The Feminine-Mystical Threat to Masculine-Scientific Order

In his obituary of 1910 John Dewey commemorated William James by praising “his intellectual vitality, his openess of mind, his freedom from cant, his sympathetic insight into what other people were thinking of, his frank honesty, his spirit of adventure into the unknown” (MW 6:96). In one respect, however, his sympathetic insight failed him, and that is in regard to women, whom he consistently viewed from a masculinist, or ideologically patriarchal angle of vision; that is, one which equates humanness with maleness and believes that women’s proper role is to serve men’s interests. As a result of this devaluation of women, their experiences are distorted when they are not ignored outright, and customary and institutional barriers to women’s emancipation are not challenged.

James’s explicit support of the ideology of separate spheres, which restricts women to the privacy of the home and reserves the public sphere for men, mires him in sentimentality rather than in the sympathetic understanding so characteristic of his interactions with others whose way of life differs dramatically from his own. Insofar as he believed that women’s nature predisposed them to higher moral standards, his views about women resemble those of his contemporary, Jane Addams, as well as those of Carol Gilligan and Nel Noddings in their more recent versions of an ethics of care. The cultural feminism of Addams, however, a woman whom he greatly admired, differs from James’s espousal of the ideology of separate spheres because she explicitly attacks men’s injustices to women and argues that women should not let their responsibilities in the home prevent their active participation in society.

There are at least three reasons why the topic of James’s relations with women is only now being raised in a philosophic context. First, women have historically been excluded from full participation in philosophical discourse, particularly in institutions of higher learning, which
were only fully opened to women well into the twentieth century. And only late in the second half of this century have women been admitted in any significant numbers as professors of philosophy in coeducational institutions, which, along with all-male colleges and universities, have largely determined the proper subject matter of philosophical reflection, standard texts, and canonical philosophers. But these historical exclusions alone cannot account for the fact that this essay is only now being written. Absences do not make themselves felt unless someone is already aware of a presence that can be missed.

The second reason for my writing this essay is that feminist theory has made us more aware that culture has been largely androcentric, as Charlotte Perkins Gilman wrote in 1914 in *The Man-Made World; or, Our Androcentric Culture*. She pointed out that not only has history been written largely by men about male accomplishments, but they have monopolized mental, mechanical, and social developments. The loss of an important part of my own philosophical heritage is illustrated in the fact that I became aware of feminist theory through a French work, Simone de Beauvoir’s *The Second Sex*, at least a decade before realizing that Gilman had already written about women’s oppression some thirty-five years earlier than Beauvoir. Androcentric cultures suppress or marginalize not only gynocentric views, such as Gilman’s, but also any perspectives that reflect different centers of interest or principles of organization. This second reason helps account for why merely including women as philosophers is not sufficient to recognize sexist discourse, although it can help.

After many years of scholarly engagement with James’s philosophy, it is only recently that I have become aware of his pervasive sexism. How could it have escaped my notice for so long if it is so pervasive? Philosophy teachers engaged in helping students uncover hidden assumptions know that what is most familiar is often most difficult to recognize and hold up for reflective appraisal. As Naomi Sheman points out, learning to do philosophy successfully means disciplining our own personal, idiosyncratic voices and engaging in the great questions deemed philosophically important. The third reason, therefore, for not acknowledging even the small amount of sexism that one has recognized is that one must be sufficiently empowered to change the conversation, to make central what was marginalized, and to convince oneself as well as the profession at large that one’s own interests are philosophically significant. As long as philosophy is understood as a quest for universal truth or is restricted to a predetermined set of topics, propositions, or texts, appeals to any particular cultural, gender, or racial perspectives are judged to be at best misguided and at worst to sanction bias.

Moreover, James’s philosophy and his way of expressing it was such an oasis from the conventional subject matter and method of philosophy, providing as it did such a powerful means of dismantling so many philosophical roadblocks and opening up promising new directions, that his own limitations in regard to women did not seem worth pursuing. So for many years I assumed that James’s occasionally disparaging remarks about women were irrelevant to his philosophical perspective, which, after all, is pluralistic and antihegemonic. I simply ignored or skipped over them, much as Virginia Woolf did in her enjoyment of great literature. This was easy to do, since the marginalizing of women in James’s thought is reflected in the fact that his direct references to women are incidental to the main subjects under discussion. Substantial references are found in early, more obscure works and are not reprinted in his better-known books, and the references in his major works are either in footnotes or serve merely as examples of a larger point. They also occur more often in such sections as the physiological parts of his psychology, which are of less immediate interest to philosophers and are often not even read.

Like Woolf, I found that it was only by deliberately focusing on this issue that its dimensions have become more apparent and therefore more discouraging, since I have generally held that James’s sympathy with the downtrodden and his vital pluralism shielded him from the more harmful forms of sexism. At a time when women were excluded from Harvard University, for instance, he was among the first Harvard professors to participate in the founding of the Harvard Annex, which later became Radcliffe College, by agreeing to teach women students. That I was wrong about the extent of James’s sexist assumptions shows just how difficult they are to acknowledge and reject. It seems that sexism can very well coexist not only with individually cordial relations with women but also with philosophical perspectives that systematically affirm difference. Inevitably, as women and those from other underrepresented groups move from the periphery to the center of philosophical discourse, our hitherto marginalized interests will increasingly become focal ones. As they do so, philosophy will approach more closely James’s definition of it as “the habit of always seeing an alternative, of not taking the usual for granted, of making conventionalities fluid again, of imagining foreign states of mind” (*EPH*, 4). And in seeing “the familiar as if it were strange, and the strange as if it were familiar,” it has the power to break up “our caked prejudices” (*SPP*, 11).

But why should the absence of women affect the subject matter of philosophy, which is often claimed to be a purely rational discourse or which claims to reflect on the human condition as such? James himself unwittingly provided the answer when he stated that “every human being of the slightest mental originality... is peculiarly sensitive to evidence...
that bears in some one direction. It is utterly hopeless to try to exorcize such sensiveness by calling it the disturbing subjective factor, and branding it as the root of all evil. . . . Pretend what we may, the whole man within us is at work when we form our philosophical opinions. Intellect, will, taste, and passion co-operate just as they do in practical affairs" (PM, 77). It is not surprising that women would be more sensitive than his male readers to how James portrays women. Not just the whole man, but the whole woman within us participates philosophically and responds emotionally as well as intellectually to what especially pertains to her. For James this perspectival character of our perceptions enhances rather than distorts our understanding of reality, and therefore it should be encouraged in philosophical reflection, not rejected as a merely subjective distortion of presumptively unbiased analysis.

In this chapter I will examine James's relations with and attitudes toward women to demonstrate that his belief in separate spheres for women and men reflects the patriarchal ideology that only men are fully human, that is, fully rational, and reflects as well the Victorian sentimentalizing of this ideology, which holds that women are more emotional than men and thus the proper bearers of a morality based on care. Not only are both attitudes detrimental to the full development of women's being-in-the-world, but they also subtly distort and undercut central positions of James. Since he argues that our feelings, attitudes, and beliefs inform our reflections, the feminist practice of "reading as a woman," that is, differently than the author intended, should not be judged as an invalid interpretive approach by other pragmatists. According to Nancy Tuana, the difference of such a reading consists in the overt rejection of "the process of definition of women in Western culture as not male, as Other." In regard to James, I show that what Tuana argues is a consequence of reading as a woman, namely, "the realization that some of the central categories of philosophy must be transformed in order to include woman and the variety of women's experiences." 15

But although James's writings are among the least feminist of all the classical American philosophers (a distinction shared with Peirce and Santayana), they are also arguably the most conventionally feminine. Images of fluidity and merging abound; boundaries are permeable; and nuances usually lost in focusing on an object are recalled in his appeal to the fringes and horizons of knowing. 14 He develops a metaphysics of relations and an epistemology based on sympathetic concrete observation. His ethics requires responsive sensibility to the inner life and worth of others. Religion is defined through intensity of experience and not dogmatic formulas, and feeling is defended as intrinsic to cognition and the development of rationality. Morris Grossman writes: "The 'feminine' in James—the chthonic, the liquid, the vague, the inconstant, the chaotic—almost destroy him. . . . The 'embrace' of the feminine—the acceptance of the vague, the inchoate, the irresolute, the liquid, the emotive—saves him. . . . William also accomplishes a feminine embrace of chaos in favor of nature, abundance, inventiveness, fecundity and superfuidity." 15

Perhaps it is the very prominence of this feminine side of himself that led James to emphasize manliness, the Promethean self, and the Goethe-like resolution to continually strive against overwhelming odds. However it affected his own life, his writings demonstrate an unresolved, creative tension between feminine and masculine desires and values. Both attraction to the feminine side of experience and assertions of masculinity pervade his published and unpublished writings, but are not themselves analyzed or challenged. His philosophy is so at odds with the masculine character ascribed to Western philosophy by many feminists, yet not yet free of sexist stereotyping, that it is particularly important to explore just how his sexism affects his appropriation of the feminine. Only then can a feminist radical empiricism be developed in recognition of the strengths, ambiguities, and distortions of the feminine inscribed in the text.

1. SENTIMENTAL IDEALS

Since James was a Victorian, after all, what does it matter that he shared the typical attitudes of his time toward women? It matters because his attitudes were not simply a reflection of his times but were deliberately adopted. Not all Victorian men succumbed to contemporary stereotypes of women. John Stuart Mill, for example, who wrote The Subjection of Women, did not, nor did Lester F. Ward, to whom Charlotte Perkins Gilman dedicated The Man-Made World. Furthermore, many nineteenth-century women, such as Ida B. Wells, Frances Wright, Margaret Fuller, Angelina and Sarah Grimke, Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Susan B. Anthony, and Sojourner Truth wrote and spoke against the stereotype and for emancipated womanhood. James was aware of at least some of this agitation on the part of women, and he even responded to Mill's analysis of women's subjection.

In fact, the one and only time James publicly wrote about the burgeoning women's movement, he uncharacteristically stepped back from an unknown he did not want to contemplate. In an unsigned review article written in 1869 while he was still a student, he supported Horace Bushnell's more reactionary book, Women's Suffrage, against John Stuart Mill's more revolutionary book, The Subjection of Women. 16 Bushnell's thesis is that the status of women ought to be improved by freer access to education and occupations, but they should not be allowed to participate
in any form of governing. This limited view of women's education sheds light on James's later support of it. James agrees with Bushnell's reason for such a restriction, namely that women's nature is naturally subordinate. He actually believes that "the universal sense of mankind" confirms such subordination in women as an ideal (ECR, 247). But though he accepts Bushnell's basic premise, he disagrees with all of his supporting arguments and thinks that Bushnell does not specify the real cause of such clashes between the sexes as the fight for women's suffrage.

Although James thinks that Bushnell's style is too pompous and his utterances hollow, he nonetheless agrees with his sexist view of women, and although he praises Mill's clean, forcible rhetoric, which he says shoots straight to the target, he nonetheless rejects his contention that women should be emancipated. This uncharacteristic disagreement with Mill, to whom he later dedicated Pragmatism, saying that he "first learned the pragmatic openness of mind" from him, a man whom he would like "to picture as our leader were he alive to-day," is further evidence of the operation of prejudice rather than of James's usual, pragmatic openness.

James superficially criticizes Mill as quibbling over whether women have a fixed nature or not, since Mill argues that there are no fixed natural differences between men and women, only differences of education, and yet calls women's present condition unnatural. But in context Mill makes it clear that the Victorian exaggeration of differences between the sexes is not based on nature, as is claimed by those who want to preserve male privilege, but on socialization, and is only in this sense unnatural. James takes "the woman question" to be a practical one, by which he means that conservatives and reformers target for praise or for disparage the same actual conditions of women, such as the restriction of women to the home and the failure to provide career opportunities for single women. He especially objects to Mill's attack on "the accepted sentimental ideal of the personal intercourse of man and wife," since James naively or chauvinistically believes that, by contrast with the situation in Europe, legal abuses are obsolete in America, where men do not express their superiority in brutality toward women nor do they object to their wives' occupying public roles (ECR, 251).

James likens what he calls "a hidden premise" in Mill's reasoning to a projectile whose explosive force propels it forward. He plainly fears the explosive effects of Mill's attack on the sentimentalizing of the Victorian family structure in which men rule and women serve. Mill argues, for instance, that what passes for a school of sympathy and tenderness in the family is more often an idealized selfishness, in which men's interests and self-worship condone a morality of submission for women and children. Mill advocates that a morality of justice, in which two human beings live together in equality, with leading and following reciprocally shared, ought to supplant the present state of marital affairs in which the husband is the absolute master. James responds that Mill is confusing friendship with love and that his advocacy of reciprocal superiority threatens "the conception of a wife as a possession" (ECR, 253). Although it is obvious that men's status is enhanced by their power to virtually own women, James never questions why women should welcome being treated as objects.

James defends the ideal of the representative American male, who craves dependency in his wife. Since men struggle in the cruel public world of work and suffer from having their weaknesses exposed, they long for the security of the home where they will not be criticized and where their egos will be built up. Men's ideal of security and repose requires that he be the woman's mediator with the external world. Unlike Mill, James never inquires what women desire nor seeks to understand their needs or perspectives since he assumes, contrary to Mill, that he already knows "the true mental characteristics of women" (ECR, 251). He contends that "mere mutual respect, and sympathy in some end" are weak ties in marriage compared to "that flattering interplay of instincts," egoism on his part and self-sacrifice on hers (ECR, 254). James fears the "extremely revolutionary import" of Mill's substitution of friendship for love as the basis for marriage, since friendship requires the equality of the sexes, while love requires that women be subordinate to men.

After examining this same 1869 review in 1986, Gerald E. Myers did not find any evidence of sexism. As I do in the opening paragraph of this chapter, he asks whether James's universally recognized tolerance, generosity, and goodwill went beyond mere tolerance to embrace a morally conscientious attitude towards women and concludes that "his ethics of individualism did not falter in its application to women." He points out that James was highly sarcastic in his review of Bushnell and that he pilloried his redundant, careless, vulgar style. This assessment is accurate as far as it goes, but Myers does not notice that although James rebuts Bushnell's arguments, he does not challenge his basic positions. Bushnell argues against women holding public office or exercising the suffrage on the grounds of their feminine nature, which is naturally subject and meant to yield to evil rather than combat it with violence. Rather than finding this position morally repulsive, as Myers thinks, James at this point says, "So far, so good" (ECR, 247). He continues by saying that as long as Bushnell attributes these attitudes to "inexplicable sentiment" and holds them as ideals, "he remains in a strong position."

What James objects to are the reasons Bushnell gives in support of his dogmatic assertions about woman's nature and his view that being subjected to the will of another is a higher moral state than taking responsibility for one's own actions. James says that Bushnell's arguments
are canceled out because he appeals to purely ascetic principles rather than to ones of justice. Myers defends his interpretation of James’s non-sexist attitudes by giving the pertinent quotation: “Modern civilization, rightly or wrongly, is bent on developing itself along the lines of justice, and any defense of woman’s position on ascetic principles will fall with little weight on the public ear.” 20 But whatever James means by justice, it does not entail equality between women and men. In his arguments against Mill in the second half of the review, James quotes Bushnell to illustrate the horrors that follow when a woman no longer idolizes or idealizes her husband, insists on being his partner instead of his subordinate, and even refuses to accept his name. James once again objects to Bushnell’s dogmatic assertion of what is a priori natural, but then goes on to appeal to less dogmatic minds that basically support Bushnell’s contentions. These “other sceptics” object that, unlike the mutual sympathy which characterizes friendship, the sympathy between husband and wife should be hierarchical, and “the most thorough equality” between them is possible only within the restricted sphere that includes purely personal interests within the family and “the minor practical matters of life” (ECR, 254).

Myers points out that James had earlier mocked Bushnell’s fears that women will lose their particular beauty and grace in assuming public roles. Bushnell cannot logically maintain the utterly radical difference of women’s nature from men’s, he says, and then be terrified that a few outward changes will fundamentally alter it. James gives so many examples of the silliness of Bushnell’s characterization of women’s simpering nature and men’s thundering masculinity that it is easy to overlook the fact that he is intent on debunking Bushnell’s arguments and ridiculing his style, but not necessarily his fundamental assertions. If Bushnell’s ravings were allowed to stand without criticism, their obvious fallaciousness would weaken the moral grounds for subordinating women to men, grounds James wants to shore up by supplying the facts that will reveal just where “the true puncta dolorosa of the disorder lie” (ECR, 250).

In James’s review of Mill’s Subjection of Women, we have seen how he characterized the disorder being introduced into the conventional relations between the sexes by such new ideals as absolute equality between women and men, justice, and personal independence. Myers defends James’s sentimental and self-serving rejection of Mill’s arguments for women’s emancipation. He prints a long passage in which James restates the theme of female subjection in marriage, proclaiming that “the wife his heart more or less subtly craves is at bottom a dependent being” 21 and, after explaining the masculine ideal as including absolute validation in the private world of marriage, asks rhetorically whether the elements of security and repose essential to this ideal are “easily attainable without some feeling of dependence on the woman’s side.” 22 Myers says nothing about the one-sidedness of an ideal according to which men need to dominate women. Instead, without comment, he glosses James as appealing to “the mutual dependence in love,” (emphasis added), as what will take modern marriage beyond friendship. He cautions against throwing custom overboard, since, according to James, custom represents the experimentation of centuries in coming to a moral equilibrium which should curb the arrogance of a self-assertion that challenges whatever it does not like.

By arguing only for the benefits that marriage brings to men and completely ignoring their negative impact on women, James’s sentimentalizing of the patriarchal status quo uncritically espouses the very argument from custom that Mill so clearly demolishes in The Subjection of Women. The fact that after more than a century Myers can still find the appeal to custom convincing sadly demonstrates that Mill was right in attacking this source of women’s subordination. James fails to rebut Mill’s central claim that the principle separating modern liberal societies from earlier tyrannies is that conduct alone, and not the accidents of birth, such as sex, or of status, such as slave and citizen, should determine morality and politics. James concludes his review by advocating that everyone read Mill’s essay, which will convert many who are skeptical or indifferent but will also strengthen those whose conservatism leads them to resist “the democratic flood which is sweeping us along” (ECR, 255).

James wonders whether his own espousal of special moral ties that vary with circumstances or Mill’s “passion for absolute equality, ‘justice,’ and personal independence” signals the future progress of evolution (ECR, 255–6).

In 1908, nearly forty years later, James repeats the view that women’s role is to serve men. In a footnote in The Meaning of Truth James tried to correct a mistake he had made in Pragmatism when he asserted that “God” and “Matter” could be considered as synonyms, so long as no differences in practice could be deductible from the two conceptions. 23 In retracting this support for a godless universe, he developed an analogous case of an “automatic sweetheart,” meaning a soulless body indistinguishable from a real maiden. The point of the comparison is that both God and maidens, though perceptually indistinguishable from their doubles, would not be accepted as equivalent to them. In the case of automatic sweethearts, even if they could perform all their functions perfectly, they could not perform the supreme female function, namely, to sympathetically reaffirm the importance and moral worth of their men. James argues in his imaginary anticipation of “The Stepford Wives” that the switch would not work pragmatically because what men’s egos crave above all things is “inward sympathy and recognition, love...
and admiration," and the satisfaction of these needs requires belief that they are bestowed by a conscious being.

In this passage women are defined not only in relation to men but
as fulfilling very definite needs of men. No reciprocity is implied or even
logically possible because James is supposedly describing women's essential
erole as women. He gives as the curiously limited "feminine offices"
of "a spiritually animated maiden" those of "laughing, talking, blushing,
nursing us." A woman cannot even read the footnote logically; to do so
in my analysis, for instance, I have had to substitute the term men for the
original formulations, which include, besides "nursing us," "our egoism" (emphasis added). Once this masculine-centered perspective is
recognized, then the gender restrictions of the phrases used in the
analogous case of a godless universe a few lines later can also be recog-
nized. James refers to "the chief call for a God on modern men's part"
and "the craving of our ego" felt by "most men." Men apparently need
women and God for the same reason.

James unquestionably assumes that women were created to fulfill
men's deepest needs. They are quite literally God's surrogates on earth.
And with a shudder I realize that it must follow that something of the
absoluteness of God's love and sympathy is expected from women: never
wavering, never withholding, never resenting. Justifications for self-
regarding behavior that would be acceptable, even morally praiseworthy
in men, would therefore be considered selfish, a moral fault, in women.
Both women and men become morally worthy insofar as they live a full,
human life. But for men this includes developing one's talents, while for
women it means helping men develop their talents.

In an essay commemorating the eccentric individualist, Thomas Da-
v Davidson, James mentions that a few independent women were among
Davidson's faithful friends who attended his cultural summer school in the
Adirondacks (ECR, 90). He condescendingly remarks that "naturally
a man who is willing, as he was, to be a prophet, always finds some women
who are willing to be disciples" (ECR, 96). The women's emotional at-
chments are emphasized by James's characterizing the women as warm-
ing themselves at the fire of Davidson's soul. He reports that Davidson,
however, did not treat the women with exaggerated courtesy, but instead
"told them truths without accommodation." Apparently surprised that
Davidson did not seek to accommodate women's supposed sensibilities,
but criticized them as sharply as if they were men, James remarks, after
giving a few examples of such brusqueness: "Seldom, strange to say, did
the recipients of these deliverances seem to resent them." The strange-
ess resides in the fact that the women students reacted as male students
would, instead of according to Victorian stereotypes of frail femininity.
from a total phenomenon, as well as the ability to associate aspects not immediately perceived as connected, most clearly distinguishes human reasoning from nonhuman organization of experience.

The reasoning by analogy that distinguishes human thinking characterizes both poetic and analytic, or scientific, thinking, which differ in that the analytic thinker can explain the ground of the analogy, whereas the poet prefers to let the analogy resonate without discursive explanation. Neither is intellectually inferior to the other, although James prefers the splendor of poetic leaps of connection to the dry, plodding connections made in ratiocination. But after reaffirming the lack of superiority of the analytic mind to the intuitive one in any absolute way, he says that it is still true that the analytic mind represents the higher stage. To support this view he constructs a series of hierarchies, such as that philosophical reasoning by abstraction is a later stage historically than that of “savages,” who can associate by analogy without knowing why the two cases are similar. The example he gives is that of Dr. Livingstone arguing with a “Negro conjurer.” The savage state is to the civilized one as the uneducated to the educated, which he illustrates by contrasting an Irish girl with a male, educated friend. He thus easily conflates savagery, nonhuman and human, of primitive and developed, of contemplative exercise of sympathy, and their character is fully developed at twenty.

Finally, man’s most essential characteristic is said to be his ability to negate all fixed modes, to break up the received order into elements and combine them anew (EPS, 36). Man is preeminently human because he is an educable animal, not one who settles problems instinctively. But some humans are more educable than others. Italians, for instance, are not only said to be more instinctual and Germans more rational, but they will remain so despite education. An identical difference is said to exist between women and men. Women’s likes and dislikes are set early in life, and their character is fully developed at twenty. A young boy of the same age is less developed and is awkward compared to the young woman. But this absence of a fixed character, of unfinished brain development, “is the very condition which ensures that it shall ultimately become so much more efficient than the woman’s” (EPS, 37). The “masculine brain” can more flexibly determine classificatory schemes and deal with new complexities than can “the feminine method of direct intuition.” No matter how admirable feminine intuition performs within its limits, competing with masculine rationality remains a vain hope.

“Brute and Human Intellect,” which begins with the continuity of nonhuman and human, of primitive and developed, of contemplative and rational thinking, of feeling and intellect, and of art and science, ends with making a new hierarchy of them. It is true that James’s sympathies are more often with the devalued terms of emotion, embeddedness in a holistic experience, contemplation, and poetry than with the more commonly valued terms of reason, abstraction, analysis, and science. He speaks, for instance, of “admiration at the gracefulness of the primitive human mind” and “disgust at the narrowness of modern interpreters” (EPS, 3). He even denies that the analytic mind represents a higher intellectual stage and the intuitive mind a stage of arrested development (EPS, 30). But his ethnic, class, and gender prejudices distort his pluralistic and developmental model. The equation of humanness with his own ethnocentric maleness effectively renders women and other races, nationalities, and classes as less than fully human. In these crucial areas he could not “break across in unaccustomed places,” and he thus fell short of instantiating his own criterion for the distinctively human.

3. James’s Ethics of Care

James believes that the ability to sympathetically enter into the life-worlds of other persons is an asset, a positive ability, certainly not a negative one. He argues that this precious natural ability of women not only can but ought to be learned by men, since it is an ability necessary to the proper moral development of everyone. Therefore, what is natural in women should become a learned moral habit in men. His ethics of care anticipates a similar version first elaborated by Carol Gilligan and further developed by others, such as Barbara Houston, Jane Roland Martin, Nel Noddings, and Mary Brabeck. James, along with these feminists, believes that care and concern for others play a much greater role, perhaps even a dominant one, in women’s ethical judgments, in contrast with men’s moral reasoning, which emphasizes justice. They argue that ethics should be redefined to make caring a central moral issue.

Both current versions of an ethics of care and James’s earlier version strike me as problematic. The first difficulty with James’s analysis, one which is also true of recent versions, is that he takes this sympathy to be a natural endowment of women. Since they do not have to strive for it, it does not seem something for which they should receive moral credit. He says in Principles of Psychology, “It there is anything intolerable (especially to the heart of a woman), it is to do nothing when a loved one is sick or in pain. To do anything is a relief. Accordingly, whatever remedy may be suggested is a spark on inflammable soil. The mind makes its spring towards action on that cue, sends for that remedy, and for a day at least believes the danger past” (PPH, 939). Rather than in their exercise of sympathy, women’s highest moral worth for James consists in their willingness to serve others uncomplainingly. Such morally praiseworthy selfless service is facilitated by women’s natural sympathy and empathetic ability to enter into lives other than their own.

There is no need, however, to attribute to sex-linked natural char-
characteristics any systematic differences found in women's and men's differing approaches to moral reasoning. Not only women but any disadvantaged group whose well-being depends on the goodwill of others quickly learns to interpret nonverbal cues of the dominant group as a basic mechanism of survival. This learned ability comes to be seen as natural because it is so pervasive in women and so foreign to men who are able to ignore the interests of others because of their power to control them directly. Being the perceptive psychologist that he is, James is acquainted with these phenomenal facts, but he does not use them to rethink his appeals to innate gender differences. He says that “the impulse to conceal is more apt to be provoked by superiors than by equals or inferiors” (PP, II, 1050). The examples he gives of this hierarchy of concealment are boys toward their parents and servants toward their masters, including male and female servants, who must be hypocritical, given the unequal power relationships, since “servants see more of their masters' characters than masters of servants.”

That James does not draw a feminist conclusion from these insights is especially striking since Mill uses a very similar argument in *The Subjection of Women* to show why men cannot know how much women suffer under their oppressive rule—despite the fact that men live with women as wives, mothers, and daughters. They must wait until women tell them how their behavior is viewed “from below.” And women are unlikely to disclose either minor annoyances or any mental or physical abuses they may suffer in the home as long as the complaints must be directed to the person who, both by custom and by law, exercises nearly unlimited control over them. Since he reviewed Mill’s book, we know that James was familiar with this line of argument. It is therefore even less defensible that he simply dismissed it, especially in light of the fact that he himself cited independent corroborating evidence of the psychological state in question.

James's belief that men are naturally belligerent and women naturally nurturant led him to systematically distinguish male from female virtue. Heroism is first of all a male virtue, but since it is thus a preeminently human one, women can also share in it—but only according to their separate nature. James says that “wars, of course, and shipwrecks, are the great revealers of what men and women are able to do and bear” (ERM, 134). And he gives as “the most genuinely saintly person” he has ever known a friend of his who was suffering from breast cancer and who, despite her considerable pain, continued to help others cheerfully (ERM, 143). Heroism always includes an active resistance to overwhelming odds, but men's heroism is described as taking place in the public sphere and women's in the private sphere. Furthermore, men's heroism is aggressively active, affecting whole civilizations, while women's is some-

how passively active, primarily affecting only their immediate family and friends.

Women's heroism is categorized as "chronic" in comparison to men's "acuter proofs of human nature's reserves of power" (ERM, 152–53). James’s “humbler examples” of women's sustained moral heroism include the cases of "illness nursed by wife or mother" and of "exemplary housewives," whereas masculine heroes include a man who survived a coal mine explosion and kept thirteen other men alive until they could be excavated twenty days later, and an army officer who carried on attacks despite sickness and appalling injuries. Female heroism is characterized by “sustained endurance” and selfless service of others, while male heroism is characterized as taking command over and disciplining others. Moreover, women are also expected to remain cheerful despite exhaustion, while it is all right for men to prop up their courage by taking brandy! Men's opportunities expand in heroic action, women's remain constrained; women can only be the "humble heroines of family life" while men are said to take on "new position(s) of responsibility" (ERM, 153).

4. The Maternal Joys of a Cat (PP, II, 1055)

James’s chapter on instinct in *Principles* is a veritable compendium of traditional sexist beliefs about the differing natures of women and men. Already at the nonhuman animal level, females and males are said to exhibit strikingly different instinctual behaviors. Females invariably either actively exhibit maternal instincts or are the passive objects of sexual love. Even the language James uses in examples of maternal instincts is condescending to the point of sarcasm. He says, for instance, that the hen "submit[s] herself to the tedium of incubating such a fearful...
women have to fear from men is not explored. instincts are not entirely lacking in men, but can easily be overpowered by perspective, and therefore women's potentiality is reduced to the two especially between mother and child. is given as an example of a primitive human instinct: "Danger to the child blindly and instantaneously stimulates the mother to actions of alarm or defense."

The nature of these sex-linked instincts would be a mere curiosity were it not for the principle that James uses in selecting them; namely, that "we can only interpret the instincts of brutes by what we know of instincts in ourselves" (PP, II, 1007). But women are not part of the seemingly gender-neutral collective pronouns just used: we and our. The perspective adopted is not that of humanity, but of male humans, as all of James's quotations make clear. Note the masculine gender of the word our in the following sentences: "The possession of homes and wives of our own makes us strangely insensitive to the charms of those of other people. . . . The original impulse which got us homes, wives, diets, and friends at all, seems to exhaust itself in its first achievements" (PP, II, 1015). Since I cannot possess wives, he cannot be speaking to me, and yet he is describing human characteristics. He also gives the following definition of "The Empirical Self" or me: "In its widest possible sense, however, a man's Self is the sum total of all that he CAN call his, not only his body and his psychic powers, but his clothes and his house, his wife and children, his ancestors and friends, his reputation and works, his lands and horses, and yacht and bank-account" (PP, I, 279). Even the widest sense of self is not only gender bound but class bound.

Since James is best known for his arguments against determinism and for subjectively spontaneous creativity, these residues of belief in a fixed nature when it comes to gender are the more surprising. Female animals and women are assumed to be naturally caring and sympathetic; male animals and men are naturally pugnacious and violent. Sympathy, especially between mother and child, is given as an example of a primitive human instinct: "Danger to the child blindly and instantaneously stimulates the mother to actions of alarm or defense." Hunting and pugnacious instincts, such as is exhibited in "the cruelty of collections of men hounding each other on to bait and torture a victim," characterize men's instinctive nature (PP, II, 1029). The sympathetic instincts are not entirely lacking in men, but can easily be overpowered by their more dominant instincts of hunting and cruelty. Nor are women entirely devoid of pugnacity. They are even said to get angry oftener than men, "but their anger is inhibited by fear and other principles of their nature from expressing itself in blows" (PP, II, 1033). Exactly what women have to fear from men is not explored.

As these examples show, men tend to see women from their own perspective, and therefore women's potentiality is reduced to the two most important roles they play in men's lives—as mothers and wives. The question is never raised as to how women view their own lives. Just as the two instincts of maternity and sexuality are preeminent in James's descriptions of female animals, they are taken to be definitive of female humans. James asks, "Why does the maiden interest the youth so that everything about her seems more important and significant than anything else in the world?" He answers, "Nothing more can be said than that these are human ways . . . " and "The common man can only say "... of course we love the maiden, that beautiful soul clad in that perfect form, so palpably and flagrantly made from all eternity to be loved!"" (PP, II, 1007, 1008). Woman as the object of desire is traditionally inseparable from unbridled passion, and James duly notes this danger for men: "The sexual passion expires after a protracted reign," and therefore habits of sexual restraint acquired in youth will tell in maturity: "Exposure to bad company then makes him a loose liver all his days; chastity kept at first makes the same easy later on." (PP, II, 1021).

Although men are urged to keep their instincts under proper control, women are urged to wallow in them, as long as the wallowing is directed to men's well-being. James quotes at length G. H. Schneider's "lively description" about maternal instincts. Female cats are said to exhibit the instincts of "higher animal-mothers": "The maternal joys of a cat, for example, are not to be disguised. With an expression of infinite comfort she stretches out her fore-legs to offer her teats to her children." (PP, II, 1055). This quotation occurs in a passage extolling human motherhood because it causes a woman to turn away from exclusive interest in herself as a vain object of men's attention and to center her world instead on her child.

James adds to the passage from "the worthy Schneider" that "the passionate devotion of a mother—ill herself, perhaps—to a sick or dying child is perhaps the most simply beautiful moral spectacle that human life affords. Contemplating every danger, triumphing over every difficulty, outlasting all fatigue, woman's love is here invincibly superior to anything that man can show." (PP, II, 1056). Women receive the highest praise when they fulfill to excess their natural function of taking care of others. But there are indications that not all women see themselves primarily as mothers. Schneider remarks that "Thus, at last, it is in all unspoiled, naturally-bred mothers, who, alas! seem to be growing rarer; and thus it is with all higher animal-mothers." (PP, II, 1056).

The valued human characteristics that James describes are the same as the characteristics ascribed to males. Women are defined as differing from men in specific ways and therefore differing from the human as such. When James says he is "leaving lower animals aside, and turning to human instincts," he reviews the stages of human life: the child, who
laboring classes (including Italian and Hungarian subway workers) "on freight-trains, on the decks of vessels, in cattle-yards and mines, on lumber rafts...and a wave of sympathy greater than anything I had ever before felt with the common life of common men began to fill my soul."

The passages are taken from one of the last three chapters of Talks to Teachers, which are separately listed under the heading of "Talks to Students." From the way James identifies those in our midst who are usually ignored and with whom "we" are being asked to sympathize, it is obvious that the authorial we, which encompasses both author and student, is middle- or upper-class, a member of a privileged ethnic group, educated, professional, and male. James is not only acknowledging a debt to those whose sacrifices make his privileged life possible, but also drawing the attention of his students to the heroic sufferings of the laboring classes, so that they will sympathize with, rather than despise, them. But there is no corresponding call to overthrow or even question the hierarchical relations that separate them.

James fears Tolstoy's "leveling philosophy" because phenomenal differences are not superficial but are the very relations that constitute personal identity (TT, 157-67). Nonetheless, he believes that humanity progresses by means of great prophets who preach "the religion of democracy," and thus nudge the world toward more humane relationships. But although he thinks that society should progress toward "some newer and better equilibrium," including the redistribution of wealth, true nobleness resides for him in the realm of ideals and high-mindedness, joined with "manly virtue." James' goal, finally, is not to question or undo the advantages accruing from unequal relationships, but only, sub specie aeternitatis, to develop a willingness "to live and let live." Such conclusions could seem desirable only from the point of view of one who was already on the favored side of the hierarchies: rich and poor, educated and uneducated, ethnic privilege and ethnic devaluation, professional and laborer, male and female. "Sympathy, insight, and good will" can indeed lead to "tolerance, reverence, and love for others" without shifting one iota the continued privilege on one side and disadvantage on the other.

Since in the original letter from which the later passage selectively quotes, laboring-class women are emblematic of all mothers and wives, that is, of women as such, then the distinctions of class, ethnicity, and education do not change women's status in the same way they change men's. Relegated to the private realm and to a distancing otherwise does not leave women anything to hope for in democracy's slow progress to a new and better equilibrium. Rich or poor, black or white, educated or uneducated, women remain men's conscripts, alien lives "bent on duty, envying nothing, humble-hearted, remote" (TT, 155).
James reproduces without criticism the ancient mythology that equates women and nature. He says that though idealists and empiricists use different analogies in their disputes with one another, as human beings they share the same essential interests. "Both are loyal to the world that bears them; neither wishes to spoil it; neither wishes to regard it as an insane incoherence; both want to keep it as a universe of some kind; and their differences are all secondary to this deep agreement" (PU, 10–11). We should subordinate such minor differences "in view of the fact that, whether we be empiricists or rationalists, we are, ourselves, parts of the universe and share the same one deep concern in its destinies. We crave alike to feel more truly at home with it, and to contribute our mite to its amelioration" (PU, 11). James is sure that his audience will not find his empiricist spirit "matricidal," since he is "as good a son as any rationalist among you to our common mother" (PU, 11).

His discourse echoes Emerson, who in his treatise Nature chides those idealists who ungratefully attack temporal nature in their longing for eternal, absolute spirit. Emerson says, "I have no hostility to nature, but a child's love to it. I expand and live in the warm day like corn and melons. Let us speak her fair. I do not wish to fling stones at my beautiful mother, nor soil my gentle nest." This mother-child imagery seems benign and certainly close to recent ecological ethics and ecofeminism. The problem remains that the relation of man to nature reproduces a patriarchal interpretation of the relation of man to woman. The language of an absolute, brute dominance by which man tames nature has been mitigated into stewardship, to be sure, but the hierarchical relations are unchanged and nontransferable, since it would still be perceived as unnatural for nature to overpower spirit as for woman to be the guardian of man.

Emerson continues, "I only wish to indicate the true position of nature in regard to man, wherein to establish man all right education tends; as the ground which to obtain is the object of human life, that is, of man's connection with nature." The slippage from man to human to man is not simply an example of a generic usage of the word man. The man addressed as human is the male sex, as is more explicitly seen in the "gentle reader" he addresses is certainly male because he is characterized as not caring for those who read such popular Victorian reading material for women as Waverley and the Fire-side Companion.

James warns male gatekeepers that no one perspective, even the scientific, can encompass the totality of truth. He argues from his position of pluralistic perspectivism that "something escapes the best of us—not accidentally, but systematically and because we have a twist" (WB, 224). He finally explicitly identifies the rational, scientific perspective as male: "The scientific-academic mind and the feminine-mystical mind shy from each other's facts, just as they fly from each other's temper and spirit."
JAMES’S INTENTION IS TO UNDERCUT THE PREJUDICES OF SCIENTIFIC POSITIVISM BY REHABILITATING THE FEMININE-MYSTICAL AS A LEGITIMATE PERSPECTIVE THAT REVEALS ASPECTS OF REALITY NOT ACCESSIBLE TO NORMAL SCIENTIFIC PROCEDURES. ALL THE FOUNDING MEMBERS OF THE SOCIETY FOR PSYCHICAL RESEARCH WERE “GENTLEMEN.” MANY—PERHAPS MOST—OF THEIR SUBJECTS WERE WOMEN. THIS IS NOT SURPRISING SINCE MEN’S VIEW OF WOMEN AS OTHER, AS CLOSER TO AND EMBLEMATIC OF NATURE, THE UNTAMED, THE IRRATIONAL, THE WILDNESS, WOULD MAKE THEM APPEAR TO BE IDEAL WITCHES OR PSYCHICS, MORE IN TOUCH WITH THE MYSTERIOUS UNKNOWN THAN RATIONAL MAN. 9 JAMES SPEAKS OF “A MOTHER-SEA” AND A “PSYCHIC SEA,” THAT IS, A SEA OF CONSCIOUSNESS TO WHICH OUR PUNY, FINITE CONSCIOUSNESSES WILL ONE DAY RETURN. THE MOTHER-SEA “LEAKS-IN” THROUGH THE INTERSTICES OF EVERYDAY LIFE DESPITE EFFORTS TO BLOCK IT OUT.

JAMES LONGS TO RETURN TO THE PRIMAL MOTHER-SEA, WHICH HE ENVISIONS AS ENCOMPASSING THE FINITE, VISIBLE WORLD OF HUMAN EXPERIENCE, JUST AS THE ATMOSPHERE BLANKETS AND PROVIDES LIFE-GIVING OXYGEN TO THE PLANET. HE SAYS IN “THE CONFI DENCES OF A ‘PSYCHICAL RESEARCHER’” (1909) THAT HIS EXPERIENCES HAVE LED HIM TO “ONE FIXED CONCLUSION,” NAMELY, “THAT WE WITH OUR LIVES ARE LIKE ISLANDS IN THE SEA, OR LIKE TREES IN THE FOREST,” WHICH “MAY WHISPER TO EACH OTHER WITH THEIR LEAVES.... BUT THE TREES ALSO COMMINGLE THEIR ROOTS IN THE DARKNESS UNDERGROUND, AND THE ISLANDS ALSO HANG TOGETHER THROUGH THE OCEAN’S BOTTOM. JUST SO THERE IS A CONTINUUM OF COSMIC CONSCIOUSNESS, AGAINST WHICH OUR INDIVIDUALITY BUILD BUT ACCIDENTAL FENCES, AND INTO WHICH OUR SEVERAL MINDS PLUNGE AS INTO A MOTHER-SEA OR RESERVOIR” (EPR, 374). HE SUGGESTS THAT “OUR ORDINARY HUMAN EXPERIENCE, ON ITS MATERIAL AS WELL AS ON ITS MENTAL SIDE, WOULD APPEAR TO BE ONLY AN EXTRACT FROM THE LARGER PSYCHO-PHYSICAL WORLD” (EPR, 374-75).

THE INTELLECT MISGUIDEDLY THINKS OF THE WORLD “AS EXISTING IN A CLEAN AND REGULAR SHAPE.” INSTEAD, JAMES MULTIPLIES EXAMPLES OF THE MESSY, CONCRETE WORLD WE LIVE IN. HE DIPS INTO ABNORMAL PSYCHOLOGY TO TELL US “OF ODDITIES AND ECCENTRICITIES, OF GROTESQUES AND MASQUERADEINGS, INCOHERENT, FITFUL, PERSONAL,” SO UNSATISFACTORY TO THE “CUT AND DRIED CLASSIFICATIONS” OF THE MEDICAL AND PSYCHOLOGICAL MINDS OF PROFESSIONALS. 99 WE KNOW THAT RATIONALITY AND SCIENCE ARE MALE DOMAINS FOR JAMES AND THAT UNTAMED NATURE IS FEMALE. THUS, WHEN HE SAYS THAT “EVERYTHING HERE IS SO LAWLESS AND INDIVIDUALIZED THAT IT IS CHAOS [COME AGAIN],” HE IS REFERRING TO BOTH PHYSICAL NATURE AND WOMEN. HE CONTINUES BY SAYING THAT MOST PROFESSIONALS “DON’T WISH A WILD WORLD.... THEY ARE PERFECTLY WILLING TO LET SUCH EXCEPTIONS GO UNNOTICED AND UNRECORDED.” FACTS CAN BE NOTICED AND ACCOMMODATED IN SCIENCE ONLY IN SO FAR AS THEY CAN BE MADE TO FIT AN ORDERLY PATTERN. BUT JAMES BELIEVES THAT ALL GREAT ADVANCES IN SCIENCE BREAK THE ACCEPTED ORDER. IN DEFENDING THE WILDERNESS AGAINST THE INROADS OF SCIENCE, HE ALSO CELEBRATES WOMEN, WHO ARE ASSOCIATED WITH OTHERNESS, WITH DISORDERLINES NOT TAMMED BY MEN’S RATIONAL ORDER.

JAMES CAN THEREFORE BE ARGUED FOR PLURALISM, SINCE HE SEEMS TO VALUE DIFFERENT PERSPECTIVES EQUALLY FOR THEIR IRREDUCIBLY DISTINCT DISCLOSURES OF REALITY. BUT THIS BENIGN INTERPRETATION ONLY WORKS UP TO A POINT. UNFORTUNATELY, HIS CHARACTERIZATION OF THESE DIFFERENCES AS MALE AND FEMALE LEADS HIM TO UNDERMINE THE CONSISTENCY OF HIS PERSPECTIVISM, WHICH IS INFECTED AND DISTORTED BY HIS BELIEF THAT WOMEN ARE ESSENTIALLY DIFFERENT FROM MEN AND NATUREALLY SUBORDINATE TO THEM. THE IMPLICIT DENIGRATION IN THE HIERARCHICAL SUBORDINATION OF WOMEN TO MEN IS EXTREME AND UNDERMINES A GENUINE PLURALISM OF CREATIVE DIFFERENCE BY ASSUMING A PRIMAL, PREDETERMINED ONE. SINCE CREATIVE SPONTANEITY IS FOR JAMES THE DEFINING CHARACTERISTIC OF THE HUMAN, WOMEN’S REDUCTION TO A PREDETERMINED NATURE CAN ONLY DEHUMANIZE US. THE OPPRESSIVE HIERARCHY WHICH IS BELIEVED TO PROPERLY characterized the subordination of women to men likewise characterizes the relation of male-defined rationality to a nature defined as feminine. Once the feminine-mystical facts have been indisputably ascertained and admitted, the academic and critical minds are by far the best fitted ones to interpret and discuss them—for surely to pass from mystical to scientific speculations is like passing from lunacy to sanity; but on the other hand if there is anything which human history demonstrates, it is the extreme slowness with which the ordinary academic and critical mind acknowledges facts to exist which present themselves as wild facts, with no stall or pigeon-hole, or as facts which threaten to break up the accepted system. (WB, 224)

Male-defined rationality thus has for its primary task the control and forcible restriction within bounds of the unbridled, irrational female element in nature and society.

JAMES IS PROFOUNDLY AMBIVALENT ABOUT THE SEXUAL DUALISMS MEN HAVE READ INTO NATURE AND THE HUMAN APPROPRIATION OF THE WORLD. ON THE ONE HAND, HE SUPPORTS THE SYMBOLIC ORDER IN WHICH THE MASCULINE SCIENTIFIC MIND OUGHT TO INTERPRET THE FEMININE-MYSTICAL. ON THE OTHER HAND, HE WANTS TO PROTECT THE WILDERNESS OF MYSTICISM AND PSYCHIC EXPERIENCES FROM BEING EXPLAINED AWAY BY SCIENTIFIC RATIONALITY. THE SAME AMBIVALENCE THAT MYSTICISM INTRODUCES IS FOUND IN REGARD TO SAINTINESS BECAUSE BOTH PLACE A HIGHER VALUE ON QUALITIES TRADITIONALLY ASSOCIATED WITH THE FEMININE. BECAUSE OF HIS FAILURE TO CRITICIZE THE CONFLATION OF HUMANITY
with masculinity, James finds himself struggling to defend saintliness as an ideal that embodies feminine values while countering his own fears that it emasculates men.

He does not quarrel with the "ancestral evolution [that] has made us all potential warriors" and the military discipline that roots out excessive tenderness in regard to one's own person but only with developing them into extremes that can turn us into "monster[s] of insensibility" (VRE, 291). He also fears the opposite tendency, which is manifest in the material wealth and luxury of the age and which makes for "effeminacy and unmanliness." His strategy is to argue for "a renovated and revised ascetic [religious] discipline" to replace the traditional military discipline of war, which is "too savage, too cruel, too barbarous" to serve as an appropriate "bulwark against effeminacy" (VRE, 292). If the great appeal of his proposal for a "moral equivalent of war" is that it develops a moral ideal of the strenuous life that does not need to go about "crushing weaker peoples" in order to avoid becoming like women, then the denigration of women is being woven into the very fabric of morality.

James's defense of saintliness against Friedrich Nietzsche's scorn is profoundly ambiguous and convoluted because James shares with him the equation of heroism and leadership with masculinity and the soul quality of sympathetically service, purity, and patience with femininity (VRE, 294-97). "The overpowering man of prey" excites "thrills of wonder veiled in terror," while women and saints embody "the mystery of gentleness in beauty" (VRE, 295-29). James concludes that "both aggressiveness and non-resistance are needful" and argues against any "one intrinsically ideal type of human character" (VRE, 297). He ultimately favors the saint as "abstractly a higher type of man than the 'strong man,'" but in concrete situations he admits that saints are liable to appear rather "insignificant and contemptible" (VRE, 298).

James labors mightily to show that saints are indeed greater and more appropriate heroes for the complexities of modern civilization than are "the strong men of this world," who easily degenerate into "bullies, robbers, and swindlers," and his struggles to do so all stem from his acceptance of the very masculinist view that he is trying to overcome. Although he includes such women as Agnes Jones, Margaret Hallahan, and Dora Patterson among the saints, he reminds us that "we must not forget" that "in discussing saintliness, we ask if it be an ideal type of manhood" (VRE, 298-99). That it is an idealizing of womanhood is taken for granted. Since he strongly valued women as Other in their subordinate complementarity to men, he seems to be struggling with himself as well as with a masculinized culture in generating convincing arguments as to why men should find saintliness to be an ideal of manhood. His courage failed him, however, at the task of rethinking and rejecting the continuing masculinizing of rationality as the source of the distortion and disorientation.

Acknowledgment of the fact of women's full humanity and rationality would necessarily "break up the accepted system" of male dominance, and James could not relinquish the privileges that accrued to him under the old system. Just as men and women are assigned separate spheres, so are facts and theories conceptually hierarchized into dominant and submissive. "In psychology, physiology, and medicine, wherever a debate between the mystics and the sciences has been once for all decided, it is the mystics who have usually proved to be right about the facts, while the scientists had the better of it in respect to the theories" (WB, 224). James says that he has been forced to recognize that mystics have access to "certain kinds of phenomenal experience," but he soothes the unacknowledged but obvious male anxiety over the "wildness" of the facts disclosed through female perspectives by assuring his male colleagues that philosophers can successfully deal with the repugnant mystical style of philosophizing by "reflecting upon them in academic-scientific ways" (WB, 224). In other words, men can legitimately appropriate women's insights by transforming them into masculinized rational discourse.

The woman-as-nature analogy carries over into James's assessment of the nature of women's rationality. Nature speaks out of women; they do not have to pursue nature by use of a logical method. Since they are the objects of a masculine search for knowledge, they cannot themselves be striving for what they supposedly already are. As with moral sympathy, women cannot be credited with striving for and conquering truth, a state that they simply inhabit. In a brief, one-paragraph review praising Jane Addams's The Spirit of Youth and the City Streets, James points out how all its details flow from her central insight or persuasion. But analysis fails him: "Of how they flow I can give no account, for the wholeness of Miss Addams' embrace of life is her own secret. She simply inhabits reality, and everything she says necessarily expresses its nature. She can't help writing truth."

Admittedly, this is highest praise from James, who all his life tried to reach through rational means the wholeness exhibited in a mystical one-ness with reality. But it also strips women of their dignity as human beings, that is, those whose greatest suffering and greatest triumphs alike come from the struggle to organize the Walpurgis-like chaos of life into a finally satisfactory harmony. If women are the reward of the struggle or the oasis of escape from the burdensome duties of public life, they cannot themselves be engaged in the struggle as partners. The bitter effect of such a marginalized existence restricted to the private sphere is poignantly illustrated in the life of William's brilliant sister, Alice, who was
sickly all her life with one of those mysterious Victorian “wasting” illnesses with no diagnosed name, but which included mental depression. She wrote to William: “I think the difficulty is my inability to assume the receptive attitude, that cardinal virtue is women, the absence of which has always made me so uncharming to & uncharmed by the male sex.”

Unlike her mother, Alice was self-assertive; but, like her, she could imagine no acceptable, ladylike career outside of marriage to absorb her energies. One may speculate whether it was her invalidism or her indomitable personality, a Jamesian family characteristic that served her two famous brothers well, that accounted for her “sour spinsterhood,” as she herself called it, and her wasted talents.

7. MASCULINE VIEW OF CREATIVITY

In a 1907 interview with the New York Times James explained the core of his philosophy in gendered terms. He boldly claimed that “mind engenders truth upon reality.” Rather than simply copying a reality complete in itself, “the use of most of our thinking is to help us to change the world.” Adopting this perspective frees us “to use our theoretical as well as our practical faculties . . . to get the world into a better shape, and all with a good conscience. The only restriction is that the world resists some lines of attack on our part and opens herself to others, so that we must go on with the grain of her willingness.” James thus unselconsciously paints a picture of the philosopher as a predatory male, one whose attacks are sometimes resisted, sometimes welcomed by a world/woman who literally “opens herself to others.” Just how big a grain of willingness is needed to justify such an attack, undertaken “with a good conscience”? The fact that such passages have begun to be criticized only recently by feminists shows how easy it is to internalize the masculinist perspective that permeates traditional learned discourse.

Late in life James is repeating, and thus reinforcing, a masculinist insemination view of how truths are forced upon the world. He had already linked engendering to a submerged rape metaphor in Pragmatism, where he explained the creativity of our cognitive as well as our active life in a grammatical trope asserting that we make real additions to the subject as well as the predicate part of reality. He continued: “The world stands really malleable, waiting to receive its final touches at our hand. Like the kingdom of heaven, it suffers violence willingly. Man engenders truths upon it” (PM, 129). From the later reappropriation, we know that in this passage he is also thinking of the world as a she, not an it.

The explicit recognition of this masculinist perspective makes plausible the textual development from seeing the world as malleable, as receptive to further touches “at ‘our’ hand” (which certainly cannot be referring to my woman’s “hand”) to a willing suffering of violence. No woman who suffers violence at the hands of another would call her participation willing. I in no way imply that philosophers who quote these and similar passages are consciously responding to the submerged rape metaphor, but rather to the largely unrecognized, because so familiar, heroic masculinist perspective. It is surely worth reflecting on the fact that women as well as men have been educated to take for granted a masculinist perspective of rationality, one which celebrates violence as a paradigm of knowledge. It takes a genuine paradigm shift, such as feminist theory introduces, to even recognize the hidden sexist assumptions operative in normal discourse.

But James does not simply take over from the tradition such an extreme masculinizing of rationality. And this fact helps account for the continuing attractiveness of his philosophy for both women and men. Characteristically he resists such hegemonic moves by strongly rejecting appeals to rationality as the forced imposition of received truths, as is evident in his defense of psychical research. He knows that “dingy little mediumistic facts” would not impress Huxleyan, that is, scientific minds, but he goes on to criticize the reductionism of the increasingly positivist view of the science of his time. He argues that science advances “by the little rebellious exceptions to the science of the present” (EPR, 375). Feminists, both women and men, can identify with these rebellious refusals that James provides but was unable to carry through to a liberating conclusion for women.

In “The Sentiment of Rationality,” published in The Will to Believe, James struggled with “the unsatisfactoriness of all our speculations” (WB, 61). But they are unsatisfactory for a different reason for women who, as the objects rather than the subjects of the speculation, are not included in the possessive case our. I will try to make visible this exclusion by engaging in a brief, rebellious dialogue with James’s text, one that his own attitude invites. In an extended passage (WB, 61) James sharply criticized the one-sided intellectualist drive toward theoretic simplification, which can retain a semblance of multiplicity only by invoking an “empirical sand-heap world.” But “the practical man” is said to despise such an “empty barrenness,” which mocks genuine diversity and fails to identify the essence of this or that concrete thing. How much more does “the practical woman” experience the empty barrenness of so many philosophical classifications that ignore the concrete specificity of her life?

James continues: “We are thus led to the conclusion that the simple classification of things is, on the one hand, the best possible theoretic philosophy, but is, on the other, a most miserable and inadequate substitute for the fulness of the truth.”
The simple classifications of things as advanced by canonical philosophers most miserably and inadequately substitute for the insights of unrepresented groups and individuals, which is why there is currently pressure to expand both the diversity of philosophers and the subject matter of philosophy. The fullness of the truth would have to include women’s and minorities’ experiences and varying perspectives.

"It is a monstrous abridgment of life, which, like all abridgments is got by the absolute loss and casting out of real matter."

The lives of women and minorities are abridged more than the lives of James and his sex, class, and race, and their loss is often absolute.

"This is why so few human beings truly care for philosophy."

Especially, I might add, minorities and women, whose numbers in philosophy are far below those in other liberal arts disciplines.

"The particular determinations which she [philosophy] ignores are the real matter exciting needs, quite as potent and authoritative as hers."

Yes, how much of women’s lives and experiences have been ignored in philosophical reflection? How much resistance still remains toward the socially defined masculine role and his attraction to the artist for classical aesthetics?

"What does the moral enthusiast care for philosophical ethics? Or the artist for classical aesthetics?"

Or what do women care for a philosophy that stubbornly ignores or denigrates their lives and intellectual contributions?

Ironically, James may have seen women as marginal to the business of philosophers, but part of him desperately wanted to be on the margin with them. His fascination with the misfits of society and his belief that they—like instances of ecological diversity in nature—are an irreplaceable resource for the renewal of society surely account for the poignancy of his reflections and the passion with which he challenges philosophical business as usual. In warning Harvard University against stamping "a single hard and fast type of character upon her children," James insisted that "our undisciplinables are our proudest product." His own ambivalence toward the socially defined masculine role and his attraction to the feminine opens a rebellious space which feminists can enlarge and reclaim.

8. CONTINUED INFLUENCE

Mary Whiton Calkins, Ethel Puffer Howes, Jane Addams, and other women students and friends have testified to James’s friendly support for their intellectual endeavors, a support that was especially noteworthy at a time when so many academic doors were closed to them. But James’s influence on women’s education extended beyond the small number of women students that he taught during his lifetime, and, as we have seen, the beneficial nature of his written texts for women is more ambiguous.

An excerpt from “Ethical and Pedagogical Importance of the Principle of Habit,” taken from Psychology: Briefer Course, 1925-26, turns up in 1925, for instance, in a small work intended as a handbook for young women just entering college. Both his stature and the perceived relevance of his views for women are evident in the fact that the selection is the only posthumous one included. The Freshman Girl: A Guide to College Life is a collection of essays written by administrators, professors, and one dancing instructor, for the purpose of easing the transition from high school to college. It is plain why the excerpt from James is included, since it encourages the growth of good habits in young people. It both motivates by emphasizing that habits largely determine character, and it gives practical advice on how to “make our nervous system our ally instead of our enemy.”

But it also exemplifies the ambivalence created in women trying to understand their own role in life as college-educated women when they learn that role through male-defined texts and authors. For one thing, the youths addressed in the selection are upper-class gentlemen, destined for such “arduous careers” as those of doctors, ministers, and counselors-at-law. For another, activity itself is explicitly conveyed as prototypically male. The sentimentalist and dreamer are called contemptible types of human character because they wallow in “a weltering sea of sensibility and emotion,” never undertaking a single “manly concrete deed.” Just as disturbing as the sexism is the racism and classism of the beliefs expressed. James praises habit, for instance, as the great conservator of the status quo of society because it discourages class warfare, prevents the lower classes from deserting the drudgery of hard labor, and “keeps different social strata from mixing.”

James’s criticism of those who praise the Good in abstract terms, but never act to carry it out in the messy particulars of everyday life, would scarcely be energizing for young women too often sentimentally preached at and then denied any practical outlets for their zeal. His example of Rousseau arousing mothers to follow Nature by nursing their babies themselves and then sending all his own children away to a founding hospital aptly characterizes the hypocrisy too often encountered. So does the example of a Russian lady weeping at a play while her coachman freezes to death. But then James goes on to label excessive novel reading, theatergoing, and indulgence in music as similarly “monstrous.”

By selectively reading the essay as a call to action, young women could be and probably were encouraged to become responsible for their
own actions on a larger, non-domestic stage. But the message is embedded in a pervasive sexism that could also inculcate ambivalence about the propriety of such an active role for themselves. It is directly addressed to male youths, and all the positive images are masculine ones, while many of the negative examples are taken from activities typical for women of that time. James even seems to go out of his way to criticize an emphasis on feeling that he usually defended in other contexts.

But the most misogynist remarks would not even be recognized at the time and so could affect the earlier readers only insofar as the attitude they express is conveyed as a pervasive background belief. They are to be found in James’s readily recognizable class-based distinction between the habits of character that are set by twenty years of age and those set by thirty. By the age of twenty, he says, a person’s personal habits, such as vocalization, gesture, and body language, are fixed. He illustrates this claim by saying that if a man is not born and bred a gentleman, the habits acquired after twenty will always betray his lower-class origins. The next plateau is the age of thirty, by which time a man’s intellectual and professional habits are formed. The period between twenty and thirty is a crucial one because habits cannot be changed once one is set in a career path. It is even said to be a good thing that our character is set like plaster by thirty years of age because it is this factor that keeps the different social strata from mixing.

The ages of twenty and thirty are not picked at random. Recall that in an earlier article, “Brute and Human Intellect,” James had said that a young woman of twenty knows how to act with alacrity in any circumstances in which she may be placed because her likes and dislikes are already formed and her opinions will not change much throughout life. “Her character is, in fact, finished in its essentials” (EPS, 37). A boy of twenty, by contrast, is still developing. With this knowledge we can see in hindsight how inappropriate it was to include the article on habit in a guide for “freshman girls” unless the intent was to encourage them to acceptably narrow the possibilities of both women and men and distort the multitude and variety of women’s perspectives on the world. Only when James’s own interpretive horizon of patriarchal values is recognized and rejected are we free to appropriate the subversive femininity that is also part of his text.

9. CONCLUSION

Although James is well known for his pluralism and emphasis on novelty, which challenge the accepted order of things, his romantic notion of women as Other leads to a glaring failure to challenge sexist stereotypes. Women’s nature and role in society remain uncriticized and therefore unreconstructed. The association of men with reason and women with nature is so much a part of our culture that the uncharacteristic sexism of Dewey’s remark in the following sentence in which he praises James can pass unnoticed, even by women: “America will justify herself as long as she breeds those like William James; men who are thinkers and thinkers who are men” (MW 6:96).

The association over the centuries of women with breeding and men with thinking has been challenged by many feminists, who have argued that the linking of rationality with maleness has distorted explanations of rationality as well as unfairly endowed masculinity with superior human qualities. It is worth while to trace James’s view of women because only by identifying the extent to which his sexism informs his philosophical analyses can we be empowered to reject the insidious because unrecognized embeddedness of misogyny in supposedly neutral analyses. Not only do we acquire one more bit of evidence for the maleness of Western philosophical conceptions of reason, but it becomes clearer how difficult it is to uproot sexist beliefs if they can infect even such an acute critic of hegemonic rationality as William James.

Since I have argued that James’s philosophy exhibits many attributes traditionally associated with femininity and thus escapes many of the criticisms of feminists about the extreme masculinizing of philosophical thinking, his own severe circumscription of the nature and role of women presents an interpretive challenge. How can James both value and devalue the feminine, both use and abuse feminine style? My analysis has sought to show that valuing a femininity constructed within a patriarchal order of race, class, gender, and heterosexual privilege unacceptably narrows the possibilities of both women and men and distorts the multitude and variety of women’s perspectives on the world. Only when James’s own interpretive horizon of patriarchal values is recognized and rejected are we free to appropriate the subversive femininity that is also part of his text.
sion and the number of dissertation advisers who are women is that women philosophers tend to be clustered at the lower ranks and located at institutions where there are not large numbers of graduate students." Letter to the Editor, Proceedings and Addresses of the American Philosophical Association 87/6 (1994): 59.

For statistics of the number of women philosophers with Ph.D.'s, numbers employed, academic rank, and so forth, see Helen E. Longino, "Report from the Chair," APA Newsletter on Feminism and Philosophy 94/1 (Fall, 1994): 52–53.


2. Documentation of the narrow range of people in the philosophical profession—the American philosophy professoriate is still very much a matter of innumerable consciousnesses of emptiness, no one of which taken in itself has a name, but all different from each other" (IPL, 243).

3. A clue to James's conception of women's mental capacity can be gathered from his 1887 review of Henry T. Finck's Romantic Love and Personal Beauty, in which he ends a series of direct quotations that celebrate and help confirm "the ideal of American young people" with this remark: "Nor would female education be any longer neglected, were it fully understood how essential it is to Personal Beauty and true Romantic Love, the basis of happy conjugal life" (ECR, 407).


5. Myers, William James, 425.

6. Myers, William James, 426.


10. Examples of "James's enlightened attitude toward women" can be found in Gerald E. Myers, William James: His Life and Thought (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1986), 428–29.


14. Myers, William James, 426.


17. This linking of "lower races" and women as natural examples of inferior intelligence was still prevalent thirty years later. See Vernon J. Williams Jr., "Fritz U. Boas and the Conflict between Science and Values, 1894–1915," APA Newsletter on Philosophy and the Black Experience 92/1 (1993): 7–10, especially, 14.

26. See Brabeck, Who Cares?
27. The ethics of care is discussed in chap. 9.
28. Dewey came to the same conclusion about an earlier passage of James's (PP1, 305) about mothers' instinctive love for their babies, which Dewey characterizes as "a natural response to a particular situation, and one lacking in moral quality as far as it is wholly unreflective, not involving the ideal of any end, good or bad" (LW 7: 294).
29. Interestingly, this passage occurs in the chapter "The Perception of Reality." James is illustrating his contention that human credulity has psychological roots. He continues: "Blame, dread, and hope are thus the great belief-inspiring passions, and cover among them the future, the present, and the past."
30. William James's son, Henry, confirms that William's wife, Alice, lived up to his high moral expectations, which may help account for why he was so enamored of the role of women as selfless servant: "His wife, who entered into all his plans and undertakings with unfailing understanding and high spirit, stood guard over his library door, protected him from interruptions and distractions, managed the household and the children and family business, helped him to order his day and to see and entertain his friends at convenient times, sped him off on occasional much-needed vacations, and encouraged him to all his major undertakings, with a sustaining skill and cheer which need not be described to anyone who knew his household. . . . If consulted, she would not tolerate even this allusion." Henry James, The Letters of William James, vol. I (Boston: Atlantic Monthly Press, 1940), 193.
32. James's equation of heroic male characteristics with human characteristics is found in such statements as "Our permanent enemy is the noted bellicosity of human nature. Man, biologically considered, and whatever else he may be in the bargain, is simply the most formidable of all beasts of prey" (ERM, 121).
33. James further contributes to the misogynist tradition of warning young men against the snares of women's sexuality and domesticity by quoting "a worldly-wise old friend" in a note in Varieties of Religious Experience: "Woman's heart and love are a shrewd device of Nature, a trap which she sets for the average man, to force him into working. But the wise man will always prefer work chosen by himself." (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1955), 121–22, n. 10.
34. Compare this ideal with the remarks made by Peter Alden in George Santavana's The Last Puritan, explaining why he will marry Caroline: "She has consciously undertaken to heal me, to do the mother in the wife" (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1936), 64. Santavana, a Harvard colleague of James, subtitled his book "A Memoir in the Form of a Novel."
36. The phrase "alien lives" occurs on p. 165.
39. James's position provides evidence for some recent feminist evaluations of literature, typified by Elaine Showalter and Carolyn Heilbrun, who argue that "Western culture was no longer seen as a republic of letters to which both sexes were equal heirs but as a state in which the rulers were usurping men who had recreated women in alienated terms as nature, inspiration or chaos." Janet Todd, Feminist Literary History (New York: Routledge, 1998), 27.
41. The pervasiveness and ambiguity of James's appeals to gender as a basic ordering device can be seen in his characterization of the spirit of Greek classicalism as "too essentially masculine for pessimism to be elaborated" in contrast to the tragic character of life experienced by "races more complex, and (so to speak) more feminine than the Hellenes had attained to" (VR5, 120–21, n. 9).
43. "The Energies of Men" (ERM, 129–46) is a sustained appeal to scientific men to recognize and utilize "the mystical portions of our nature freely" (ERM, 131). James invokes the story of his friend with breast cancer as an example of the power of mind over matter and explicitly links women, saintliness, mysticism, expansiveness, and powers that make intellectual men uncomfortable. He says that men inhibited by their scientific respectability are like persons who work with only one finger, refusing to utilize a greater range of organic powers, and urges them to get in touch with their mystical side. Scientists should utilize historical and biographical material rather than laboratory experimentation in order "to get a topographic survey made of the limits of human power . . . and we ought then to construct a methodical inventory of the paths of access, or keys . . . to the different kinds of power" (ERM, 145).
44. The extreme masculinizing of human virtues is most apparent in "The Moral Equivalent of War" (ERM, 162–73). Although James dissociates himself from the cruelty and rapaciousness of war, he admires the militaristic strenuousness that scorns co-education and "feminism unashamed" as breeding softness and insipidity (ERM, 166).
45. James's defense of religion at a time when intellectual fashions were turning toward positivistic science and religion was becoming women's special province seems to be a factor in his continuing worries over his masculinity and intellectual rigor. In an 1882 letter to Thomas Davidson, for instance, he says that by dropping the dogma of God's all-exclusive reality and adopting the hypothesis of a primordial pluralism, "piety forthwith ceases to be incompatible with manliness, and religious 'faith' with intellectual rectitude." Ralph Barton Perry, The Thought and Character of William James, vol. I (Boston: Little, Brown, 1935), 738.
46. Dale Spender argues that such appropriations are the rule rather than the exception in Women of Ideas.
47. See Seigfried, William James's Radical Reconstruction, 61–64.
48. Germaine Greer says that according to the stereotype of the Eternal Feminine a woman "need achieve nothing, for she is the reward of achievement...

49. See Jean Strouse, Alice James: A Biography (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1980). One can wonder whether William's intimate knowledge of Alice's nervous prostrations and life of invalidism influenced his advocacy of exercise for women as a way of overcoming nervous disorders and engaging in a fuller, more productive life. In "The Gospel of Relaxation" (1899) he points out that women's lives in Norway have been revolutionized by their participation in the new sport of skiing. What had happened since his review of Subjection of Women in 1869 for William James to ridicule as an "old-fashioned ideal of femininity, the 'domestic angel,' the 'gentle and refining influence' sort of thing"? The daring Norwegian women who donned skis to defy darkness and heights are reported as not only rejecting "the traditional feminine pallor and delicacy of constitution, but actually taking the lead in every educational and social reform" (TT, 119–20).


51. Yeazel, Death and Letters, 121.


54. As James goes on to say, "to some of us it proves a most inspiring notion," and philosophers have indeed praised these texts as examples of James's doctrine of the Prometheus self. In commenting on his espousal of heroism and strenuousness, George Cotkin defends James against the charge of imperialism, to which the language lends itself. But by paraphrasing James's remarks as addressed to women as well as men, he ignores the issue of its masculinist bias. William James, Public Philosopher, 179–71.

55. See, for instance, the special issue on "Teaching in Ways That Attract Women and Minorities to the Profession," ed. Hilda Hein, APA Newsletter on Feminism and Philosophy, 92/4 (Spring, 1993), 44–64.

56. James, "The True Harvard (1903)," ECR, 77.

57. James, Psychology: Brief Course (PBC) (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1925). The Freshman Girl: A Guide to College Life, ed. Kate W. Jameson and Frank C. Lockwood (Boston: D. C. Heath, 1925). The authors are, besides seven deans, three present or retired college presidents: Mary E. Woolley of Mount Holyoke College, Ada Louise Comstock of Radcliffe College, and Le Baron Russell Briggs, former president of Radcliffe College; one M.D.; two professors, Vida D. Scudder of Wellesley College and Sarah M. Sturtevant of Columbia; an unaffiliated woman who writes on "Dancing"; and James's posthumous contribution.

58. This is not to say that the sexist tone is deliberate. The vehemence expressed might well reflect James's own lifelong ambivalence about being torn between an unstructured life of sentiment and a rigorous life of scientific thought. Perry assumes that "James's exhortation to action was addressed primarily to himself" because of his "very definite tendency to brooding melancholy." Perry, Thought and Character, vol. 2, 674. Nonetheless, the valuations are expressed within a horizon of sexism that informs what is said as well as how it is said.


SEVEN


5. Riley, "Am I That Name?" 13. A recent example can be found in Sheila Ruth, Issues in Feminism, 2d ed., (Mountain View, CA: Mayfield, 1990), 413: "How, generations of women have asked, can one integrate claims to full equality with a sense of women's special identity?"


10. The Quest for Certainty (LW4: 175).


12. "Valid Knowledge and the Subjecivity of Experience" (MW6: 80).


19. See bell hooks, Ain't I a Woman (Boston: South End Press, 1981); Collins, Black Feminist Thought; Jill Johnston, Lesbian Nation (New York: Simon and Schus-