful work in the transformation of the surrounding world, and even here lies the highest guarantee of its truth. But it preserves its autonomy as a perfectly distinctive experience” (p. 712). As we know, James’s deep interest in mysticism helped convince him of this distinctiveness. His proximity to the Unitarians, representatives of the spirit of free thought in Christianity, did not, Kotliarevsky continues, lessen his intimate understanding of the stern mysticism of the Puritans. But then James’s appreciation of the diversity of religious experience reflected the overall harmony of American religious culture.

Although firmly rooted in American society and culture, James had a mastery of European religious-philosophical thought. Among major contemporary religious thinkers, Kotliarevsky compares James to Albrecht Benjamin Ritschl, who opposed intellectualism as the path “leading to the greatest distortion of religion, which can only be a matter of faith, not knowledge.” For Ritschl, religion belonged to the sphere of practical, not theoretical, reason, and in this Kotliarevsky suggests he took a step in the direction of the pragmatic interpretation of religion (p. 713). Kotliarevsky also refers to Ritschl in his earlier essay, “Pragmatism and the Problem of Tolerance,” where his great service is said to have consisted in the attempt to establish the limits of the sphere legitimately belonging to rationalism, and in the defense of the autonomous content of religion outside that sphere (p. 377). Another comparison he draws is to Friedrich Schleiermacher, who sensed in the diversity of religious experience not the slightest diminution of faith, but rather the presence of the infinite in the finite ("James as Religious Thinker," pp. 713–714).

But most of all Kotliarevsky likes to compare James to Catholic modernism, “which apparently must be recognized as the most significant and outstanding phenomenon in contemporary religious life” (p. 714). Modernists seek to reconcile the authoritarian spirit of the church with the rights of individual self-determination and modern cultural values. Like James, they reject dogmatic intellectualism, strive to make immediate internal experience the basis of faith, interpret church dogma in a symbolic sense, and entertain the idea of the imminence of the natural and supernatural. Thinkers like Edouard Le Roy and Maurice Blondel might understand better than anyone the religious potential in pragmatism (pp. 714–715). Kotliarevsky re-
turns to the parallel between James and modernism in his 1912 essay "On the Relative and the Absolute." The point of comparison here is to the individuality of religious experience that James describes. This individualism does not at all lead to the complete religious atomization of society. Nor does it, Koltiarevsky insisted, exclude a uniformity of experiences, a solidarity arising from this uniformity, or, finally, a feeling of profound tolerance toward differences and the form of their expression. "Catholic modernists hope to create from this solidarity and tolerance a new bond among members of the church" (pp. 101–102). And in "Pragmatism and the Problem of Tolerance," Koltiarevsky declares that modernists are kindred in spirit to pragmatists and advocates of tolerance in a milieu—Catholicism—not known for these principles. He thinks (or hopes) it is still too early to predict the outcome of the struggle between modernism and Pope Pius X, but in any event he believes that modernists such as Le Roy, George Tyrrell, and Alfred Loisy have already written a "brilliant chapter in the history of contemporary religious thought" (p. 379).

Truth, Tolerance, Liberalism

"Pragmatism is first of all a call to tolerance," Koltiarevsky proclaims in "Pragmatism and Tolerance" (p. 369). But it provides a very different basis for the defense of tolerance than do skepticism and nihilism, with which pragmatism is often associated. Koltiarevsky refers to Dostoevsky's "Legend of the Grand Inquisitor" to show that in itself skepticism does not provide favorable ground for tolerance. "Disbelief in objective truth can very easily turn into complete contempt for it, which no longer leaves a place for respect for the spiritual freedom of others" (p. 372). This is an important point for Koltiarevsky, which he repeats at the end of this essay. Skepticism, providing no criteria for the superiority of one truth-claim over another, leads to sheer indifference, "where freedom of thought, as a natural right of the human person, does not represent any special value" (pp. 378–379). The opposite danger is fanaticism, where intolerance is the result, in Koltiarevsky's words, of an incorrect evaluation of truth and error, not of plain indifference to them. The "incorrect evaluation" consists, of course, in attributing the forces of good to truth and the forces of evil to error. The superiority of truth over error is obvious (apart from the fact that rarely do fanatics possess even this superiority), but it does not follow that someone who is in error is also wicked. Error is all too easily transformed into moral and social heresy. "In this is the special psychological danger of monism" (p. 373). Pragmatism removes the ground from intolerance in the case of both skepticism and fanaticism. It is, Koltiarevsky says, the golden mean between them (p. 379).
What is the actual positive link between Jamesian pragmatism and tolerance? What is the pragmatic basis of the respect for truth which, according to Kotliarevsky, promotes tolerance? First, Kotliarevsky believes that the best allies of tolerance are religious inspiration and living faith. In "James as Religious Thinker," he sees every possibility for the establishment of an "authentic tolerance" in the growing diversity of religious experience, which he calls an undoubted fact of contemporary spiritual life (p. 716). To support this connection, he draws on the historical development of tolerance ("Pragmatism and Tolerance," p. 370), especially in America ("James as Religious Thinker," pp. 710–712). His argument for a pragmatically based tolerance is clearly that pragmatism esteems dynamic spiritual life (as skepticism does not), and that it is diverse religious experience that, in turn, engenders respect for truth and, as Kotliarevsky puts it, higher spiritual values ("Pragmatism and Tolerance," p. 370). These values emerge from the process of free interplay in a pluralistic diversity of religious experience, so respect for them increasingly commits one to tolerance and freedom of conscience. One of these spiritual values is the absolute worth and dignity of the human person, the (personalist) cornerstone of the liberal worldview. With this we have the foundation stones underlying what can be called Kotliarevsky's pragmatic defense of liberalism.

Like several of his Psychological Society colleagues (Pavel Novgorodtsev and the brothers Sergei and Evgenii Trubetskov, in particular), Kotliarevsky was convinced that liberalism grew from the demands of religious consciousness and that a liberal civic culture had its foundations in free spiritual life. Monistic forms of religion were, in this sense, illiberal. They did not provide enough space for the emergence of the spiritual premises of a viable democracy. Catholicism was Kotliarevsky's favorite example, but he clearly had Russia in mind as well. Subordination of church to state in modern Russian history was its own type of monism, the reverse side of theocracy (Kotliarevsky's usual image). It had led to the atrophy of religious life, the rebirth and free development of which required a pluralistic separation of church and state. The prospects of Russian liberalism depended, in other words, on freedom of conscience, an important principle of neidualist social philosophy in the Moscow Psychological Society, where it took on broad meaning. Freedom of conscience concisely formulated the idea of respect for the autonomy of parts that enables the balanced and integrated development of the whole. This principle is not limited to church and state, but extends to the various distinct spheres of human consciousness and experience (science, philosophy, and religion, for example). These spheres are legitimate in their own domain; one cannot be substituted for any of the others; they are relatively autonomous parts of a whole in which each has its own place. We have seen how this principle
underlies Kotliarevsky’s critique of “false realism.” He stressed the autonomization of religion in particular from false monistic unities because the religious sphere was, he thought, the ultimate source of respect for liberal values.

After the Revolution of 1905, Russia was experiencing, as Kotliarevsky saw it, a national renaissance. He wondered, at the same time, whether the necessary spiritual basis was being created for this renaissance (“James as Religious Thinker,” p. 718). Religious interests, so long dormant in Russian society, were beginning to awaken, as could be seen even in the readership James has found in Russia.20 But “it cannot be regretted enough” that these religious searchings run up against the “fatal mistake”—of which Kotliarevsky apparently found the Russian church most guilty—of failing to distinguish between the eternal and its relative (he said, in fact, “decrepit [obvetshaly!]”) form (p. 719). An integral religious unity can be achieved only through pluralistic diversity, not monistic imposition from above. “But then what remains is faith in human nature, which is capable of ascending, through infinitely many paths, to the divine” (p. 716).21 This faith is the spiritual basis of democracy, as Kotliarevsky emphasizes in another essay, “The Premises of Democracy” (1905). Describing the type of religious consciousness that promotes the development and deepening of liberalism, he writes there:

Its binding force consists in the feelings of piety and worship that are inherent in man before the Unfathomable, the Divine. And these feelings are sufficiently powerful, sufficiently rich in creative force, to generate an infinite diversity of symbols and forms. The spiritualization of human life—here is the true premise of the principle of the “kingdom of freedom.” It is impossible to imagine without religion, forging a link between the terrestrial and celestial. (pp. 126–127)

It is not surprising that the author of these lines had a special appreciation for the author of The Varieties of Religious Experience. Five years later, concluding his remarks before the Psychological Society, Kotliarevsky defined James’s main strength in his fearlessness before life, with its infinite diversity and also its infinite possibilities, “to the realization of which man is called by the feeling of his link with a higher world, at the edge of which he stands.” It was this outlook which attracted Kotliarevsky and his colleagues, “for in it we sense the germs of faith, which can indeed move mountains” (“James as Religious Thinker,” p. 719).

Notes

The author wishes to express special thanks to George Kline for his assistance with this chapter.

2. Chelnabov took a very active role in the Psychological Society after 1907, upon his move from Kiev to Moscow University, where he was to serve as professor and chair of philosophy until 1923. In 1912 he established the Institute of Psychology at Moscow University. He became deputy chair of the Psychological Society in 1909.

3. In 1909 Questions of Philosophy and Psychology published an overview (see Balaban) of pragmatism (focusing on James's Pragmatism and F. C. S. Schiller's Studies in Humanism), presumably with a view to preparing readers for the more interpretive essays which were to follow. Balaban was not a significant figure in the Psychological Society (the overview was his only essay to appear in the journal).

4. Kotliarevsky defended four dissertations at Moscow University: on the Franciscans (1901), Lamennais and modern Catholicism (1904), constitutional law (1907), and the rule-of-law state and foreign policy (1909). In 1909, he became professor of state law at Moscow University. He also lectured at the Higher Women's Courses (1908–1917). He played a leading role in the Russian Liberation Movement, which culminated in the Revolution of 1905. He was a member of the central committee of the Constitutional-Democratic (Kadet) party and was elected to the First State Duma. He became a member of the Psychological Society in 1898.

5. Lev Mikhailovich Lopatin was the senior philosophy professor in the Psychological Society. He became coeditor of its journal in 1894 and editor in 1905. His major work is the two-volume Polozhitel'nye zadachi filosofii (The Positive Task of Philosophy) (1886 and 1891).

6. On El's paper, delivered in 1914, see Scherrer, pp. 338–340. Krupp industries of Essen were major suppliers of German armaments, mostly famous cannons.

7. Positive Tasks, II, especially pp. 213–224, for the section entitled, "The concept of substance and the concept of causation in the strict sense of the word."

8. He often criticized the idea. However, see Meyers, p. 362.


10. Also see, for example, his "Spiritualism kak psikhologicheskai gipoteza" (Spiritualism as a Psychological Hypothesis) VFP 8: 3, kn. 38 (1897): 486–534.

11. The second unit of his Introduction to Philosophy bears the title, "The Ontological Problem," and includes a chapter on spiritualism. Chelnabov states, in the form of his own conclusions, that the self is substantial, that the ontological basis of all reality
is spiritual and comprised of monads, and that spiritualism, so conceived, is a type of monism (cf., Lopatin's spiritualistic monism) (198-200). In his "Survey of Contemporary Theories of the Soul," the substantiality of the soul is the defining criterion of spiritualism (319).


13. "Survey," p. 333. Chelpanov made the straightforward argument that unity of consciousness and identity of self presuppose substantiality (pp. 317-319). James's *Principles of Psychology* was listed here among recent psychological works that assume the existence of the soul. In another essay, "On the Relation of Psychology to Philosophy," Chelpanov defined psychology as the science of the soul, argued that the soul is an inevitable concept in psychology, and criticized the recent "psychology without a soul" movement (without mentioning James).

14. "Urgent Tasks," pp. 70-73. His account clearly draws on James (without mentioning him), as does part of his discussion of immortality (p. 67). According to Korelina (p. 116), Lopatin was himself attracted to "spiritism" and participated in séances.

15. V. M. Khvostov (1868-1920) was the main Russian representative of pluralism in metaphysics, which he took to mean the reality of good and evil as cosmic forces. Since these forces were in themselves irrational, optimism and pessimism were equally untenable monisms. Overcoming evil and cosmic dualism was the goal of human activity, but the outcome was not predetermined. The free struggle with evil was the source of the "ethics of human dignity," as Khvostov entitled one of his books (1912). The conclusion to his essay, "The Pluralist Worldview," adduced James's understanding of religious experience in support of pluralism, so conceived (Khvostov, pp. 391-394).

16. Here and above Kotliarevskii apparently meant the Marxist ideology underlying the "Russian Social-Democrat Workers Party" of Bolsheviks and Mensheviks. By "religious searching" he likely referred to the God-building (bogostroitelstvo) movement within Bolshevism.

17. Lopatin appears to have introduced the concept in the first volume of *The Positive Tasks of Philosophy*. He wrote there that the inevitability of metaphysical suppositions needs to be acknowledged and justified. "Why not call things by their names?" Otherwise, metaphysical ideas can figure in thought only as contraband, distorting it on an unconscious level and preventing clear and precise discourse. "Is it desirable to perpetuate such contraband of reason? . . . Every case of lack of consciousness in the scholarly (nauchnyi) sphere leads only to confusion of concepts, to ambiguity, and to lies" (*Positive Tasks*, I, 434).

18. Kotliarevsky mistakenly placed this passage in *The Varieties of Religious Experience*.

19. His first essay in *Questions of Philosophy and Psychology* was, appropriately enough, "Religion in American Society," a review essay of Henri Bergson, *La religion dans la société aux États-Unis* (Paris, 1902). James, "a purely American genius," was discussed in connection with his ideas on the relationship between society and the individual (pp. 16-18).
20. Kotliarevsky gave this example in another essay, “The Philosophy of the End,” a review of E. N. Trubetzkoy’s two-volume study of Vladimir Solovyov (1913). The essay argued that, since 1905, Russia had been on the path of genuine cultural reorientation, especially in the waning of utopianism (the reference to James is on p. 318).

21. Kotliarevsky denied that, for James, this aspiration to unity with the divine has anything to do with identity of substance. In this connection, he called James’s tendency toward polytheism a “strange admission,” probably a symbol of his aversion to monism (pp. 709–710).

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(“VFP” designates Voprosy filosofii i psikholoii.)


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