

The Afterdeath Journal of an American Philosopher:

The World View of William James

by Jane Roberts (Prentice-Hall, Englewood Cliffs, N.J., 1978)

## William James . . . Ghostwriter?

By Stanley Fisher and John Edminster

THE LABEL says William James but the contents read suspiciously like Seth, the mysterious spirit that's been taking over medium Jane Roberts' mind and body every few days for the past 15 years to tell us all where it's at. And where it's at, Seth and "William James" agree, is that we should each celebrate our own uniqueness and trust in the fundamental goodness of all our desires, casting aside any beliefs that would shackle our truly limitless powers. Nowhere in this memoir from the beyond is the reader warned that new powers entail new moral responsibilities. The devil couldn't have composed a more convincing rationale for irresponsibility in the name of "spontaneity."

William James comes to Jane Roberts like a ghostly lover and dictates his newfound "wisdom" to her while she sits at the kitchen table, dropping her food in midbite to grab a pencil to write it down. He's here, James says, to shed what light he can on the human condition from the superior vantage point of the dead. But if it really is William James, his light

has dimmed pathetically since he wrote *The Varieties of Religious Experience, Pragmatism and A Pluralistic Universe* in the decade before his death in 1910.

To be sure, *The Afterdeath Journal* treats many of the issues that concerned the live James and in ways that often reflect his known bents and biases. But gone is the painstaking logic with which he explored each question down to its furthest roots, and gone is James' intimacy with the dark depths of the human soul — washed away in a flood of anecdotal chatter and Pollyanna-style conclusions. This seems to be still another fraudulent text whose otherworldly author passes himself off as the ghost of William James — like Susy Smith's *The Book of James* (Putnam, 1974). Dr. Ian Stevenson's comments on Miss Smith's book express the same judgment we are passing on *The Afterdeath Journal* — that if it really is William James, his stature is pitifully diminished.

In his article "Some Comments on Automatic Writing" in the October 1978 *Journal of the American Society*

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Enrollment in a heavenly "School for Philosophers" doesn't seem to be helping him either. His teachers — Mesopotamians and ancients from lands even more exotic — spend more time smiling in puzzlement at his foolish questions and dazzling him with their knowledge than dealing with real philosophic problems. Is the universe a unity or a pluralistic aggregate? Are all its events rigidly predetermined, or could God be surprised by what happens? How much can we know about God? These are among the questions the real William James would be asking in such a school and he would be finding out what Plato, Kant and Hegel had to say about them. Not so the author of *The Afterdeath Journal*. He has not looked up a single historical philosopher since his arrival in Paradise, nor has he bothered to find out who else is in his school!

The author of *The Afterdeath Journal* does bear some resemblance to the real William James, for he touches on some of the subjects dear to James' heart during his lifetime: the spiritual condition of the American civilization, the possibilities and limitations of knowledge, the conflict between scientific and religious world views, man's relation to the divine. But the ghostly James (Seth-James as we are inclined to call him) does them ghostly justice indeed.

We have previously mentioned, for example, that he dismisses evil as non-existent, for men always mean to do good, he says, and do wrong only out of ignorance. But if we grant this premise — and it is a cogent one — aren't we still responsible for the consequences of our ignorance and obliged

to make restitution for the harm we do? Seth-James denies that we are and thereby repudiates the principle of karma, in which the real James declared himself a believer. The *pragmatic value* of Seth-James' denial (or its consequences for our behavior, which James insisted was the real test of an idea) is that the most heinous crimes can be excused on the basis of the "good intentions" behind them.

Or consider Seth-James' glowing tribute to faith. Essentially he tells us: By all means have faith but beware of putting your faith in anything, any cause or ideal, for it will inevitably disappoint you. Then how is faith possible? Faith in yourself never fails, he answers; just believe that the universe will support you in whatever you do. This is a far cry from the William James who wrote in *The Varieties of Religious Experience*:

"We and God have business with each other . . . . The universe, those parts of it which our personal being contains, take a turn genuinely for the worse or for the better in proportion as each one of us fulfills or evades God's demands."

Seth-James is telling us that we can do whatever we like, forever exempt from remorse, because we cause no suffering which the victim did not himself choose to experience. The universe rewards those who are confident, Seth-James teaches, and their only responsibility toward the less confident is to tell them to buy and digest the books of Jane Roberts!

Seth-James' passages on truth and knowledge have the same character with an unsavory core lurking behind their rhetorical finery. At times he



for Psychical Research, Dr. Stevenson writes: "James happened to possess one of the most felicitous, and least imitable, styles of any writer of English. If the vapid writings that Smith attributes to William James did indeed emanate from him, I can only say that this implies a terrible post-mortem reduction of personal capacities. (Survival of death with such an appalling decay of personality makes it, at least to me, a rather unattractive prospect.)"

The tone and diction of *The Afterdeath Journal* are by no means crude or glaringly un-Jamesian but the arguments by innuendo, the impressionistic woolliness in place of philosophic rigor, and the glib conclusions would have been anathema to the real James. The existence of evil, discord and pain disturbed James deeply, convincing him that the universe could not be unified and that a good God could not be omnipotent. But the author of *The Afterdeath Journal* laughs off the problem of evil in a few lines, never mentioning how this new outlook squares with the traditional Jamesian philosophy. On page 171 we read: "The profound truth is that there is no evil to contend with . . . evil is merely the misdirected or distorted attempt to attain good." Discrepancies like this convince us that the real author of *The Afterdeath Journal* is not William James at all, but Seth, who is resorting to this underhanded masquerade in the hope of attracting a larger following.

Counterfeit or not, *The Afterdeath Journal* contains poetry and eloquence and frequently offers breathtaking, awesome vistas — as in the author's

description of his after-death existence:

"In the universal drama, you might say that I am still in the same theater of events, but I have moved from life's stage to the balcony, where . . . I can look down, symbolically speaking, to see the actors coming in at one end of the stage, leaving at the other end, and I can also vaguely perceive other stages, both above and below.

"Each barest whisper or muffled cry is heard everywhere, such are the amazing acoustics of this giant theater, which by its nature magnifies each sound and projects each thought outward, where it appears also elsewhere, translated into a different medium. It is as if one actor's spoken line were simultaneously transposed into a musical note in some vast ever-continuing composition; into one original line or color or shape that was part of some massive, spectacular painting always in process; into the physical components of nature — trees, rocks, animals — and into a million other transformations which even from my position would be impossible to follow.

" . . . Behind me is a door leading into perhaps even vaster theaters. When I have learned all I can from my present situation, the curtain behind me will open, of that I am certain, for even now symbolically it flutters. Sounds, visions even, come distantly to me from directions other than those immediately perceivable. For now, however, I sit with my back to that rather mysterious door."

If only the whole book lived up to the promise of passages like this! But alas, only the flimsiest philosophy lies beneath these brave flights of lyricism.

sounds like the old James, urging scientists and thinkers to take off their blinders of prejudice and intellectual habit and strive above all for fidelity to actual experience.

"Don't ignore the soul," he chides the scientists, "just because you can't reduce it to quantitative data." But he sounds a new note here, reminiscent of the antirationalist philosophers of Fascism, denigrating "factual" or "objective" knowledge and glorifying inner promptings, blind self-trust and subjective "strange stirrings" as sources of superior knowledge. In keeping with this is his readiness to declare religion, science and philosophy alike bankrupt and useless:

"Then let science beware, for the 'common man' may overcompensate and overthrow it; for religion and science have each underestimated the ordinary person, the natural creature, who in the long run may be more foresighted, in spite of all his frailties, than is generally supposed."

Seth-James reaches a peak of intellectual shabbiness in his lengthy attack on Sigmund Freud, the villain of the book, whom he smears as a fanatic who crippled America's faith in herself by teaching that men are fundamentally bestial and in need of taming:

"Altruism, displays of valor, philosophy itself, or creativity . . . were only possible because of their self-serving qualities, and beneath their gentle guise lay . . . the male's drive to slay his father in order to supersede him in life's battle. Such theories stripped human personality of any majesty and denied the possibility of heroic action that was not tied to the meanest inner motives."

Why does he hate Freud with such a passion — Freud, whose works the real James praised? It's not hard to guess that Seth-James has it in for this modern Prometheus because he freed man from his ignorance of the sexual repressions that cause his neuroses — for sex has always been a forbidden subject to Jane Roberts and Seth, whose remarkable silence on the subject bears witness to their preference for unearthly spiritualism over wholesome earthly sexuality.

In contrast to this grim modern world Seth-James describes, ruled by penis envy and the Protestant ethic, the world of the dead seems a lively place indeed. Each soul there is granted such marvelous perceptual abilities as the power to replay the tape of his life at will, not merely as it was but in the thousand ways it might have been, and to watch his thoughts incarnate as creatures with lives of their own in a "thought world." If heaven is like this and guaranteed for all, why should anyone want to stay here on earth? Will *The Afterdeath Journal* send the suicide rate soaring?

Although "the dead still love those they loved in life" they love the conviviality of Valhalla so much more that they hate to be bothered by their benighted survivors:

"The dead . . . do not miss the living. They do not feel absent from the living . . . It is to relieve the loneliness of the living that the dead communicate . . .

"The dead in their way are jealous of their freedom and . . . are so involved in their own adventures that sometimes they ignore the nagging of the living, whose thoughts rise up like



mental kites with reminders, saying, "Why haven't you written?"

What's with this Seth-James, anyway? He seems far fonder of Jane and his living readers than of the dead who should now be his companions. A hermit by choice, he has no contact with those who shared his earthly life and interests and should be his next-door neighbors. Where are his wife and children? Where is his illustrious brother Henry? Why hasn't he looked up his old scholarly cronies, Frederick Myers, Josiah Royce, Charles Sanders Peirce? Why hasn't he confronted Freud with the accusations he's now making through Jane Roberts? If this is a true account of James' life after death, then his apathy toward his sometime peers is altogether pathological, not at all in keeping with the cheery, chatty character he projects in his writings. And his turning his back on the dead to flirt with the living is all the more incongruous in the light of his avowed realization that perhaps the dead should not have any rights in the world of the living, since the dead have had their time of action in that regard: the limelight was once theirs, and only a greedy actor and an exceedingly egotistical one returns to play a scene when his part has been cut out.

If indeed this is William James, then one must wonder whether he's hanging round his earthly haunts because his heaven is not the paradise he pretends it to be, but rather hell itself: a sterile environment devoid of any meaningful human intimacy. In this light his "Good Samaritan" visitations to planet Earth smack more of nefarious meddling and suggest a

peculiar unsavory significance to his offhanded admission that "after death, watching the tracks of one's own influence is perhaps the most fascinating of endeavors." This innocent-looking statement appears, at second glance, to contradict flatly his claim that the dead prefer their own adventures to the relatively dismal alternative of remaining earthbound to fraternize with the living. And if it is high pleasure to watch one's tracks, then wouldn't one yearn to sneak back and lay more tracks and then more and more? Isn't that what Seth-James is doing, in fact, by having Jane Roberts write books for him? Then where does he intend to stop? Does he envision a world possessed and ruled by himself through high priestess Jane Roberts with every square inch crisscrossed by the tracks of his influence?

The ultimate criterion for judging a work like *The Afterdeath Journal*, as the real James would no doubt remind us, is neither its authenticity nor its author's motives but its pragmatic significance: What difference will it make in our conduct? As a piece of science fiction the book is entertaining but as a guide to living it ranks with the Seth books and Abbie Hoffman's *Steal This Book* as carte blanche for self-destructive irresponsibility. Instead of helping us love and be sensitive to one another, Seth-James offers us the lure of personal power — on the one hand, by trumpeting the enormously expanded capacities allegedly enjoyed by the dead (and by extension by those in spiritualistic contact with the dead, like Jane Roberts) and on the other, by intimating that the secret of life and happiness, here as hereafter,

## SECRETS OF MIND EXPANSION

Some of the writings of two great thinkers, William James and John Dewey, have been ignored or suppressed for 50 years. Why?

By Felix Morrow

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UNTIL I read the book *William James on Psychical Research* when it was first published in 1960, I had no idea William James had written so much and so well on psychical research, that psychical research had been one of the principal activities of his life and that he considered the continuation of psychical research of central importance to understanding human nature. Why was I so ignorant of these facts? The book itself offers a clue. The bulk of William James' writings on psychical research had originally appeared in the *Proceedings* of the British and American Societies for Psychical Research and had never before been reprinted in book form.

I had been an undergraduate majoring in philosophy and a graduate student in philosophy, with a particular interest in William James, but none of my teachers had ever mentioned these writings. Why weren't these writings reprinted during the 50 years since James died in 1910 and this book appeared in 1960? Why did his literary executors ignore them while they brought out volume after volume of his other uncollected writings in the years immediately after his death?

James' oldest son and literary executor Henry brought out two volumes of his father's *Letters* but he turned over the compiling of the uncollected papers to Ralph Barton Perry, the successor to James' chair in philosophy at Harvard. Perry compiled and wrote the two-volume work *The Thought and Character of William James* (1925) which today is still the principal work of exposition and interpretation of William James.

In the *Letters* I found one written in 1898 to his close friend J. J. Putnam who, like James, was a professor at the Harvard Medical School. James wrote of a speech he had made at a hearing in the Massachusetts State House in which he had resolutely opposed a bill sponsored by the medical profession and intended to outlaw all forms of mental healing by nondoctors. In that letter to Putnam, James called this speech "the greatest moral effort of my life." *Letters* reported that James had prevailed against the bill and that many of his fellow professors at Harvard Medical School never forgave him.

I turned for further information to Perry's two volumes but found only a



lies in the brazen pursuit of self-serving impulses. If we live and think as he does, we too can share his "delightful security" and foreknowledge of the future. We can shape reality — even call whole civilizations into being!

"But now some curiosity rouses within me, or rather now I am aware of it, that urges me toward psychological exploration, that stretches inner psychic muscles perhaps; and I am immersed in a kind of delightful security and assurance that such exploration is possible. I know, for example, that in one way or another the most simple of my memories can lead to an incredibly distant intersection point where it opens up to all of the other memories



### TOWARD BIGGER AND BETTER DREAMS

By W. Ritchie Benedict

**P**AY ATTENTION to your dreams and you'll end up with bigger and better ones, according to dream psychologist and author Dr. Ann Faraday. Lecturing at the University of British Columbia in the spring of 1977 she said that ordinary dreams are a replay of feelings hidden during the day. Working them out allows for an expansion of consciousness and a better understanding of oneself which in turn can lead to more significant dreams. She was assisted in the presentation of her lecture, titled "Extraordinary Dreams, the Crack Between Two Worlds," by John Wren-Lewis, former chairman of England's Association for Humanistic Psychology.

"As aspects of the self come together in integration," Dr. Faraday said, "an enormous amount of energy

of man's racial future and past . . . .

"Civilizations may rise up at my beckoning . . . ."

Although it is intriguing reading, *The Afterdeath Journal* is best taken with a grain of salt. Much of its value lies in the intellectual challenge it provides the reader who would pick out the nourishing morsels from the background of multidimensional meringue that turns out, as one attempts to digest it, to be mostly hot air. But insofar as one seeks in this book a way to promote brotherly love on this planet, better read something else — for on this issue, the author's total lack of concern is reflected in his total and deafening silence.

is released which you can then put into your life and live more fully so that you have bigger dreams." Wren-Lewis added that many people are afraid of the content of their dreams and for this reason do not pay attention to them. However, a high proportion of dreams contain pleasant revelations. "Even if they're unpleasant," he said, "getting to understand dreams is a process of self-discovery . . . which is an exciting, creative experience."

Dr. Faraday pointed out that extraordinary dreams, no matter how far-fetched or mystical, relate to something that is happening in one's life. She believes extrasensory perception is often expressed in dreams and said, "What we want to know is why it happens."

perfunctory paragraph about the hearing and no quotations from the speech. The speech itself was nowhere reprinted in the posthumous volumes of James' life. For help I turned to the Houghton Library at Harvard where there is a repository of James' papers. I received a response from Henry James, Jr., a grandnephew of James, who was then a Houghton librarian. He dug and dug and he finally came up with the full text of the speech. It had been reported in part in the daily newspapers but the full text was printed only once—in the Spiritualist newspaper *Banner of Light*. I got a copy and FATE reprinted it.\* When you read it you will understand why James called it the greatest moral effort of his life. In it James stands up for true investigative science against the dogmatic scientism of the medical profession.

There was personal passion as well as intellectual passion in that speech. Until his late 20's James had suffered from a combination of physical and mental ailments for which the doctors could do nothing. He was often on the verge of suicide. The turning point for James came at age 28 when the voluntaristic philosophy of Renouvier opened a new world for him, a world in which he could spontaneously, arbitrarily recreate his life and turn away from negative thoughts to "the sustaining of the thought *because I choose to* when I might have other thoughts." Thanks to Renouvier, James abandoned the idea he had been taught in medical school, that all mental disorder has a physical basis. From then on James' health improved although he still had bouts of

insomnia and melancholy. A number of times he resorted to "mind-curers," nonmedical healers (probably Christian Science practitioners). We know this because he told of it in *Letters* but we look in vain for an account of this in Perry's two volumes.

James believed these lay mental healers helped sufferers by reaching parts of the mind other than the ordinary consciousness. James related this to the great discovery, by the psychical researcher F.W.H. Myers, of the "subliminal mind," a far vaster area than that of the conscious mind. James' firm conclusion from a lifetime of psychical research is that mediums, by means of this subliminal mind, reach into "a continuum of cosmic consciousness against which our individuality builds but accidental fences and into which our several minds plunge as into a mother-sea or reservoir."

James borrowed the term "cosmic consciousness" from Richard Maurice Bucke's 1900 book of that name. James could never decide whether this cosmic consciousness included the discarnate minds of the dead if that meant that the discarnate minds remained separate entities. For James it seemed more likely that those now gone had left permanent traces within the cosmic consciousness. But he was quite certain that vast and unknown powers of healing could be discovered in the subliminal mind and in cosmic consciousness. Both psychical researchers and the new mental healers were experimenting with these mysterious areas of mind. Hence James' sense of outrage that the dogmatists of the medical profession should try to outlaw these healers.

In Perry's two volumes on *The*

\*"When William James Spoke Out for Healing," November 1969 FATE.



*Thought and Character of William James* there is only one short chapter on psychical research. And one revealing sentence expresses Perry's distaste for all this. "Psychical research," he says, "was only one of many examples of James' fondness for excursions to the scientific underworld." Underworld indeed!

In the same spirit Perry writes, "The ultimate results of James' treatments [by mind-curers] were almost invariably negative." And he writes this in the face of an 1893 letter in which James told Myers:

"My state of mind is also revolutionized since that time [that I declined the presidency of the SPR]. I had a pretty bad spell and know now a new kind of melancholy. It is barely possible that the recovery may be due to a mind-curer with whom I tried 18 sittings. What makes me think so is that I am enjoying an altogether new kind of sleep, or rather an old kind which I have been bereft of for so many years that I had forgotten its existence and considered myself sleeping as well as I ought to and told her so, when I went to her, saying my only trouble was my mind . . . Two other cases of brain-trouble, intimate friends of mine, treated simultaneously with me, have entirely recovered."

So Perry, the editor of James' posthumous writings, did not care for James' interest in mental healing or psychical research. Hence we waited half a century for the reprinting of James' writings on psychical research. Of course Perry was only symptomatic of the main trend in the academic world, then and now. In that world James is taught in part in the psychology depart-

ment and in part in the philosophy department; nowhere is his psychical research taught.

This suppression and bowdlerization of James' writings on consciousness research has deprived us for many years of some of what we might have known in this field.

I should like to pinpoint what the academic world found unpalatable in William James' conclusions from his work in psychical research. That world was of course repelled by the fact that James was proud of his discovery of the trance medium Leonore Piper and that he spent the last 25 years of his life studying her seances.

When James' friend and fellow-researcher Richard Hodgson died and Mrs. Piper reported messages from him, the academic world was scandalized that James concluded, "I myself feel as if an external will to communicate were probably there."

But over and above these details was the fact that William James, following in the footsteps of F.W.H. Myers, author of the great two-volume work *Human Personality and Its Survival of Bodily Death* (1903), conceived of a vast realm of cosmic consciousness, out of which we somehow individually emerge. And individually we have a "subliminal consciousness as the enveloping mother-consciousness in each of us, from which the [ordinary] consciousness we wot of is precipitated like a crystal."

In the case of mediums, supernormal knowledge, meaning "knowledge that cannot be traced to the ordinary sources of information, the senses," comes to the medium, says James, from "a cosmic environment of other consciousnesses of some sort which is able to

Dewey and his ideas of consciousness. I would not have believed it was possible that I did not know about a major influence on Dewey and one of his long-standing intellectual interests.

But in 1968 I commissioned a scholar of body-mind work, Edward Maisel, to compile and edit a one-volume work of the writings of Frederick Matthias Alexander, the creator of the Alexander Technique, a method of working on one's body alignment which seems to have profound effects in bettering one's health and mental stability.

When Maisel handed in the manuscript I found to my astonishment that the appendix contained three essays which John Dewey had written as introductions to three books by Alexander; Maisel's excellent introduction to the book told me much about Dewey's relationship with Alexander, with whom he had been closely associated for 35 years beginning in 1916.

I had never seen or heard any of this. Dewey's writings on Alexander have not been reprinted by his literary executors. Neither in their writings nor in those of anyone else in the academic philosophical fraternity have I ever found a discussion of Dewey's relationship and work with Alexander and his views on Alexander.

Why this silence?

Unlike the mind-curers and mediums who interested James, Frederick Matthias Alexander did not think of himself as a mystic. Even so, his idea of the holistic unity of body and mind was novel and radical for his time. People were uneasy dealing with it and Dewey's philosophical colleagues, whom he tried in vain to interest in Alexander, were no exception.

Also strange to the thinking of both scientists and lay people of that time was the idea of the experiential, the idea that you had to *do* something in order to understand it at all.

No number of expositions of the Alexander Technique could, then or now, convey what it is. One must put oneself in the hands of a trained Alexander teacher and experience the technique for a while. Nowadays, in myriad ways, we have come to understand experiential processes but in those days it sounded like abracadabra.

What Dewey was urging on people was the very heart of his philosophical method, a method of inquiry by doing. But it now seems to me that even such brilliant pupils of his as Sidney Hook and Ernest Nagel were unable to understand that, in his exposition of Alexander, Dewey was exemplifying the very method which made him famous.

Instead of being tempted by Dewey's large claims into inquiry concerning the Alexander Technique, it seems Dewey's colleagues were embarrassed for him; they thought he had gone off the deep end.

For example, Dewey, in his very first paragraph about Alexander, writes:

"Many persons have pointed out the strain which has come upon human nature in the change from a state of animal savagery to present civilization. No one, it seems to me, has grasped the meaning, dangers and possibilities of this change more lucidly and completely than Mr. Alexander. His account of the crises which have ensued upon this evolution is a contribution to a better understanding of every phase of contemporary life. His interpretation of the individual produced by the conflict



work" on the faculties of the medium. The James-Myers idea of cosmic consciousness, I think, was what the academic world of their time found most unacceptable. It seemed to bear no resemblance either to the Newtonian and Darwinian world or to the Judeo-Christian world view.

The professing Christians in the academic world found no comfort when James, in his *Varieties of Religious Experience*, went beyond naturalism to avow a precise belief in something divine, because James' "divine facts" were unrecognizable in the Judeo-Christian world view. What James avowed was "that the world of our present consciousness is only one out of many worlds of consciousness that exist, and that those other worlds must contain experiences which have a meaning for our life also, and that although in the main their experiences and those of this world keep discrete [from each other] yet the two become continuous at certain points and higher energies filter in [to this world]. By being faithful in my poor measure to this over-belief, I seem to myself to keep more sane and true."

These "higher energies," James makes clear, are divine. James never knew or even remotely implied that he knew "what the more characteristically divine facts are, apart from the actual inflow of energy in the faith-state and prayer-state," but he was ready in 1902, as in the years thereafter, to make his "personal venture" on the over-belief "that they [these divine facts] exist" (page 519, *Varieties*).

I repeat, James' idea of the divine was too utterly strange to his colleagues to be seriously considered. James ends

*Varieties* with the thought, which only sometimes has been uttered by Gnostics and never by orthodoxy, that God needs our help: "Who knows," he says, "whether the faithfulness of individuals here below to their own over-beliefs may not actually help God in turn to be more effectively faithful to his own tasks?"

James leaves us with the idea, bewildering to most people, that there is a cosmic environment of consciousness, a mother-sea or reservoir of consciousness out of which our ordinary consciousness is crystallized, and of which God is only a finite part!

That is why James' idea of a realm of cosmic consciousness was suppressed and ignored until our time.

To my knowledge, it is not until Ken Wilber wrote *The Spectrum of Consciousness* (1975) that James' idea of consciousness was taken up, seriously studied and accepted.

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**T**HERE IS another man one of whose central ideas has gone unrecognized by you, me and the world until recently—to our great loss. John Dewey's thinking about consciousness has been neglected, left quite unknown and unmentioned upon.

As an undergraduate in the 1920's, I was fortunate to meet Sidney Hook who was Dewey's favorite pupil and who later became one of Dewey's literary executors. As a result of this meeting I decided to do my graduate work in philosophy at Columbia, only to find that Dewey was just retiring. Still, the men with whom I studied had been trained by Dewey so that presumably I got my Dewey straight.

The point of this story is that for 40 years I thought I knew and understood

centers primarily about the crisis in the physical and moral health of the individual produced by the conflict between the functions of the brain and the nervous system on one side and the functions of digestion, circulation, respiration and the muscular system on the other, but there is no aspect of modern life which does not receive illumination."

Dewey hazarded the guess that prevailing dualistic feelings about the body caused resistance to Alexander. Dewey writes:

"Men are afraid, without even being aware of their fear, to recognize the most wonderful of all the structures of the vast universe—the human body. They have been led to think that serious notice and regard would somehow involve disloyalty to man's higher life. The discussions of Mr. Alexander breathe reverence for this wonderful instrument of our life, life mental and moral as well as that life which somewhat meaninglessly we call bodily. When such a religious attitude toward the body becomes more general, we shall have an atmosphere favorable to securing the conscious control which Alexander urges."

Dewey further tells us that we travel in a vicious circle: our "wrongly-adjusted psychophysical mechanisms" produce in us a "perverted consciousness" which in turn makes it hard for us to understand Alexander's statements concerning our maladjustment and our consequently perverted consciousness. Elsewhere Dewey speaks of the great moral and intellectual effort that is necessary to master the Alexander Technique and to understand its broad significance for the control of human conduct.

Dewey, thanks to his work with Alexander, understood clearly that our mastery of science without mastery of ourselves is a great danger. He writes:

"Through modern science we have mastered to a wonderful extent the use of things as tools for accomplishing results upon and through other things. The one factor which is the primary tool in the use of all these other tools—namely, ourselves—in other words, our own psychophysical disposition, as the basic condition of our employment of all agencies and energies, has not even been studied as the central instrumentality. It is not highly probable that this failure gives the explanation of why it is that in mastering physical forces we have ourselves been so largely mastered by them, until we find ourselves competent to direct the history and destiny of man?"

But Dewey does not discuss this merely as an abstraction; he goes immediately to grappling concretely with a new way of achieving it. He says:

"It is another thing to discover the concrete procedure by which this greatest of all tasks can be executed. And this indispensable thing is exactly what Mr. Alexander has accomplished . . . .When once a reasonably adequate part of a new generation has become properly coordinated, we shall have assurance for the first time that men and women in the future will be able to stand on their own feet, equipped with satisfactory psychophysical equilibrium, to meet with readiness, confidence and happiness instead of with fear, confusion and discontent, the buffetings and contingencies of their surroundings."

In these words Dewey made an



extraordinary intellectual and moral commitment. His words fell on deaf ears.

Since Dewey's time interest in the Alexander Technique has become fairly widespread—among dancers and actors. But as yet there is no sign of a systematic experiment in the use of the Alexander Technique.

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**T**HE NEGLECT and suppression of these ideas on consciousness of

James and Dewey are very pertinent today. A new generation of pioneers—told about in Marilyn Ferguson's recently published *The Aquarian Conspiracy*—is discovering much that is new and important about consciousness. Will these new paradigms find acceptance in our schools and universities? The story of James and Dewey indicates how difficult such a road is likely to be.



#### SCORCH-YOUR-MOUTH PAINKILLER

**W**ILL A steaming bowl of scorch-your-mouth Texas chili be hailed as the next great painkiller?

Recent research on animals shows that capsaicin, the chemical responsible for hot peppers' fiery kick, effectively relieves certain types of pain. Dr. T. F. Burks of the University of Arizona Health Sciences Center says that when injected in guinea pigs, the capsaicin provided long-term relief from burning

pain, the type suffered by humans with such chronic conditions as pinched nerves and tumors.

It's believed that the capsaicin blocks the nerve pathways that carry these pain signals to the brain. "It seems obvious that there is some interaction between capsaicin and these nerves," Burk said. "In small doses it activates them, causing your mouth to burn; in large doses it may block them."



#### WHETHER YOU WIN OR LOSE . . .

By Harold Helfer

**T**HEY SAY it's not whether you win or lose but how you play the game but winning is better than losing—most of the time.

Boston College alumni will attest that losing isn't the worst thing in the world. In 1942 Boston College's football team was the toast of the football world, unbeaten in eight games, scoring 249 points to its opponents' 19. Its ninth game seemed a cinch. All the team had to do was demolish Holy Cross, a mediocre outfit which had lost four games and been tied once. The Boston College team was so sure of winning that reservations for a "victory party"

were made at Boston's Coconut Grove nightclub.

But Boston College lost. Holy Cross triumphed 55 to 12 in one of the most stunning college football upsets of all time. The "victory party" was canceled.

Thus it happened that the Boston College players were not assembled in the Terrace Room of the nightclub when it caught fire. The Coconut Grove fire turned out to be one of the worst disasters in the nation's history. In little more than 10 minutes 490 persons lay dead or dying. The one room in which every single person died was the Terrace Room.



# William James:



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by Edward Hoffman,  
Ph.D.

On a beautiful summer night in New York's lush Adirondack Mountains, the famous psychologist William James found himself walking alone in the woods. He wandered for hours, while "the streaming moonlight lit up things in a magical checkered play [with] the Gods of all the nature mythologies."

James felt blissfully at one with the cosmos and ever afterward was convinced that there's more to life than what ordinary science tells us. Later, in influential talks and books like *The Varieties of Religious Experience* (1902) he insisted that mystical encounters are keys to unlocking the secrets of human existence: "They plainly show the universe to be a more many-sided affair than [narrow-minded science] allows for."

Gaining scientific respectability for psychic exploration has taken a long time. But as the field grows rapidly today, it's important to honor the contribution of its early leader, William James.

Though credited as a founder of American psychology, few people know of James' keen interest in the paranormal. Over a long, successful career ending only with his death in 1910, James actively studied phenomena like telepathy, clairvoyance, unorthodox healing, mediumship, and ghostly happenings. Not only did



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signaling an imminent change in government. Similar sightings of the Virgin in 1933 and 1958 heralded the downfall of the Urrutia and Batista regimes, respectively.

But the apparitions go beyond political struggles. Giorgio Bongiovanni is a contemporary contactee whose experiences combine the UFO and religious experience. He is the heir to contactee Eugenio Siragusa's "Fratellanza Cosmica"—the Cosmic Brotherhood—founded in the 1950s.

Bongiovanni, a youthful, bearded, smiling figure, displays stigmata, bodily marks resembling the wounds inflicted upon Christ. He proclaims "the message of Jesus linked to extraterrestrial revelation."

The Cosmic Brotherhood's leader also teaches that UFOs are merely vehicles used by the Celestial Powers. Bongiovanni believes the Powers, led by the starship-piloting Adoniesis, want to preserve some humans in order to form a new civilization after our own self-destructs.

Veronica Leuken, a contactee who delivers written messages from the Holy Virgin, has issued statements painting a darker picture of UFOs. In the winter of 1973, she said: "Many agents of hell are now loosened upon the Earth, and they have their own means of transportation. Do not be deceived by the false theory that believes that life exists beside that of the kingdom of heaven. Satan is sending such vehicles before your eyes to deceive and confuse you. These objects flying in your atmosphere come from hell. They are the false miracles of your age, and are not a product of man's imagination."

Diabolical beings are also described in Leuken's messages from the Virgin: "They are horrible to look at. Mostly they are small, have elongated eyes and long mouths. Their faces inspire fear. Some of them have something on their foreheads that is the color of silvery ash, a viscous thing that reminds one of death. They are repugnant."

Can we believe this to be a descrip-

tion of the Greys delivered in the early 1970s? The bulk of cases in the *Year of the Humanoids* (1973) featured an array of beings, but the contemporary Greys were not in evidence.

Leuken delivered messages from the Virgin throughout the decade, concerning the threat posed by UFOs. In a message from February 1978, she said, "The UFOs which you admire come from the plane of Satan. They are false images that promote the mistaken notion that there is life on other planets. There is no life, as it was created only upon Earth. Satan creates many false miracles.... They are the means of transportation of hell, and can be found nowhere else."

Leuken could simply be projecting her own fears and beliefs rather than those of heavenly denizens. Some say the entities manifesting themselves through automatic writing tend to be inveterate liars (to wit, the "aliens" that led the Peruvian operation RAMA by the nose for a number of years). Even if the messages are bona fide, they could well turn out to be the propaganda of one group of entities against another.

In his book *Defendimonos de los Dioses*, Salvador Freixedo refers to so-called religious apparitions as a means by which entities on a higher evolutionary scale than our own manage to get "subtle energies" out of the human brain. They have their way with us by stimulating our need for the spiritual and posing as deities. Strong emotions like awe, fear, and excitement are released in the act of worshipping one of them, which serves their purposes.

Could the urgent tone of the Virgin's communications be interpreted as a warning from the Earth itself against these forces? Was Wilhelm Reich correct in assuming that UFOs represented malignant energies? ■

Scott Corrales writes often for *FATE* magazine and lives in Pennsylvania. His book, *The Chupacabras Diaries*, is reviewed in this issue on page 60.

## NOW SHOWING: THE VIRGIN MARY

It is in Mexico where the first major apparition of the Blessed Virgin took place, initiating a series of nearly identical "contact" experiences which continue today.

Embellished by numerous retellings, the apparition of the Blessed Virgin of Guadalupe still influences the belief of millions of contemporary worshipers. It differs from the more recent sightings in that its lone protagonist was not a child or adolescent, but a recently-converted man in his fifties named Cuauhtlatoatzin, immortalized by his baptismal name, Juan Diego. He received no special powers during his contact experience, no crowds gathered, and there was only one cure—his uncle Juan Bernardino was healed of a serious malady.

While traversing the barren hill of Tepeyac, a young woman appeared out of nowhere to Juan Diego, directing him to go to the archbishop of Mexico, to tell him that she desired a temple built for her on that very spot. When Juan Diego was unsuccessful, she ordered him to gather roses from the site—where previously nothing would grow—and to take them to the archbishop as proof. When Archbishop Zumárraga saw the fragrant Castillian roses, the image of the Virgin appeared on the inside of Juan Diego's cloak, which he had used to gather up the roses. The cloak now hangs above the main altar of the Basilica erected on Tepeyac.

There is an interesting sidebar to this story: The hill of Tepeyac had boasted a temple to Tonantzin, the Aztec mother-goddess, ruthlessly destroyed by one of Cortez's lieutenants. The stones of this demolished temple served to build the impressive Basilica, which can be seen today. ■



# Pioneer of Parapsychology

the highly respected Harvard professor champion the cause of parapsychology, he also created the American Society for Psychical Research.

Born in New York City in 1842, James grew up in a wealthy family interested in spirituality. His younger brother, Henry, decided to become a writer at an early age, but Henry James floundered academically for several years. Shy and in fragile health, he was always drawn to questions about God, the universe, life, the soul, and death. Even when he was busy attending Harvard medical school, James remained interested in spiritual matters. He once wrote to his sister Alice about his belief in astral projection.

In 1872, after receiving his medical degree, he was hired to teach physiology at Harvard. James showed a wide range of interests including psychology, mysticism, and the paranormal. In popular and professional magazines over the next decade, he argued strongly that the human soul was not built like a machine, but had a higher sensitivity. He also insisted that laboratory research would never truly solve the mystery of our consciousness.

When the Society for Psychical Research was organized in England in 1882, James immediately became an active member. Then, three years later in Boston, he met an amazing trance-medium, Leonora Piper.

## One White Crow

Quiet and unassuming, Piper seemed ordinary enough. But she was the most gifted psychic James had ever met. She claimed to be in direct communication with the spirit world, and she was convincingly able to provide complete strangers with details about their deceased loved ones. She also clearly displayed clairvoyant powers. In 1887, James excitedly brought her to the attention of the Society for Psychical Research, and for the next 25 years, its leaders studied her remarkable abilities. To rule out fraud, they scrutinized every aspect of her private life and even hired detectives to trail her. But as one historian flatly stated, "Mrs. Piper was integrity itself. No fraud was ever discovered."

To James, Piper's psychic capabilities revealed definite evidence of the paranormal. In his famous words, she was "the one white crow" whose existence proved that "not all crows are black." In other words, James believed that at least some human beings can receive extrasensory information. He wrote many articles describing her talents, but readily admitted that

no scientific theory could explain how trance-mediumship between humans and the spirit world actually worked.

James' interest in the paranormal wasn't simply academic—it was also quite personal. He often visited psychic healers in the Boston area, and he wrote to a friend that one had cured him of chronic sleeping problems. When the Massachusetts medical association tried to ban such healers in 1894, James lobbied against the bill. In doing so, he aroused the fury of fellow doctors who questioned his competence and even his sanity.

But James was never bothered by such pettiness. Not long after his battle on behalf of unorthodox healers, he agreed to become President of the Society for Psychical Research. Mystical experiences continued to fascinate him, and in a public talk for teachers James said, "I am sorry for the man or woman who has never been touched by the spell of the mysterious." He said transcendental experiences could have wonderful healing effects, and added, "It all depends on the capacity of the soul to be grasped, to have its life-current absorbed by what is given."

Until his death from heart disease at the age of 68 in 1910, James kept a bustling schedule as a parapsychologist. He attended countless seances with mediums like Piper, visited all sorts of psychic healers, and carefully checked out innumerable cases of telepathy, clairvoyance, ghostly sightings, and haunted houses. Always honest, James was the first to admit that he couldn't explain such uncanny events. But he never ceased emphasizing that they should be taken seriously by everyone, especially scientists.

With steadily weakening health, James titled his last important article "The Final Impressions of a Psychical Researcher." In it, he declared, "I wish to go on record for the presence of really supernormal knowledge. Our lives are like trees in the forest [which] commingle their roots in the darkness underground....Just so there is a [realm] of cosmic consciousness....It is through following these facts, I am persuaded, that the greatest scientific conquests of the coming generation will be achieved." ■

Edward Hoffman, Ph.D., is a licensed clinical psychologist in the New York City area. He is the author of several books on mysticism, including The Way of Splendor, Visions of Innocence, and most recently, Opening the Inner Gates (Shambhala).