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“The Moral Earth, Too, Is Round”:

James and Nietzsche on the Aim of Philosophy

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1. Philosophy as Individual Psychology

William James and Friedrich Nietzsche share a dubious distinction: they both (in)famously explain philosophers' views by means of their temperaments and associated needs and preferences. James's division of philosophers into “tough-minded” empiricists and “tender-minded” rationalists in the first lecture of *Pragmatism* is one of the most widely remembered passages. Nietzsche constantly asks of past philosophers (Socrates, Plato, Kant, Schopenhauer) and contemporary “philosophers” (Strauss, Wagner, Dühring, Spencer) what their conclusions indicate about their psychological and even physiological constitutions.¹

James and Nietzsche explain this interpretive approach in remarkably similar terms. Here is James in Lecture I of *Pragmatism* (1907):

The history of philosophy is to a great extent that of a certain clash of human temperaments. [...] Of whatever temperament a professional philosopher is, he tries when philosophizing to sink the fact of his temperament. [...] Yet his temperament really gives him a stronger bias than any of his more strictly objective premises. It loads the evidence for him one way or the other, making for a more sentimental or a more

¹ See, e.g., most of *UM* I and III; *GS* 99, 335, 373; *BGE* 9–11, 59, 186–7, 204, 208–9; *GM* III, 6 and 14; *TI*, “The Problem of Socrates” and “Skirmishes of an Untimely Man.”

hard-hearted view of the universe [...] He trusts his temperament. Wanting a universe that suits it, he believes in any representation of the universe that does suit it. (P 11)

And here is Nietzsche, in *Beyond Good and Evil* (1886):

What provokes one to look at all philosophers half suspiciously, half mockingly, is [...] that they are not honest enough in their work, though they all make a lot of virtuous noise when the problem of truthfulness is touched even remotely. They all pose as if they had discovered and reached their real opinions through the self-development of a cold, pure, divinely unconcerned dialectic [...] while at bottom it is an assumption, a hunch [...]—most often a desire of the heart that has been filtered and made abstract—that they defend with reasons they have sought after the fact. (BGE 5)

At first glance, this may appear to be a cheap, reductive line of attack, blatantly committing the *ad hominem* fallacy. Claiming that philosophers' views were determined by idiosyncratic pre-rational characteristics seems to be a failure to engage in good faith with their ideas, or even a ploy to avoid engaging directly, perhaps because one is incapable of refuting their arguments. Moreover, if this is intended to discredit other philosophers' views, it also inevitably discredits James's and Nietzsche's own, unless they imagine themselves to be somehow exempt from these generalizations.

I argue, however, that their point about the influence of temperament on philosophers' conclusions is not intended as an objection in itself. Nor do they exempt themselves; they are quite open about how their own temperament and intellectual or psychological needs make certain views appealing or unappealing to them (*Pragmatism* Lectures I–II, *The Gay Science*, and *Ecce Homo* brim with such instances). They criticize philosophers who *claim* to have “reached their real opinions through the self-development of a cold, pure, divinely unconcerned dialectic” (BGE 5) because this involves dishonesty or,

more precisely, self-deception—which is not only contemptible in itself (at least from a certain value perspective), but hypocritical in self-styled devotees of truth. But the remedy they propose is not (*per impossibile*) to remove all traces of individual temperament from philosophy, but to acknowledge *and embrace* its inevitable influence.

A few commentators have offered explanations for either James's or Nietzsche's adoption of what Bordogna (2001) terms the 'temperament thesis': "the claim that a person's philosophical choices are, and perhaps ought to be, determined to a large extent by that person's temperament" (2001: 3). Conant (1997) argues that James became convinced by Josiah Royce's argument that Pragmatism is not truth-evaluable by its own lights, and consequently introduced the temperament thesis so that he could regard the decision whether to adopt Pragmatism as a Will to Believe case, and thus be permitted to believe it in the absence of a compelling argument for its truth. That is, according to Conant, James turned the question of whether to adopt Pragmatism into a question not of whether the available evidence and arguments point to its *truth*, but whether it is suited to one's temperament. Bordogna (2001) points out that James was hardly alone in propounding the temperament thesis at the turn of the twentieth century. The classic statement comes from Fichte's introduction to the 1797 edition of his *Wissenschaftslehre*: "The kind of philosophy one chooses [...] depends upon the kind of person one is. For a philosophical system is not a lifeless household item one can put aside or pick up as one wishes; instead, it is animated by the very soul of the person who adopts it" (quoted Bordogna 2001: 4, n. 4). Variants on this thesis became commonplace after the neo-Kantian philosopher Wilhelm Windelband revived the idea in his 1891 *Lehrbuch der Geschichte der Philosophie* (2001: 4–5).

Though Bordogna's and Conant's points may be accurate—i.e., that endorsing the temperament thesis was unexceptional at the time, and that James was troubled by Royce's

argument about the truth-aptness of Pragmatism and found the thesis a convenient workaround—I find these explanations unsatisfying. Both accounts attribute James’s acceptance of the thesis to peripheral factors: the current intellectual fashion, or a clever ad hoc solution to a particular (albeit significant) problem with making his commitments hang together. I contend that the temperament thesis was neither merely a fashionable add-on to James’s philosophical constructions nor a hastily inserted reinforcement to keep one wall from collapsing, but an integral component of the whole structure.

Solomon (1996) has, to my mind, more satisfyingly addressed Nietzsche’s comments on philosophers’ personalities or ulterior motivations, and to some extent anticipated what I will say here about both Nietzsche and James:

Nietzsche’s use of *ad hominem* arguments has very much to do with his much-debated “perspectivism.” That is, his view that one always knows or perceives or thinks about something from a particular “perspective”—[...] a particular context of surrounding impressions, influences, and ideas, [...] determined by virtually everything about oneself, one’s psychophysical make-up, and one’s history. (Solomon 1996: 195)

When a philosopher claims to have proved that the world is and must be a certain way, it is worthwhile to ask: what features of their particular perspective—sociocultural environment, material interests, and, yes, temperament—might predispose them to see the world that way? These questions become especially relevant when the arguments are less than compelling and the philosopher’s extravagant claims of certainty require further explanation.²

² Alfano refines this analysis in the context of Nietzsche’s moral psychology of human types: Nietzsche’s *ad hominem* arguments frame someone’s philosophical views as a reflex or symptom of their *type* (determined by their complement and hierarchy of drives), in a way that is intended to make the type seem maximally unappealing—i.e., the target is presented as a *negative exemplar* (2019a: 112–114).

I concur with Solomon's diagnosis, and I shall also argue that an analogous point holds for James, whose pluralist pragmatism takes a similar view of the perspectival character of all human thought. But James's and Nietzsche's commitment to the temperament thesis is connected not only to their pluralism or perspectivism, but also to their understanding of the nature and beneficial function of philosophy.

What is this function? James and Nietzsche agree that every human being has a pre-conscious, affective, value-laden perspective on the world. As James puts it:

I know that you, ladies and gentlemen, have a philosophy, each and all of you, and that the most interesting and important thing about you is the way in which it determines the perspective in your several worlds. [...T]he philosophy which is so important in each of us is not a technical matter; it is our more or less dumb sense of what life honestly and deeply means. It is only partly got from books; it is our individual way of just seeing and feeling the total push and pressure of the cosmos. (P 9)

Philosophers are people in whom this sense of the way the world is and the way it should be—or the way they *need* it to be, due to their particular combination of strengths and weaknesses—is especially strong and distinctive (P 11–12; PTAG 3, p. 44). The strength of this vision, the unshakable sense that it gets the world *right*, drives philosophers to articulate it—which can also help others make sense of their own less distinct interpretations. Finding a philosopher who explains why the world must be the way they have always implicitly seen it can make it seem familiar and tractable, and help them feel justified in their perspective and way of life. This function requires that there be many philosophers with different, often incompatible worldviews; it would be positively detrimental if all philosophers were to converge on a single universally 'true' theory.

That conclusion sounds strange considering that philosophers have traditionally presented their views as the unique truth that all previous philosophers have striven toward but failed to reach, and that future philosophers may be able to build on but never overturn. Nonetheless, both James and Nietzsche present their philosophies as suitable for some people but not others. As Nietzsche says in *The Gay Science* (Book V, 1887):

It is not by any means necessarily an objection to a book when anyone finds it impossible to understand: perhaps that was part of the author's intention—he did not want to be understood by just “anybody.” All the nobler spirits and tastes select their audience when they wish to communicate; and choosing that, one at the same time erects barriers against “the others.” (GS 381)

James, meanwhile, lets his audience choose him, or not. Predicting that they will find both “tender-minded” idealist rationalism and “tough-minded” materialist empiricism unsatisfyingly one-sided, he says: “I offer the oddly-named thing pragmatism as a philosophy that can satisfy both kinds of demand. It can remain religious like the rationalisms, but at the same time, like the empiricisms, it can preserve the richest intimacy with facts” (P 23). He finishes the first lecture with the modest statement, “I hope I may lead you to find it just the mediating way of thinking that you require” (P 26).

In the remainder of this chapter, I will explain how James's and Nietzsche's versions of the ‘temperament thesis’ fit with their broader epistemological commitments and the task they assign to philosophers: to articulate a particular, *non*-universal interpretation of the world—in the first instance, for the benefit of people with whom that interpretation resonates, due to their configuration of needs, instincts, and capacities; and ultimately, toward the end of broadening humanity's conception of the possibilities for flourishing and

the good (though they disagree on precisely what role philosophers play in furthering that end).

2. Pluralism and Perspectivism

It is beyond the ambitions of this chapter to provide a full comparison of James's pluralist pragmatism and Nietzsche's perspectivism (not to mention that there is no consensus about the precise content of Nietzsche's perspectivism³). I will focus instead on key points of convergence between their general pictures of the human epistemic situation.

The first such point is the rejection of a single complete, impartial, infallible 'God's-eye view' on the universe. This is how James describes the "notion of *the one Knower*" posited by neo-Hegelian Absolute Idealists: "The many exist only as objects for his thought [...] and *as he knows* them, they have one purpose, form one system, tell one tale" (P 71). Absolute Idealists argue that this "All-Knower" is a necessary presupposition of the possibility of a cohesive universe, relations among objects, and objective truth. But as James points out in *A Pluralistic Universe* (1909), these arguments illicitly assume that connection and disconnection, unity and distinctness, are all-or-nothing matters, and that any two things that are not wholly unified must be wholly separate and incapable of interacting; they discount the possibility of *partial* connection, present in degrees or only in certain respects (PU 32ff.). James argues that positing the All-Knower is not only *unnecessary* to explain the facts for which it was purported to be an inescapable presupposition, but generates a new puzzle: if it exists, why do our partial perspectives exist at all?

³ Among other things, commentators disagree about how 'perspectives' are individuated, whether and how one perspective can be judged superior to another, how to understand 'truth in/from a perspective' (see, e.g., Clark 1990, Hales & Welshon 1994, Anderson 1998), and whether perspectivism makes any claim about the character or characterlessness of the world 'in itself' (Richardson 1996, Welshon 2009, Lightbody 2010). I would like to skirt those technical issues and focus on the core spirit of perspectivism as a worldview.

Suppose the entire universe to consist of one superb copy of a book, fit for the ideal reader. Is that universe improved or deteriorated by having myriads of garbled and misprinted separate leaves and chapters also publish[ed], giving false impressions of the book to whoever looks at them? (*PU* 57–8)

James's pluralistic view has no trouble explaining why the world appears to us in this fragmented way—that's the only way it *can* appear: "On the pragmatist side, we have only one edition of the universe, unfinished, growing in all sorts of places, especially in the places where thinking beings are at work" (*P* 124).

Nietzsche's argument rejecting a 'God's-eye view' is, characteristically, briefer and more elliptically expressed:

Henceforth, my dear philosophers, let us be on guard against the dangerous old conceptual fiction that posited a "pure, will-less, painless, timeless knowing subject" [... which] demand[s] that we should think of an eye that is completely unthinkable, an eye turned in no particular direction, in which the active and interpreting forces, through which alone seeing becomes seeing *something*, are supposed to be lacking [...] (*GM* III, 12)

Nietzsche's point is that meaningful perception—"seeing *something*"—always involves selection and interpretation. All identification of "causes and effects," for example, involves the "arbitrary division and dismemberment" of an infinitely complex "continuum and flux" (*GS* 112), but this is necessary for our ability to predict and prepare for future events. Even if an infinite intellect could grasp *everything* in "one luminously transparent conscious moment" (Royce's description, quoted *P* 72), it would be useless as an epistemic ideal. Such an intellect would have no need to delineate a field of attention or partition the infinite flux of existence into discrete things, events, or moments; being "will-less" and "painless," it

would have no needs or priorities on the basis of which to pick out certain parts of the flux as more worthy of its attention than others. How could our finite, time-bound intellects even approximate that kind of experience? More importantly, for Nietzsche: how could living organisms approximate the *indifference* of such an indiscriminate intellect, when living itself entails “estimating, preferring, being unjust, being limited” (*BGE* 9)? To hold up such an ideal for human knowledge would indeed “demand of the eye an absurdity and a nonsense” (*GM* III, 12).

“There is *only* a perspective seeing, *only* a perspective ‘knowing’” (*ibid.*) means that all perception and knowledge is not only delimited by being embodied in organisms at particular spatiotemporal locations, with finite cognitive capacities, but also happens in the context and through the lens of those organisms’ needs, feelings, and desires. As Alfano (2019b: 127) emphasizes, Nietzschean ‘perspectives’ are always, crucially, *affective* and *evaluative*. “[T]he active and interpretive forces, through which alone seeing becomes seeing *something*” (*GM* III, 12) always designate some similarities and differences as more important than others; they gravitate toward objects and causal processes that might help or harm the subject. This involves being “unjust” (*BGE* 9) because it means treating things that are more important *to oneself* as more important *tout court*, and often assuming “that what is good for me is also good in itself” (*GS* 110). Some needs and interests are shared by all human beings because of our common biology, and some concepts and assumptions, which “proved to be useful and helped preserve the species” (*GS* 110), belong to a general *human* perspective. But many needs and preferences, as Nietzsche constantly emphasizes, are specific to certain *types* of human beings—though moralists consistently mistake *their own* distinctive virtues for universal virtues, and the way of life that is best *for them* for the

best life categorically (see, e.g., *BGE* 187, 221; *GM* III, 6; *TI* “Anti-Nature” 6, “Errors” 1–2).⁴

Recognizing this reality, Nietzsche proposes a conception of objectivity better-suited to our living, embodied existence than the imagined ‘view from nowhere’: “the *more* affects we allow to speak about one thing, the *more* eyes, different eyes, we can use to observe one thing, the more complete will our ‘concept’ of this thing, our ‘objectivity,’ be” (*GM* III, 12).

James, like Nietzsche, emphasizes the unavoidable influence of human interests in all our thinking: “Human motives sharpen all our questions, human satisfactions lurk in all our answers, all our formulas have a human twist” (*P* 117). There is of course a pre-existing reality that our beliefs must “take account of,” encompassing sensations, logical and spatiotemporal relations, and “previous truths” we have established (*P* 118). But he goes on to explain how our values shape these inputs:

[H]owever fixed these elements of reality may be, we still have a certain freedom in our dealings with them. Take our sensations. *That* they are is undoubtedly beyond our control; but *which* we attend to, note, and make emphatic in our conclusions depends on our own interests; and, according as we lay the emphasis here or there, quite different formulations of truth result. We read the same facts differently. “Waterloo,” with the same fixed details, spells a “victory” for an Englishman; for a Frenchman it spells a “defeat.” (*P* 118)

James’s next statement highlights the importance of these facts for the activity of philosophy: “So, for an optimist philosopher the universe spells victory, for a pessimist, defeat” (*P* 118). This difference in interpretation involves a difference in both *emphasis* and *valuation*. A philosopher with an optimistic temperament will be more attentive to

⁴ Alfano 2019a (esp. Chapters 3–4) provides illuminating discussion of Nietzsche’s notion of a human type.

examples of nature's benevolence, human goodness, progress in history; a philosopher with a pessimistic temperament will notice the prevalence of disease, disaster, deprivation, vice, and cruelty. The philosopher's temperament, as James says, "loads the evidence for him one way or the other, making for a more sentimental or a more hard-hearted view of the universe" (*P* 11). But philosophers also make different value judgments regarding facts they broadly agree on. A rationalist and a Romantic may agree that science has increasingly taken the place of religion and myth in shaping humanity's understanding of the universe and our place in it, providing ever-greater knowledge of nature's workings and how to control them. But the rationalist will view this as the victory of enlightenment over ignorance and superstition, and a precious opportunity to materially improve human existence, while the Romantic views it as the tragic disenchantment of the universe, stripping nature of its sacred mystery and subjecting it to violent exploitation.

Jamesian pluralism and Nietzschean perspectivism allow that the rationalist and the Romantic can *both be right*—not in the relativist sense that it is true 'for the rationalist' that the march of science constitutes progress while it is true 'for the Romantic' that it constitutes loss, but in the fuller sense that it constitutes *both* progress and loss for humanity as a whole, with respect to different goods and aims. The inquirer who follows Nietzsche's perspectivist dictum—that "the *more* affects we allow to speak about one thing, the *more* eyes, different eyes, we can use to observe one thing, the more complete will our 'concept' of this thing, our 'objectivity,' be" (*GM* III, 12)—will perceive the gains in humanity's capacity to meet material needs, the dangers of unsustainable overreach, the cognitive rewards of scientific understanding, and the dispiriting loss of mystery and enchantment, all in one more comprehensive perspective. This perspectivist's evaluation of

these developments will involve balancing all these considerations, and will depend on her own inclinations toward rationalism, utilitarianism, Romanticism, or religiosity.

This perspective is importantly distinct from that of the rationalist or Romantic who understands *that* their opponent holds a different view, but finds it completely alien or repugnant. The perspectivist understands what things look like from each party's perspective, and therefore *why* they think the way they do. This, I believe, is what Nietzsche has in mind when he says:

It may be necessary for the education of a genuine philosopher that he himself has [...] been critic and skeptic and dogmatist and historian and also poet and collector and traveler and solver of riddles and moralist and seer and “free spirit” and almost everything in order to pass through the whole range of human values and value feelings and to be *able* to see with many different eyes and consciences [...] (BGE 211)

The perspectivist knows how things look to both “skeptic” and “dogmatist,” or to the mystical Romantic and the positivist champion of science (a pair of examples that is biographically relevant to both James and Nietzsche), because she has *been* both. She has transcended these more limited perspectives, but understands them in a way that is impossible for someone who lacks this firsthand experience. Furthermore, the experience of having inhabited different value-frameworks throughout her own life can help her extend her imagination to value-frameworks she has not personally inhabited. This more comprehensive perspective is epistemically *better* than those it encompasses, because it understands more of the world—others' perspectives are also *part* of the world.⁵ But the notion of a perspective encompassing *all* others—which might replace the dispassionate

⁵ See Alfano 2019b: 140–145 for a discussion of perspective-switching as an epistemic skill distinctive of and valuable for philosophers.

‘view from nowhere,’ or amount to the perspective of the neo-Hegelians’ All-Knower—would be at most a regulative ideal, not held up as an epistemic standard. It may well be impossible for a human mind to comprehend *all* other perspectives, because “we cannot reject the possibility that [the world] *may include infinite interpretations*” (GS 374).

James frames a similar ethical-epistemic ideal—the capacity to perceive others’ values from their perspective—in “On a Certain Blindness in Human Beings” (1899), though he emphasizes the difficulty and rarity of achieving it. “[N]either the whole of truth nor the whole of good is revealed to any single observer,” he writes, “although each observer gains a partial superiority of insight from the peculiar position in which he stands.” With regard to the goods revealed from others’ perspectives, the best most people can do is “to tolerate, respect, and indulge those whom we see harmlessly interested and happy in their own ways, however unintelligible these may be to us” (TT 149). Nonetheless, James himself furnishes an example of temporarily coming to inhabit a foreign perspective. Though his first impression of the ‘coves’ cleared by homesteaders in the North Carolina mountains is one of “unmitigated squalor [...] without a single element of artificial grace to make up for the loss of Nature’s beauty” (TT 133), it takes only a sentence from his driver—“Why, we ain’t happy here, unless we are getting one of these coves under cultivation”—to prompt him to shift his perspective:

when *they* looked on the hideous stumps, what they thought of was personal victory.

The chips, the girdled trees, and the vile split rails spoke of honest sweat, persistent toil and final reward. The cabin was a warrant of safety for self and wife and babes. In short, the clearing, which to me was a mere ugly picture on the retina, was to them a symbol redolent with moral memories and sang a very paeon of duty, struggle, and success. (TT 134)

“The Moral Philosopher and the Moral Life” (1891) expands on the significance of these diverse visions of the good, articulating, in effect, a pluralist-perspectivist metaethics. Here James argues that “nothing can be good or right except so far as some consciousness feels it to be good or thinks it to be right” (WB 147). Just as in *Pragmatism* and *A Pluralistic Universe* he denies the necessity and usefulness of positing an “All-Knower” with an authoritative view of all descriptive facts about the universe, here he denies that philosophers can appeal to “any abstract moral ‘nature’ of things existing antecedently to the concrete thinkers themselves with their ideals” that authoritatively dictates all the moral facts (WB 147). He goes on to argue “*not only that without a claim actually made by some concrete person there can be no obligation, but that there is some obligation wherever there is a claim*” (WB 148, original emphasis). That is: *any* sentient being’s need, desire, suffering, or condemnation constitutes a *pro tanto* reason to satisfy the need or desire, alleviate the suffering, remove the target of condemnation—though of course all such claims can be outweighed by greater needs, or the consideration of greater suffering that would result from satisfying the first claim. James denies that there are any general principles or an “essence of good” that unfailingly dictate the correct course of action, because all such proposed essences fail to account for some cases, by either making the wrong prescription or failing to yield a useful answer at all (WB 152). Rather, “[t]he elementary forces in ethics are probably as plural as those of physics are” (WB 153).

James does *not* deny the existence of a God whose moral worldview is authoritative, and even makes a pragmatic case for positing such a God. But he argues that a moral ‘God’s-eye view’ has no *intrinsic* authority: either that viewpoint must be occupied by a living, thinking God whose claim is overriding because it is infinite in magnitude (WB 159); or else we must regard it merely as an abstract way of describing the final balance of *concrete*

claims made by finite creatures that will eventually be achieved, through the arduous process of negotiating conflicting needs and valuations (*WB* 155ff.). That is, we might imagine an omniscient observer who already knows what the maximally “inclusive order” which “awaken[s] the least sum of dissatisfactions” looks like, the ideals “by whose realization the least possible number of other ideals are destroyed” (*WB* 155). But it is the actual balance of demands and their satisfaction that secures the authority of that order, and we epistemically limited human beings can come to know it only by letting the long moral struggle unfold. But because new, unanticipated demands arise with every generation, there may not *be* any final arrangement for our hypothetical observer to grasp, only an endless process of renegotiation.

3. The Aim of Philosophy

Now we return to the question of what James and Nietzsche think the philosopher’s function is, in light of the epistemic situation described in section 2. It cannot be to discover the one universally true, rationally coercive world-interpretation, theoretical or moral, because there is none. Philosophers can only provide an intelligible expression and justification of their own affective and evaluative worldview. But this is also beneficial to others because everyone *implicitly* holds such a worldview, though for most people it is either unconscious or only dimly conscious. James called it “our *more or less dumb* sense of what life honestly and deeply means” (*P* 9, emphasis added). Nietzsche asserts that “[m]an, like every living being, thinks continually without knowing it,” and only becomes conscious of the thinking that “*takes the form of words*” and can thus be communicated to others. Even “given the best will in the world to understand ourselves as individually as possible, [...]

each of us will always succeed in becoming conscious only of what is not individual but ‘average,’” belonging to “the perspective of the herd” (GS 354).

Philosophers have an exceptionally strong sense of the way the world is or should be, which motivates them to articulate it in order to convince others. The philosophers who, James has said, are led by their temperament to believe in a “representation of the universe that [...] suit[s] it” are “men of radical idiosyncrasy.” By contrast,

[m]ost of us have [...] no very definite intellectual temperament [...] We hardly know our own preferences in abstract matters [...] But the one thing that has *counted* so far in philosophy is that a man should *see* things, see them straight in his own peculiar way, and be dissatisfied with any opposite way of seeing them. (P 11–12)

Nietzsche characterizes the idiosyncrasy of philosophers similarly in an unpublished draft, *Philosophy in the Tragic Age of the Greeks* (1873): “The philosopher seeks to hear within himself the echoes of the world symphony and to re-project them in the form of concepts [...] viewing himself coldly as a mirror of the world” (PTAG 3, p. 44). Philosophers look *inward*, not outward, for the truth they believe themselves to possess, and accordingly, for “monolithic” philosophers like Thales, Heraclitus, Socrates, etc., “[t]heir thinking and their character stand in a relationship characterized by strictest necessity” (PTAG 1, p. 31; see Panaïoti 2019: 46–9).

Most philosophers have taken themselves to have special insight into the sole truth about the universe, putting forward their systems in the “calm conviction that [they are] the only rewarded wooer of truth” (PTAG 8, p. 66). Of the philosopher with “strong temperamental vision,” James writes: “He feels men of opposite temper to be out of key with the world’s character, and [...] considers them incompetent and ‘not in it,’ in the philosophic business” (P 11). But as Nietzsche emphasizes, philosophers have only ever

propounded *their own* truth. In a preface to *PTAG*, he writes: “philosophical systems are wholly true for their founders only. For all subsequent philosophers they usually represent one great mistake, for lesser minds a sum of errors and truths” (p. 23). More scornfully, in *Beyond Good and Evil*, he calls philosophers “wily spokesmen for their prejudices which they baptize ‘truths,’” and points to “the hocus-pocus of mathematical form with which Spinoza clad his philosophy—really ‘the love of *his* wisdom,’ to render that word fairly” (*BGE* 5), as an example of the stratagems philosophers have used to disguise their idiosyncratic worldviews as the deliverances of indifferent logic.

But James’s and Nietzsche’s objection is not to the inseparability of philosophers’ views from their character, but to their failure or refusal to acknowledge it.⁶ Nietzsche heralds a new type of philosopher who will proudly own the particularity of their views:

Are these coming philosophers new friends of “truth”? That is probable enough, for all philosophers so far have loved their truths. But they will certainly not be dogmatists. It must offend their pride, also their taste, if their truth is supposed to be a truth for everyman [...] “My judgment is *my* judgment”: no one else is easily entitled to it—that is what such a philosopher of the future may perhaps say of himself. (*BGE* 43)

In offering Pragmatism as a tool for those who might benefit from it, James also acknowledges that not all who apply its method will arrive at the same conclusions:

it lies in the midst of our theories, like a corridor in a hotel. Innumerable chambers open out of it. In one you may find a man writing an atheistic volume; in the next someone on his knees praying for faith and strength; in a third a chemist investigating a body’s

⁶ More precisely, Nietzsche objects to this failure only in philosophers starting with Socrates, given the overriding value that Socrates accorded to reason and honesty, which shaped the whole later philosophical tradition (see Panaïoti 2019: 50–51).

properties. In a fourth a system of idealistic metaphysics is being excogitated; in a fifth the impossibility of metaphysics is being shown. (P 32)

This philosophical diversity serves to accommodate the diversity of human types or temperaments, which benefit from different conceptions of the nature of the universe and of the good. This chapter's title is drawn from a section of *The Gay Science* (1882) in which Nietzsche makes this point explicitly:

Consider how every individual is affected by an overall philosophical justification of his way of living and thinking: he experiences it as a sun that shines especially for him and bestows warmth, blessings, and fertility [...] How I wish that many such new suns were yet to be created! Those who are evil or unhappy and the exceptional human being—all these should also have their philosophy, their good right, their sunshine! [...] What these people need is not [...] forgiveness of sins; what is needful is a new *justice!* [...] And new philosophers. The moral earth, too, is round. The moral earth, too, has its antipodes. The antipodes, too, have the right to exist. There is yet another world to be discovered—and more than one. Embark, philosophers! (GS 289)

Philosophers can provide this “justification of [their] way of living and thinking” for individuals who are “exceptional” and therefore “unhappy” in their culture’s dominant value paradigm, whom it calls “evil.” Most people cannot provide it for themselves, because they are scarcely aware of their “way of just seeing and feeling the total push and pressure of the cosmos” (P 9); they may only understand it as a gnawing dissatisfaction with conventional ways of viewing the world. But when they encounter a philosophy that explicates and justifies the way they have always subconsciously ‘known’ the world to be, or glorifies the activity in which they feel most fulfilled (be it leisure, manual labor, conflict, or service), they “experience[] it as a sun that shines especially for [them],” that “leads all

energies to bloom and ripen and does not permit the petty weeds of grief and chagrin to come up” (GS 289). “For one thing is needful,” Nietzsche says in the next section: “that a human being should *attain* satisfaction with himself, whether it be by means of this or that poetry and art” (GS 290)—or philosophy.

James likewise says, in “The Sentiment of Rationality” (1879–80), that a philosophy can not only make the world seem *theoretically* rational to people by systematizing and validating the way they implicitly see it, but can also make it seem *practically* rational by assuring them that it possesses “a character for which our emotions and active propensities shall be a match” (WB 71). But “[m]en’s active impulses are so differently mixed that a philosophy fit in this respect for Bismarck⁷ will almost certainly be unfit for a valetudinarian poet” (WB 75). People with disparate talents and capacities all want to be told that *their* talent is what the universe demands—much as, according to Nietzsche, Kant’s morality, with its “categorical imperative,” says, ““What deserves respect in me is that I can obey”” (BGE 187). Throughout his works, James offers certain ways of thinking about things in hopes of helping his audience see the world as more *practically rational* and suited to their capacities: pragmatic grounds for believing in free will in “The Dilemma of Determinism” (1884), reasons not to commit suicide in “Is Life Worth Living?” (1895), principled permission to believe in God in “The Will to Believe” (1896). As Marchetti argues, “James understood philosophical activity as therapeutic and transformative practice which might help us attain a cleared and possibly wiser take on our life” (2015: 25). His philosophy is not intended to persuade every reader indifferently; instead it provides tools to “*work on*

⁷ Or for the benefit of Nietzsche, who despised Bismarck, one might say “Napoleon.”

oneself" (2015: 33), to clarify one's own needs, capacities, and commitments and bring them into harmony.

What distinguishes *philosophy* from other strategies for finding satisfaction with one's life—art, myth, religion, psychiatry—is its tools: concepts and logic. "What verse is for the poet, dialectical thinking is for the philosopher": "the only means [...] to communicate what he has seen" (PTAG 3, p. 44). In *The Varieties of Religious Experience* (1902), James suggests that philosophers can use these distinctive tools to determine which *religious* doctrines are consistent both internally and with the latest science, and thus which are viable candidates for truth (VRE 359). But while Nietzsche's philosophers use concepts to communicate the products of *their own* "creative imagination" (PTAG 3, p. 40), James assumes that it is a different kind of person—a religious leader, "saint," or mystic—whose inspired visions the philosopher renders intelligible in concepts:

But even if religious philosophy had to have its first hint supplied by feeling, may it not have dealt in a superior way with the matter which feeling suggested? Feeling is private and dumb, and unable to give an account of itself. It allows that its results are mysteries and enigmas, declines to justify them rationally [...] We are thinking beings, and we cannot exclude the intellect from participating in any of our functions. [...] Moreover, we must exchange our feelings with one another, and in doing so we have to [...] use general and abstract verbal formulas. Conceptions and constructions are thus a necessary part of our religion; and as moderator amid the clash of hypotheses [...] philosophy will always have much to do. (VRE 341)

Similarly, in "The Moral Philosopher..." James implies that it is someone *other* than the philosopher who introduces new value-ideals into the process of moral evolution:

Every now and then [...] some one is born with the right to be original [...] He may replace old 'laws of nature' by better ones; he may, by breaking old moral rules in a certain place, bring in a total condition of things more ideal than would have followed had the rules been kept. (*WB* 157–8)⁸

James portrays the philosopher as a spectator who “must allow that it is at all times open to any one to make the experiment,” but does not make it himself (*WB* 156). The philosopher can clarify that the fundamental question of morality requires us to “vote always for the richer universe,” encompassing a greater diversity of value-ideals, but “*qua* philosopher, is no better able to determine the best universe in the concrete emergency than other men” (*WB* 158).

Nietzsche, by contrast, assigns to philosophers the roles *both* of striving to inhabit ever more comprehensive value-perspectives (*BGE* 211; *GM* III, 12), *and* of envisioning new ideals; their calling is “to know of a *new* greatness of man, of a new untrodden way to his enhancement” (*BGE* 212). And it stands to reason that the people with the broadest synoptic view of extant values—as James’s philosophers also are, in their role as interpreter of the moral drama of history or “moderator in the clash of [religious] hypotheses” (*VRE* 342)—would be in the best position to formulate new ones that can overcome the limitations of all that have been accepted previously.⁹

This difference in their views on the role of philosophers may be due to the closer connection Nietzsche draws between theoretical and moral philosophy—counterintuitively, considering that the very nature of Pragmatism is to affirm the relevance of practical

⁸ See Franzese 2008: 43–5, 81–7, 112 for discussion of this phenomenon.

⁹ Constâncio compares the Nietzschean philosopher’s process of coming to understand her own value preferences to Kantian *reflective judgment*: philosophical judgments of ‘taste’ in values are not mere arbitrary preference, but *informed* preferences, involving but not reducible to concepts that the philosopher constructs based on a variety of affective experiences (2019: 199–202).

considerations to theoretical questions. James portrays philosophers as having marked preferences for certain ways of conceiving the world *theoretically*; but despite his acknowledgment that different theoretical conceptions have different consequences for the practical activity we should undertake and its prospects of success (see, e.g., *WB* 70–75, *P* 53–4), he portrays philosophers (in “Sentiment,” “Moral Philosopher,” and *Varieties*) as mere spectators or referees in the contest over how human beings ought to live and act, (apparently) without a distinct personal stake in the outcome. Nietzsche, meanwhile, says that “if one would explain how the abstrusest metaphysical claims of a philosopher really came about, it is always well (and wise) to ask first: at what morality does all this (does *he*) aim?” (*BGE* 6). *Moral* aims, a particular ideal of the good life, are the real engine of philosophers’ preferences in theoretical matters.

Despite this point of divergence, however, James and Nietzsche still agree on two important functions of philosophy, both importantly connected to their pluralist and/or perspectivist approach to theoretical and moral inquiry. First, in providing articulation and justification of their own distinctive worldview, philosophers also provide it for others whose worldview is similar but only subconsciously held, helping them make sense of and feel justified in it. Second, they help humanity achieve a broader, more inclusive conception of the good, by articulating novel and unusual value-ideals in intelligible, communicable concepts (whether they are the original visionary, as Nietzsche would have it, or translators of someone else’s vision, as on James’s model). By offering this justification of the “right to exist” of the “moral earth’s antipodes” (to paraphrase *GS* 289), philosophers help create the possibility of acceptance for a greater diversity of “ways of living and thinking.”

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Primary texts are cited with an abbreviation for the book title, Roman numerals or abbreviated titles for the larger divisions of the text where relevant, Arabic numerals for the aphorism numbers, and page numbers if the sections are especially long.

Abbreviations

<i>BGE</i>	<i>Beyond Good and Evil</i>
<i>GM</i>	<i>On the Genealogy of Morality</i>
<i>GS</i>	<i>The Gay Science</i>
<i>PTAG</i>	<i>Philosophy in the Tragic Age of the Greeks</i>
<i>TI</i>	<i>Twilight of the Idols</i>
<i>UM</i>	<i>Untimely Meditations</i>

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Abbreviations

<i>P</i>	<i>Pragmatism</i>
<i>PU</i>	<i>A Pluralistic Universe</i>
<i>TT</i>	<i>Talks to Teachers on Psychology and to Students on Some of Life's Ideals</i>
<i>VRE</i>	<i>The Varieties of Religious Experience</i>
<i>WB</i>	<i>The Will to Believe and Other Essays in Popular Philosophy</i>

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