

EDUCATIONAL PSYCHOLOGY: A CENTURY OF CONTRIBUTIONS

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William James: Our Father Who Begat Us

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More than half a century ago one of his former students began a tribute to William James by confessing that "it is hardly possible to say briefly anything newly significant about Professor James" (Delabarre, 1943, p. 125). If that was true for someone both intimately familiar with James' work and with James himself, imagine my predicament. So let me confess from the outset that I too believe I can say nothing that is newly significant about William James. But I am fortunate on one account. Familiar though most readers will be with his name and honorary title as the Father of American psychology, perhaps even familiar with some of his humorous anecdotes or clever aphorisms, few will have actually read much of James' work or will be acquainted with even the more general facts of his life (Allport, 1943). As such, perhaps I need not reach for significance, if that be unavailable. Perhaps my more modest aim should be simply to familiarize readers of this volume with this most remarkable of men.

The editors would not be satisfied with mere familiarization, however. This is a volume about one hundred years of contributions to educational psychology, and so I have quite reasonably been instructed to outline and evaluate the legacy left by James to present-day education and educational psychology. Again I am fortunate, for I have what at least can be described as some scattered thoughts on this. The editors also asked that I present James' perspective on four issues of critical

importance to educators—the nature of the learner, the nature of learning, the optimal conditions of instruction, and the nature of important learning—instructional outcomes. And fortune smiles on me yet again, for James left rather a clear blueprint of these perspectives. Before I begin, however, let me put my bias clearly on the table. I can claim no sense of objectivity about this man or about his work. For over 30 years, I have been smitten with William James. I read him for work and for play. I read him for guidance. I read him for inspiration. I read him when my spirits are low. I read him to discover what I really think. I read him to learn. I am never disappointed. My admiration borders on adulation. How could anyone fail to see the profundity of this man's wisdom, the elegance of his thought, or the simplicity of his uncommon common sense. *Caveat emptor*. Let me begin with a biographical sketch.

A LIFE OF LOVE AND WORK¹

William James was born in New York City on January 11, 1842, to an affluent, cosmopolitan, and deeply religious family. His father Henry dabbled in theology, doted on his five children, was well connected to literary and philosophical luminaries of the day, and often took the family for extended stays in Europe. His journeys to the Continent were primarily theological and philosophical odysseys intended to resolve his conflicting spiritual bouts. His right leg had been amputated after burns suffered in a boyhood accident failed to heal. His spirit never quite recovered. A devoted father, he sought to provide his children with the sort of education that would enable them some day to outdistance their countrymen both in erudition and in breadth of knowledge. To this end, he enrolled them in fine schools, obtained for them gifted tutors, and saw to it that they frequented museums and attended lectures and the theater with regularity. William and two of his siblings would give fruit to their father's liberal educational efforts. Brother Henry became one of America's most famed novelists, and sister Alice acquired a literary reputation of her own after her diaries were posthumously published.

When William was but 1 year old, the family went for a two-year stay to Europe. At the dawn of his adolescence, the family made a second journey. William attended schools and had a succession of private tutors in England and France. When he returned home at the age of 16, he spoke, read, and wrote French fluently. A year later, while he was attending school in Newport, Rhode Island, Darwin's *The Origin of Species* was published. It was back to Europe two years later, to more schools and private tutors, this time in Germany and Switzerland, where he first enrolled at the Geneva Academy as a university student. By this time William had added German to his repertoire of foreign languages.

Before William James entered the Lawrence Scientific School at Harvard University to begin medical school at the age of 19, he was familiar with nearly every major museum on the continent, was fluent in five languages, and had met

various major figures who frequented the family home. These included Carlyle, Greeley, John Stuart Mill, Tennyson, Thoreau, and James' godfather, Ralph Waldo Emerson. He had first wanted to be a painter and had studied with famed artist William Morris Hunt, but he came to believe that he was not touched with genius in this area and decided to look elsewhere. He was also acceding to his father's urging that he seek a more traditional career path. He enrolled in Harvard and began to study comparative anatomy.

James began his studies at Harvard at the same time that the American Civil War began to rage. Although his brothers Wilky and Bob enlisted, William and Henry Jr. did not, pleading health issues—William suffered from neurasthenia and a host of ailments, including weak vision, digestive disorders, and a severe depression that brought about thoughts of suicide. He was well enough by 1865 to interrupt his studies and join an expedition to the Amazon with naturalist Louis Agassiz. But there, too, James was beset by medical maladies. Two years later he traveled to France and Germany, where he remained for 18 months "taking the baths" to alleviate crippling back aches. He also used the opportunity to read widely in philosophy—particularly Kant, Schiller, Goethe, and Herder—and to study under Hermann von Helmholtz and other leading European experimental psychologists. He returned home to complete his course work and received his degree from the Harvard Medical School in 1869. The MD was the only degree William James ever received.

For almost three years after graduation, James lived in the family home. His bouts of depression increased after a young woman whom he had befriended died following a prolonged illness. He would later describe his depression as a descent into a profound crisis—of spirituality, of being, of meaning, of will (James, 1902/1990, p. 136). He suffered panic attacks and hallucinations that left him mentally crippled. His father had suffered similar attacks and had sought refuge from them in spiritual quests. William feared that his infirmity was rooted in a biological destiny he would be unable to overcome. He shrouded his angst with secrecy and used only his reading and journal writing to deal with the mental anguish. One April evening in 1870, the psychological fever began to break. He recorded in his journal that, after reading an essay on rational psychology by Charles Renouvier, he had come to believe that free will was no illusion and that he could use his will to alter his mental state. He need not be a slave to a presumed biological destiny. "My first act of free will," he wrote, "shall be to believe in free will."

James was now 30, three years out of medical school, and with no career prospects or plans except for a vague desire to devote himself to philosophy in some fashion. It was at this propitious time that Harvard president Charles Eliot, a neighbor and former teacher of James, offered him a post at Harvard teaching physiology for the modest sum of \$600 per year. His acceptance signaled the start of a prestigious career, for James was to become a gifted teacher, a skilled orator, and, of course, a prodigious thinker and writer. It signaled also the renewal of his spirit. James took to teaching. His students described him as a rigorous instructor,

a lively and humorous lecturer, and a caring soul mate—"To see him," one wrote, "was never to forget what it means to be alive."

As it does to most new teachers, however, the first year left James utterly exhausted. To recharge his batteries, he traveled with his brother Henry through Italy, returning home in the fall of 1874 to resume his teaching duties. The following year he offered a graduate course on the relations between physiology and psychology and established the first laboratory of experimental psychology in the United States. In 1876 he became the country's first assistant professor of psychology. "The first lecture in psychology that I ever heard," he wrote, "was the first I ever gave." Two years later he began writing *The Principles of Psychology*, a task which was to take him a dozen years to complete. He also became engaged to Alice Howe Gibbens.

James had warned Alice that, should she deign to accept his proposal of marriage, she should be well aware of his mental condition. He confessed to her his neurasthenia, his bouts of deep depression, his thoughts of suicide, his lingering spiritual crisis. He cautioned her that he could as easily get worse as better. Alice threw caution to the wind and married William on July 20 of 1878. His neurasthenia got better very quickly.

No academic field could easily contain James' interests. He had switched from teaching physiology to psychology and, in 1879, he shifted to philosophy. The following year he was made assistant professor of philosophy. He saw the new decade in with the birth of the first of his five children. It was a decade devoted to teaching, writing numerous articles for the best journals, and meeting with the finest minds at home and in Europe. But it was also a decade marked by personal tragedy. He lost his mother early in 1882 and his father before that year was out. Three years later, his third child Herman, less than a year old, died of bronchial pneumonia. At decade's end, the family moved to a new home in Cambridge. On September 25 of 1890, Holt began distribution of *The Principles of Psychology* at \$6 for the 2-volume set (\$5 after dealer discount).

In many ways, the two-volume work was as much philosophy as it was psychology. It was also literature, autobiography, self-help manual, and confessional tale. It was widely admired and for the most part positively reviewed, although a number of readers found it too personal in tone and substance. Although James would self-effacingly claim that "I have no facility for writing, as some people have," the lucid style and rich literary tone he used in this and future works earned for him the accolade that he was actually the real novelist of the James brothers, a novelist who wrote about psychology. Henry, on the other hand, was the real psychologist who wrote novels. But it was not an accolade typically given by members of his discipline. "It is literature," the renowned psychologist Wilhelm Wundt said of the *Principles*, "it is beautiful, but it is not psychology." At the urging of his publisher to create a more digestible book with greater classroom appeal, James later condensed the two volumes into one, *Psychology: The Briefer Course*. Soon the complete work came to be known as *The James*, and the abridged tome as *The Jimmy*. For years, the two would become the standard texts for generations of American university students.

The year 1892 should be an auspicious one to students of education and educational psychology because it was in July of that year that William James delivered the first of a series of twelve lectures on psychology to teachers at Cambridge.² His speaker's fee was \$50. Such was his eloquence and appeal that the size of his audiences increased after each lecture. After the success of *Principles* and of the lectures, James was exhilarated but exhausted, and an exhausted James always turned to travel. He obtained a year's sabbatical from Harvard, turned his laboratory over to Hugo Münsterberg, and, as had his father before him, he took the entire family to Europe, where he enrolled his boys in an English school in Florence.

When the family returned, James found an America ravaged by a financial depression that had severely depleted his savings. Moreover, he feared he was losing touch with his own national identity. "One should not be a cosmopolitan," he wrote, "one's soul becomes 'disaggregated'" and "one's land seems foreign." He determined to reclaim his cultural identity and began a period of intense activity in social and political causes. The increase in political activism was also marked by decreased interest in psychology—"I wish to get relieved of psychology as soon as possible," he wrote to a friend. European experimentalism, spearheaded by Wundt, was now in full bloom in American psychology. It emphasized an objectivist view of human functioning in which only observable experience merited scientific interest. James found it trivial, mindless, and intellectually indigestible. Though disheartened by the growing success of the behaviorist movement, he continued throughout his life to fight for his introspective view of psychology, and he remained an active member both of the American Philosophical Association and of the American Psychological Association, even serving as President of each organization.

During the closing years of the century, James lectured widely, remained politically active, and published *The Will to Believe and Other Essays in Popular Philosophy*, a book more in keeping with his growing spiritual and philosophical concerns. His lectures to teachers were collected and published in *Talks to Teachers on Psychology: And to Students on Some of Life's Ideals*. At a lecture delivered at the University of California, Berkeley, entitled "Philosophical Conceptions and Practical Results," he put forth his first explanation of the method of pragmatism, an idea that he credited to Charles Sanders Peirce but which James appropriated and transformed.

Ill health once again beset James in the form of a heart condition, and he welcomed the new century convalescing in Europe, where he remained for two years. Proclaiming himself a "piecemeal supernaturalist," James deepened his interest in spirituality and religion during this time, and his Gifford lectures delivered in Scotland formed the basis for a new book entitled *The Varieties of Religious Experience*. Back on home soil, his social activism continued, and he wrote a series of pieces against what he perceived to be America's growing aggression and imperialism. He was delighted when in 1903 Harvard conferred on him an honorary doctorate, but soon after that he was back on a European sabbatical with brother Henry.

In 1906, James accepted an invitation to spend a term at Stanford University and, while there, experienced the earthquake that very nearly destroyed San Francisco. James and Alice survived unscathed, losing only some pottery to the calamity. Later that year he delivered the Lowell Lectures in Boston—lectures that subsequently served as the foundation for *Pragmatism: A New Name for Old Ways of Thinking*. James was now at the height of his eminence both in philosophy and psychology. Although pragmatism had more than its share of detractors, it was also promoted by powerful allies such as the up-and-coming English philosopher Canning Schiller and the American educator, philosopher, and psychologist John Dewey. But James was the preeminent voice.

William James taught his last class at Harvard on Tuesday, January 22, 1907. On that day his classroom overflowed with his own students, former students, colleagues, and Harvard administrators. Even Alice snuck in to view the proceedings. A committee of his graduate students and teaching assistants presented him with a silver-mounted inkwell. His undergraduates gave him a loving cup. The gifts represented an acknowledgment by his students of the quality of their professor's work and the appreciation for his love. If Sigmund Freud was correct that love and work are the cornerstones of humanness, James' students were deeply aware that they had been touched by one of the most human of men. James was genuinely touched and surprised, remarking on "how warm-hearted the world around one is."

He had hoped of course to relax during his retirement, but he was in constant demand for lectures. The few that he now gave played to overflow halls. The Hibbert lectures given at Oxford resulted in the publication of *A Pluralistic Universe* in 1909, the same year that *The Meaning of Truth* came out. In September of that year he attended a celebration at Clark University where he met Sigmund Freud and Carl Jung. He liked Jung well enough; he found Freud "a man obsessed by fixed ideas." The three men took part in a historic photograph.

But James was not well, and his health was deteriorating. He made one final, brief trip to Europe to look in on an ailing Henry and take the baths at Nauheim before he returned to his country home in Chocoma, New Hampshire. There, just before 2:30 in the afternoon of August 26 of 1910, William James passed away cradled in the arms of his wife Alice. He was 68. An autopsy revealed that he had died of an enlarged heart. Two years after his death, a number of his articles were collected and posthumously published as *Essays in Radical Empiricism*.

CONTRIBUTIONS TO PSYCHOLOGY

By the time that William James had published *The Principles of Psychology* in 1890, Rousseau's doctrine of innate ideas was under attack in the field of psychology from associationists who favored Locke's model of the human mind as a *tabula rasa*. The Russian school of reflexology, known today to psychology students primarily through the work of Ivan Pavlov and his discovery of the

principle of conditioned reflexes, was having a profound influence on European elementist psychologists. There was an antimentalist view of human functioning in which only observable experience was deemed worthy of scientific scrutiny. This positivist perspective would travel to the United States by way of structuralist Edward Titchener and others. The intellectual precursors of John Watson's and B. F. Skinner's brand of radical behaviorism were well on their way to capturing the discipline, and they wanted a discipline in which self-perceptions and other internal mental states played no meaningful role in a scientific psychology. Moreover, notions of mind-body dualism were still well entrenched within the discipline.

These were not ideas that sat well with James, a man who had come to psychology by way of art and philosophy and who believed that a psychology without introspection could not aspire to explain the complexities of human functioning. It was by looking into his own conscious mind that he made sense of his own psychology, and it was primarily through this method that he developed what he believed were sound principles of psychology. After all, James (1890/1981a) would argue, "introspective observation is what we have to rely on first and foremost and always" (p. 185).

There is general agreement regarding the major ideas with which James imbued his psychology and which he used to ward off the emerging positivist influence. There are, of course, the foundational ideas of functionalism, radical empiricism, and pluralism. James also emphasized self-processes and expressed a profound belief in free will, and he argued strongly for the critical role that mental associations play in the development of human functioning. There is, as well, pragmatism, a method by which ideas can be appraised.

As the 19th century came to a close, it was primarily James' functionalism that stood in opposition to prevailing notions of mind-body dualism and to the growing positivist theories that would rule American psychology during the better part of the 20th century. Initially influenced by Darwin's evolutionary thought that established a connection between structure and function, functionalism emphasized the interactive nature of mind and body and the unity and dynamic nature of what James would describe as "the stream of consciousness." According to James (1899/1958), mental processes are functional in the sense that they aid individuals in their attempts to adapt themselves to their world and their environments—"Man, whatever else he may be, is primarily a practical being, whose mind is given him to aid in adapting him to this world's life" (p. 34).

Perhaps the most identifiable feature of functionalism is its claim that mental states are characterized by their interactions with and causal relations to other mental states. Moreover, because mental events must be understood in terms of their relation to the sensory inputs from which they emanate and to the behavioral outputs that they produce, functionalists argued that elements of mental functioning and rules for the association of ideas cannot be investigated in isolation. These elements are but a function of a continuous stream of thought that can only be understood in relation to the conscious actions of human beings as they go about

the business of day-to-day living. Consciousness itself, argued James, is adaptive and functional and makes it possible for individuals to engage in self-regulation.

As had John Locke's empiricism, James' radical empiricism represented a break with Cartesian dualist notions that the real world is an extension of a larger world that exists within the mind. Whereas Locke's empiricism became foundational to positivist views that would focus exclusively on an individual's experienced reality as the *fons et origo* of their psychologies, James' "radical" view of reality had a pronounced phenomenological bent (Allport, 1943; Hilgard, 1987; Wilshire, 1968). For James, mental events stand on an equal footing with observable events as representations of reality. In fact, James made little distinction between experience and reality (Boller, 1979). Whether mental events are or are not simply a function of the external world, they can influence human functioning independently of that world. Consequently, "ideas, feelings, sensations, perceptions, concepts, art, science, faith, conscious, unconscious, objects, and so-called illusions" each merit attention and investigation (Barzun, 1983, p. 111). James believed that an individual's immediate experience represents the essence of psychological truth (Allport, 1943). As for truth itself, that also is a hypothesis. After all, "the universe is still pursuing its adventures" (James, 1907/1975, p. 123). Moreover, the mental and physical events—the immediate experiences—that an individual uses both for self-understanding and to understand others are selected and interpreted by the individual.

Although the dominance of positivist psychology throughout many of the decades that followed James resulted in a large part of the discipline eschewing his brand of radical empiricism (Allport, 1943; Barzun, 1983; Perry, 1958), James' argument that mental states were appropriate subjects of investigation won the day in a number of areas within psychology. It was, of course, a basic staple in Freud's psychodynamic theories, and it gathered adherents in personality research; social, clinical, and child psychology; abnormal psychology; and educational and school psychology.

It is consistent with James' interdisciplinary mind, his "catholicity of spirit" (Taylor, 1996), that he should view the solution to each question in psychology from a variety of perspectives and that he should urge others to do likewise. He had early on dismissed dualism, the notion that reality is reducible to two, independent, mutually irreducible elements. He also wrestled with the problem of monism, the view that reality represents a unified whole, and found it deficient for a number of reasons: It violated the dynamic nature of personal experience, constrained the character and expression of reality, and resulted in mechanistic and absolute conceptions of the world (Viney, King, & King, 1992). This was for James (1907/1975) "the most central of all philosophical problems" and one he had resolved by proposing a pluralistic view of the universe—"the world of concrete personal experiences . . . is multitudinous beyond imagination, tangled, muddy, painful, and perplexed" (p. 18). How could understandings of these experiences be otherwise? Pluralism represented for James a belief in concert with his

brand of radical empiricism and with the pragmatist philosophy he would adopt. It represented also his conviction that the facts of the world can be understood only when they are embedded in their local conditions.

There were no boundaries to James' interest in psychological processes, and no areas to which his mind would not travel. He was criticized broadly for his interest in psychical research, and he was known to have attended seances. In the *Principles*, he devoted chapters to habit, attention, perception, association, memory, reasoning, instinct, emotion, imagination, psychological methods, and even hypnotism. Of all psychological processes, however, one was clearly central to a Jamesian psychology—the *self*.

It bears noting that "The Consciousness of Self" is the longest chapter in the two volumes of the *Principles*. In it, James (1890/1981b) described an individual's sense of self as "duplex," composed of objective and subjective selves. He differentiated between the self as knower, or the *I*, and the self as known, or *me*. The *I* is pure ego, consciousness itself. The *me* is one of the many things that the *I* may be conscious of, and it consists of three components, one physical or material, one social, and one spiritual. James was careful to point out that the two selves are discriminated aspects of self rather than "separate things." The self is also purposive, dynamic, and active. James was also one of the first writers to use the term self-esteem, which he described as a self-feeling that depends on what one decides to be and to accomplish. Self-esteem may be raised, James argued, either by succeeding in our endeavors or, in the face of incessant disappointments, by lowering our sights and surrendering certain pretensions. James' belief in God permeates his psychology and plays an important role in his understanding of self (particularly of the *I*). For example, his discussion of the soul as a combining medium of thought or consciousness is permeated with references to a spiritual being and the role that such a being may play in understanding an individual's self. He argued that psychology must "admit" the Soul.

All of which leads to the manner in which James himself evaluated philosophical and psychological ideas. Just as he is acknowledged as the father of American psychology, William James is also recognized as the father of American pragmatism, an idea that he credited to Charles Sanders Peirce but which, in James' hands, became one of the prevailing philosophical movements of the 20th century. It became also one of the most criticized, misinterpreted, and ill-used philosophical movements of the 20th century to the point where, in modern parlance, being "pragmatic" has become synonymous with being practical, expedient, and relativistic, each independent of moral and ethical ramifications.

Of course, that is not how James viewed or expounded pragmatism, which was for him more method than philosophy, a method for resolving philosophical disputes, for arriving at the meaning and truth of ideas. Originally expounded by Peirce in 1878 in an article entitled "How to Make Our Ideas Clear," the pragmatic method, as James (1907/1975) came to define it, aimed to discover the truth of an idea. "Truth," argued James, "*happens* to an idea," and it happens when "we can

assimilate, validate, corroborate, and verify" its agreement with reality (p. 97), "be such realities concrete or abstract" (p. 101). Pragmatism asks its practitioners to consider the value of truth in terms of its utility—"Grant an idea or belief to be true, it says, what concrete difference will its being true make in anyone's actual life? How will the truth be realized? What experiences will be different from those which would obtain if the belief were false? What, in short, is truth's *cash-value* in experiential terms" (p. 97)? Criticisms of pragmatism are typically predicated on the assumed effectiveness of questionable short-term actions, but determining the cash value of an idea requires determining the practical, ethical/moral, and intellectual long-term *consequences* that will emanate from the actions the idea will generate. Moreover, although for pragmatists such as James and Dewey truth is indeed provisional, the moral standards that undergird the cash value of an idea must be founded on democratic, progressive, and pluralist principles (Rorty, 1991).

When Jamesian passages are lifted out of their contextual moorings, they can be used to illustrate and defend the view that pragmatism asks nothing of truth but that it be practical, useful, and personally self-serving. James (1907/1975) wrote that "truth in our ideas means their power to work" (p. 34); "A new opinion counts as 'true' just in proportion as it gratifies the individual's desire to assimilate the novel in his experience to his beliefs in stock" (p. 36); "The true is the name of whatever proves itself to be good in the way of belief, and good, too, for definite, assignable reasons"; "'What would be better for us to believe!' This sounds very like a definition of truth" (p. 42).

James (1907/1975) himself was aware of "how odd it must seem to some of you to hear me say that an idea is 'true' so long as to believe it is profitable to our lives" (p. 42), and he worked both to clarify his definition of pragmatism and to emphasize the moral element that accompanies it. But it was not James' pragmatism that caught the fancy of America as it turned into a new century. The land of the individual, of the entrepreneur, and of the competitive marketplace preferred the wrongly understood, self-oriented, practical, expedient approach. James would struggle through his remaining years both against critics whom he believed misinterpreted his pragmatism and against admirers who sang its praises and used a mutated form to defend and promulgate their political or philosophical agendas.

He would also struggle against the growing atomistic and mechanistic tendencies in psychology. He dreaded the encroachment of this "microscopic psychology" that was "carried on by experimental methods, asking of course every moment for introspective data, but eliminating their uncertainty by operating on a large scale and taking statistical means. This method taxes patience at the utmost, and could hardly have arisen in a country whose natives could be *bored*" (Perry, 1935b, p. 114). Nonetheless, the growing successes of behaviorist psychology, which was turning the new experimental laboratories into laboratories geared at discovering the roots of animal learning, isolated James from many of his colleagues and from the discipline. Not long after the publication of the *Principles*, he began to lose interest in formal psychology and turned his attention to philosophical pursuits.

He developed as well a curiosity for unusual states of consciousness, psychic phenomena, and religious experience. He began also to apply the principles of his psychology and the fruits of his philosophical thinking to other areas of human endeavor. One of these areas was education.

WILLIAM JAMES AND EDUCATIONAL PSYCHOLOGY³

With the appointment of Paul Henry Hanus as assistant professor of the History and Art of Teaching in 1891, only a year after the debut of the *Principles*, Harvard University began a process that culminated in the creation of a Division of Education in 1906 and a Graduate School of Education in 1920. At the time of the appointment, the Harvard administration also proposed to its instructors that they address issues of concern to teaching from the perspectives of their own disciplines. James did so and incorporated the fruits of his labors into his own teaching (James was perhaps the first university professor ever to elicit evaluations of his teaching from his students). I believe it safe to say that William James was the first American psychologist to directly address educational issues.

When Harvard also suggested to James that a series of lectures to classroom teachers on the relationship between psychology and teaching would be well received, James saw the opportunity to promote attention to his newly published *Principles* and to increase his university income. On July of 1892,² he delivered the first lecture to a group of Cambridge teachers under the title of "Talks on Psychology of Interest to Teachers." According to Harvard's university calendar, the first lecture was delivered on a Tuesday evening; lectures then followed every Thursday (Baldwin, 1911). He would subsequently deliver the lectures throughout the country. After being published in installments in the *Atlantic Monthly*, they were collected and published in 1899 as *Talks to Teachers on Psychology and to Students on Some of Life's Ideals*. *Talks* became popular with teacher educators, who used it prominently in teacher training programs throughout the nation for the next thirty years. By 1929 it had been reprinted 23 times.

Most readers familiar with the *Principles* quickly realize that, had William James had access to a personal computer, he would have made frequent use of the cut and paste feature to compose the lectures. As he had done for the *Jimmy*, James used scissors and paste to produce the bulk of the text, adding where appropriate exemplars, aphorisms, and instructive maxims relevant to education. Some have argued that both the lectures and book may have been prompted more by financial considerations than by an abiding interest in teaching and in education (e.g., Hilgard, 1987; Simon, 1998). Indeed, in his private correspondence James revealed that he had little patience with or admiration for teachers as a whole, and he could be dismissive both of the lectures and the subsequent book—"Pray do not wade through the Teacher part, which is incarnate boredom," he wrote to

a friend about *Talks*. Others contend that James was genuinely interested in the work of teachers and in the workings of education (Perry, 1935b). His essays related to university education (e.g., "The Ph.D. Octopus") attest to the fact that he was interested in how American students were educated, at least at the university level.

James (1899/1958) began his talks by declaring to the teachers in his audience that they held the future of the country in their hands. Shrewdly, he went on to lower their expectations of what they could hope to take from his lectures. He cautioned them that knowledge of psychology does not ensure effective teaching. Indeed, they would make a "great, very great" mistake if they believed that scientific psychology could offer them teaching strategies or instructional methods they could readily incorporate into their teaching. After all, "psychology is a science, and teaching is an art; and sciences never generate arts directly out of themselves" (p. 23). Moreover, knowledge of psychology cannot help anyone develop ingenuity or tact, and these are skills central to the art of teaching. He went even further: The amount of psychology necessary to effective teaching "might almost be written on the palm of one's hand" (p. 26). What psychology can do is to "save us from mistakes. It makes us, moreover, more clear as to what we are about. We gain confidence in respect to any method which we are using as soon as we believe that it has theory as well as practice" (p. 25).

If psychology could provide teachers with but modest help, what did James find to lecture them about? And, in keeping with the aims of this chapter, what were James' views on four issues of critical importance to educators—the nature of the learner, the nature of learning, the optimal conditions of instruction, and the nature of important learning-instructional outcomes? Where possible, let me try to make use of James' own words to answer these questions.

Perhaps the most often quoted Jamesian phrase that provides insight into his view of the nature of the learner is that a student is "a little sensitive, impulsive, associative, and-reactive organism, partly fated and partly free" (p. 131). In coming to understand the basic nature of a child, James was influenced by his physiological training. He viewed the pupil as a "subtle little piece of machinery" that possesses a number of native reactions that are present from birth—"We are by this time fully launched upon the biological conception" (p. 42). These instinctive reactions include fear, love, curiosity (which is "the impulse toward better cognition"), ownership, and constructiveness. Children are also imbued with "ambitious impulses" that include imitation, ambition, pugnacity, and pride.

There is always a tension in James's description of the source of human activity. Not averse to resorting to overstatement to drive home a point, James proposed that "ninety-nine hundredths or, possibly, nine hundred and ninety-nine thousandths of our activity is purely automatic and habitual, from our rising in the morning to our lying down each night" (p. 56). We are all "mere bundles of habit . . . stereotyped creatures, imitators and copiers of our past selves" (p. 58). As an empiricist, James believed that individuals learn and behave by reacting to impressions. A child's

mind is there to help determine those reactions, and a critical essence of learning is a child's success in making reactions numerous and perfect.

James' insights regarding how information is best learned surely resounded with experienced teachers. Associationist to the core, he argued that a teacher should begin with the child's native reactions and, by connecting them to novel information and academic material, help the child to acquire new reactions—"Every acquired reaction is, as a rule, either a complication grafted on a native reaction, or a substitute for a native reaction which the same object originally tended to provoke. The teacher's art consists in bringing about the substitution or complication; and success in the art presupposes a sympathetic acquaintance with the reactive tendencies natively there" (p. 42). Even interest in academic material could be generated through the process of association. Material not interesting in itself could be made interesting by being associated with material that a child already finds interesting—"thus things not interesting in their own right borrow an interest which becomes as real and as strong as that of any natively interesting thing" (p. 74). The teacher's task is to discover what the child finds inherently interesting and make the appropriate connections to the novel task or activity. And what do children find inherently interesting? All things wed to their own personal selves. Connect that to be taught to personal relevance, and the teacher is nearly home.

An experienced and dedicated teacher, James did not imagine that the teacher's task was anything but challenging and arduous. The blueprint for effective teaching, however, was simple enough: Be aware of the child's native interests, bring forth the child's existing knowledge regarding the material to be presented, present material in a straightforward and clear manner, and carefully connect the new knowledge to the existing knowledge and to the native interests in a natural, logical, systematic, and telling way. Though the blueprint is clear enough, however, James acknowledged that "the accomplishment is difficult in the extreme" (p. 82), and he took seriously his responsibility to provide as many practical suggestions as possible regarding how these connections could be made, as well as how teachers should practice their craft. He urged them to become familiar with their students' native tendencies if they wished to enlarge their pupils' worlds. It was also important that teachers not attempt to make their students do that which the teacher could not do, for "the deepest spring of action in us is the sight of action in another" (p. 51). They should also take care not to "preach" to their charges or present information in abstract terms. *Talks* abounds with passages that exemplify the manner in which James sought to stimulate a teacher's instructional strategies:

If the topic be highly abstract, show its nature by concrete examples; if it be unfamiliar, make it figure as part of a story; if it be difficult, couple its acquisition with some prospect of personal gain. Above all things, make sure that it shall run through certain inner changes, since no unvarying object can possibly hold the mental field for long. Let your pupil wander from one aspect to another of your subject, if you do not wish him to wander from it altogether to something else, variety in unity being the secret of all interesting talk and thought. (p. 84)

The difference between interesting and dull teachers, according to James, is simply the inventiveness with which they go about the process of mediating the associations and connections necessary to learning. On the argument of whether an effective teacher is made or born, however, James again landed on the side of biology—"When all is said and done, the fact remains that some teachers have a naturally inspiring presence and can make their exercises interesting, whilst others simply cannot. And psychology and general pedagogy here confess their failure, and hand things over to the deeper spring of human personality to conduct the task" (pp. 80–81).

It is not difficult to credit James' educational philosophy as contributing to the child-centered movement that progressive education would launch or to the self-oriented, child-centered approach that humanistic educators would subsequently propose. But it is important to remember that he was rather more of a traditional at heart. In fact, James was more progressive regarding how children should be taught than he was regarding the aims of their education. He had no patience for those who preached permissiveness in educational practices, and there is little doubt but that he would have viewed the excesses of the humanistic movement with some distress. When a teacher who attended one of his lectures wrote him to complain that his emphasis on the critical importance of interest and perceived relevance had sounded to her like a suggestion that rigorous, uninteresting material should be abandoned, he made a point to alter his text to be clear than he was suggesting no such thing. "Soft pedagogics," he cautioned his listeners, "have taken the place of the old steep and rocky path to learning. But from this lukewarm air the bracing oxygen of effort is left out. It is nonsense to suppose that every step in education *can* be interesting. The fighting impulse must often be appealed to" (p. 51). James was also forthright in declaring that competitive classroom environments best foster learning—"The feeling of rivalry lies at the very basis of our being . . . no runner running all alone on a race-track will find in his own will the power of stimulation which his rivalry with other runners incites, when he feels them at his heels, about to pass" (pp. 50–51).

Although James emphasized continuously that habit and automatic responding were responsible for nine hundred and ninety-nine thousandths of an individual's daily activity, the one-thousandth remaining was critical to him, for it is here that individuals exercise free will. James' brand of associationism was not the passive compounding of the British associationists (Hilgard, 1987) or of the early proponents of conditioning in learning. For James, proactive processes such as interest and will, as well as reactive processes such as self-reflection and self-evaluation, could determine the actions that result from the associations created, just as they could determine the "prepotency" of the things associated. His emphasis on the importance of these processes notwithstanding, however, James was often criticized for emphasizing that individuals possess free will while simultaneously contending that they are, essentially, creatures of the habits they have created.

The purpose of education, and the teacher's primary concern, should be to "ingrain into the pupil that assortment of habits that shall be most useful to him throughout life. Education is for behavior, and habits are the stuff of which behavior consists" (p. 58). But the purpose of inculcating habits is to help create thoughtful, independent, generous, and energetic citizens who can guide the democracy that will soon be in their charge (Miller, 1997). The central aim of education, thus, is not to serve as a vehicle for transmitting information but rather to help students learn how to evaluate the information available to them, and this evaluation is accompanied by a moral imperative—"See to it now, I beg you," he pleaded with his audiences, "that you make freemen of your pupils by habituating them to act, whenever possible, under the notion of a good. Get them habitually to tell the truth, not so much through showing them the wickedness of lying as by arousing their enthusiasm for honor and veracity" (p. 113). As it would be for Dewey, the school was for James especially suited to build a student's character and impart democratic values—"only by sharing our individual experiences and pooling our knowledge [is] it possible to gain a better grasp of things, devise better ways of living together, and move toward a more democratic, tolerant, and humane world" (p. 164).

In all, James put forth a psychology of education consistent with his functionalist, pluralist, and pragmatic positions. It is a child-centered psychology primarily in the sense that James urged educators to familiarize themselves with the needs and interests of their students so that teaching practices can be geared at making the associations and connections necessary to ensure effective learning. But James never confused acquaintance with the needs of students with acquiescence to their whims. Although certainly progressive and nontraditional for its day, James' educational psychology today would be described as a traditional, almost old-fashioned, no-nonsense view of teaching and learning in which freedom and compulsion each play its appropriate role (Barzun, 1983). It is an educational psychology that abounds with references to rigor, effort, ambition, competition, pugnacity, and pride. It is in many ways a combative view of teaching and learning, as James exhorts his teachers to struggle for their students' attention, to rouse in them "the fighting impulse." James' commonsense psychology appealed to the teachers in his audience. It is likely that it would appeal also to modern audiences. James said the sorts of things that parents want to hear from their child's teacher during a teacher conference.

But James' educational psychology also abounds with references to character, civility, patience, democracy, wisdom, self-appreciation, the cultivation of sensitivity, volition, and even love. *Talks to Teachers* ends with James' observation that "I cannot but think that to apperceive your pupil as a little sensitive, impulsive, associative, and reactive organism, partly fated and partly free, will lead to a better intelligence of all his ways. Understand him, then, as such a subtle little piece of machinery. And if, in addition, you can also see him *sub specie boni*, and love him as well, you will be in the best possible position for becoming perfect teachers" (p. 131). One need only cast a casual glance at the current American landscape

to see that attending to the personal concerns and character of students is both a noble and necessary enterprise.

THE JAMESIAN TRADITION

Few would argue that James' ideas have had a pronounced influence on philosophy, politics, sociology, religion and theology, literature, and, through the pragmatic philosophies of Supreme Court justices Oliver Wendell Holmes and Louis Brandeis, even jurisprudence (see Morris, 1950; Posnock, 1997). In each of these areas James was and continues to be widely read and studied. Many prominent figures have expressed their admiration for James and acknowledged their intellectual debt. Most prominent among these have been John Dewey, George Herbert Mead, Charles Cooley, Josiah Royce, Charles Peirce, Gordon Allport, Reinhold Niebuhr, Gardner Murphy, and Henry Murray, as well as a number of James' students, including E. L. Thorndike (an admirer but not a follower), Dickenson Miller, E. B. Holt, Robert Frost, Gertrude Stein, James Angell, Walter Lippmann, and W. E. Dubois, who once said that "my two best friends in life have been my mother and William James" (Taylor, 1992). But what can be said of his lasting influence, of his legacy, on psychology? Is the Jamesian tradition alive and well in the field as it enters a new century?

When the American Psychological Association celebrated its 75th anniversary in 1977, David Kreech described William James as "our father who begat us" (Barzun, 1983, p. 298). But it is easier to recognize James' contribution to the origin of the discipline than it is to evaluate the lasting contribution of his ideas. In mainstream psychology, the first three decades of the 20th century were dominated by John Watson's experimentalist views, characterized by fierce polemics against introspective, mentalist psychologists such as James. Until a scant two decades ago, B. F. Skinner's operant conditioning theory vied for supremacy with Freud's psychodynamic views. Clearly, neither Watson's experimentalism, Skinnerian behaviorism, nor Freud's psychoanalysis were in concert with a Jamesian view of human functioning, and so it cannot be said that James' views held any real sway in American psychology during the decades when these movements were prominent. More recently, cognitive psychology, influenced by technological advances and by the advent of the computer, which became the movement's signature metaphor, has become the dominant force in American psychology.

Because the current wave of cognitive theorists and researchers emphasize internal, mental events, one might well think that the Jamesian tradition has resurfaced after the dominance of behaviorism. Indeed, some of the questions of cognitive psychology are questions that would surely have interested James—questions about automaticity, encoding and decoding of human thinking, information processing strategies, higher-order thinking, and problem-solving. But this new psychology, part artificial intelligence, part linguistics, and part logic and philosophy

of science (Myers, 1992), has itself developed a mechanistic mind set and shied away from exploring the issues that were of primary concern to James—issues related to self and self-belief, to will, to introspection (Bruner, 1990, 1996). Some have argued that the new cognitive psychology has nothing of a Jamesian character at all (Robinson, 1993).

It is difficult to gauge how the Jamesian tradition has fared in American psychology. Perhaps Hunt (1993) summed it up well when he concluded that "James' influence on psychology, though great, was fragmented; though pervasive, was never dominant. James avoided creating a system, founded no school, trained few graduate students, and had no band of followers" (p. 164). Taylor (1996) similarly concluded that James paved a road that most psychologists have not taken. As for pragmatism, the Jamesian type has long disappeared from mainstream psychology (Robinson, 1993).

If these appraisals are correct, James bears a measure of responsibility for his lack of concentrated influence on the discipline. There is little disagreement that he often expounded ideas in ways that appeared either inconsistent or out-and-out contradictory, and much ink has been spilled on what Allport (1943) called the "productive paradoxes" of William James. For example, in the *Principles* he argued against unconscious mental states whereas later, in the *Varieties*, he argued for "subliminal consciousness." His description of the role of habit seems often at odds with his views on self and personal volition. When he was criticized for putting forth arguments both for determinism and free-will, he explained that the science of psychology could quite safely adopt a posture of determinism despite the fact that free will was true. James' associationist tendencies may easily be viewed as inconsistent with his view of self as purposive and selectively conscious, not to mention with his insistence that individuals are endowed with free will (Allport, 1943; Boring, 1942). In fact, depending on the interpretation of his words and meanings, he can as easily be described a committed phenomenologist (Boring, 1942) or as a staunch supporter of behaviorist thinking (Dewey, 1940). Many have long claimed that James was instrumental in the success of the behaviorist movement by promulgating some of the basic tenets of associationist thinking. Indeed, some of the origins of stimulus-response can be traced to James' description of "impression" and "expression" (Bolton, 1930). When one scholar went in search of James to gain support for one of his contentions, he found ample evidence with which to buttress his position but found also ample evidence to contradict it. "Could anything," he vented with frustration, "be more perverse!" (James, 1892/1961, p. xx).

James responded to the charge that he was inconsistent by arguing that no author could be understood if pieces of his thinking were carelessly considered in isolation or taken out of context. After reading a dissertation in which one of his students pointed out a number of inconsistencies in some of the arguments that James put forth, he testily responded that "you take utterances of mine written at different dates, for different audiences, belonging to different universes of discourse and string them together as the abstract elements of a total philosophy which you then

show to be inwardly incoherent" (Simon, 1998, p. xvi). For James, "a man's vision is the great fact about him" (James, 1909/1977, p. 20), and capturing the "center" of that vision could only be accomplished through "an act of imagination" (Bjork, 1997, p. xiii).

Allport (1943) put the issue of inconsistency in perspective when he observed that one major reason for the Jamesian paradoxes is that, unlike most psychologists, James was willing to take the persistent "riddles of psychology" head on. Moreover, in James, wrote Allport, "we are not dealing with smart rhetorical paradoxes, each of which seems true enough in separate contexts but irreconcilable when juxtaposed" (p. 115). We are dealing instead with a pragmatic thinker attempting to piece together the fragments of a loosely joined universe. In truth, of course, we also have in James a man "hankering for the good things on both sides of the road" (James, 1907/1975, p. 14). It bears recalling that Emerson, who had crafted his own position statement on the issue of foolish consistency, was William James' godfather.

In addition to being perverse regarding consistency, there is little doubt James suffered from what Dewey (1933) would describe as lack of "whole-heartedness" about psychology. Quite simply, psychology could not contain William James, and its questions could not maintain his interest for very long. His interdisciplinary mind could not prevent the divided interest with which he approached the discipline. This given the fact that James did not deliberately try to be interdisciplinary; "he could think no other way" (Bjork, 1997). For this reason, James seems to be everywhere in psychology, but in no particular or concentrated place (Taylor, 1992). Given the richness of his thinking, not to mention what he did accomplish, one wonders what else he might have accomplished had this "unsystematic psychologist" (Hilgard, 1987) but lingered a while longer on one line of thought.

Although James' psychology has not persisted in America in anything like its original form, it is remarkable to note the almost hypnotic lure he continues to exercise on individual members of the discipline and the attention he regularly receives. During the past two decades it seems that no year goes by without a new book on James or a retrospective of some sort. And it seems that James is always there when a movement requires an advocate, even if that advocacy is typically discovered only in retrospect. He influenced the behaviorist onslaught on psychology, but when the humanists looked around in search of an antidote for behaviorism, they too stumbled on to William James and his plea for a psychology centered on the individual, a psychology receptive to the importance of self-processes and introspection. Current social cognitive ideas regarding the reciprocal nature of determinism (Bandura, 1986) also owe to the Jamesian view of human functioning in which individuals and environments influence each other reciprocally.

If the influence that William James has had on the general field of psychology can be described as foundational but uneven, what of his influence on education and on the psychology of education? In 1903 John Dewey referred to James' *Principles* as the "spiritual progenitor" of the progressive education movement that

Dewey was launching at the University of Chicago (Morris, 1950). Educational reforms inspired by Dewey were influenced by James' functional and pluralistic psychology, and James' "democratic temperament," as well as his argument that education should serve the aims of democracy, also found its way into Dewey's movement. James' ideas also served as foundational for the scientific pedagogy that G. Stanley Hall and Edward L. Thorndike would later promulgate.

Psychological theories have always had an influence on education, and there is evidence that James' educational ideas were embraced by the educational community of his day. Writing a year after James' death, Baldwin (1911) observed that James' educational theory had served as the prevailing influence on most educators during the last two decades of James' life, particularly as regarding James' call for attention to self-processes and to the needs and dispositions of the child. Baldwin contended also that James was primarily, though not exclusively, an educational psychologist. This bit of overstatement was no doubt due to the fact that Baldwin was writing what amounted to a combination tribute article and eulogy for the new *Journal of Educational Psychology*.

What are we to make, then, of the influence on modern educational psychology of James' propositions related to the psychological constructs that he believed important? Some have fared well and are thriving. For example, reviewing the current state of knowledge related to theories and principles of motivation for the 1996 *Handbook of Educational Psychology*, Graham and Weiner observed that current research in educational psychology "reflects what is probably the main new direction in the field of motivation—the study of the self" (p. 77). Self-constructs are so pervasive in research on academic motivation that Graham and Weiner concluded that the self is on the verge of dominating the field. Interest and research on habit also continues to thrive, although the construct now travels under the guise of automaticity. Motivation researchers are also active in their study of interest, perceived value, attention, memory processes, modeling and imitation, and transfer. And of course, Vygotsky's (1978) social constructivism, a view of meaning construction in line with James' own theory of knowledge, seems today to have caught the imagination of many teachers, teacher educators, and researchers.

The renewed attention to a student's sense of self and its relationship to competence focuses on the critical aspects of self-awareness and personal cognition that James believed vital to a study of psychology and which he so strongly expounded (see Markus, 1990; Smith, 1992; Strube, Yost, & Bailey, 1992). It focuses, also, on the powerful influence of self-beliefs in academic functioning, self-beliefs such as self-concept, self-efficacy, self-schemas, and possible selves. Similarly, the current interest in conceptual change can be traced to James' vivid description of this process. In fact, I believe that no account of the process of conceptual change and allegiance to ideas is as clear and compelling as James' account of belief alteration, of how an individual settles into a new opinion (James, 1907/1975). Moreover, there is renewed appreciation in some quarters of educational psychology for the role of context in psychological descriptions and prescriptions.

On the whole, however, I am uncertain as to whether James would look kindly either on the major questions with which educational psychology typically concerns itself or with the manner in which it goes about seeking the answers to the questions that would interest him. Current fascination with self constructs, constructivism, and social cognition notwithstanding, the core of educational psychological research continues embedded in the mechanistic aims of positivist science (Bruner, 1990, 1996; House, 1991). The aim of researchers is typically to "discover a set of transcendent human universals—even if those universals are hedged by specifications about 'cross-cultural' variations" (Bruner, 1990, p. 20). For all that educators and educational psychologists deplore decontextualism, the quest for universal truths is not only prevalent but deeply entrenched in educational psychology classes and teacher education programs. Although in these constructivist times no one disputes Austin's (1962) premise that it takes a meaning to catch a meaning, more than a fair amount of what is taught in educational psychology courses consists of learning how to decontextualize—how to categorize behavior, personality, thinking styles, environmental events, and even self-beliefs in the abstract terms that theoretical formulations employ and that educational research thrives on. It goes without saying that these tendencies toward universal absolutes and nomothetic practices would strike at the very core of James' pluralistic and idiographic sensibilities.

Following the habits of its parent discipline, educational psychology continues to show impatience with modes of inquiry and analysis not reducible to quantities and not assessable statistically. Too often, the "neat little studies" (Bruner, 1996) populating the field's journals seem to amount to little more than methods in search of a problem (Robinson, 1993). Had the zest for statistical analysis been as prevalent in his day as it is in ours, no doubt James would have aimed his verbal darts at those of us who traffic nearly exclusively in numbers—"I for my part cannot but consider the talk of the contemporary sociological school about averages and general laws and predetermined tendencies, with its obligatory undervaluing of the importance of individual differences, as the most pernicious and immoral of fatalisms" (James, 1897/1956, p. 262). As Robinson (1993) observed, pluralism requires an ideographic psychology skeptical, if not scornful, of "every form of statistical lumping and clumping" (p. 642).

It is not incongruous to suggest that the man who provided "principles" of psychology, presented psychology as a science, and populated his lectures to teachers with maxims would reject universal prescriptions, nomothetic theorizing, and over reliance on statistical findings. James (1909/1978) always underscored the point that "to consider hypotheses is surely always better than to dogmatize" (p. 47), and he would heartily agree with Cronbach's (1975) caution that "when we give proper weight to local conditions, any generalization is a working hypothesis, not a conclusion" (p. 125). James (1907/1975) proffered his principles with frequent warnings about the need for situated and contextual understandings of phenomena—"what we say about reality depends on the perspective into which we throw it" (p. 118).

He knew also that scientific principles are never derived through statistical analysis and that the ideology of accumulated observations and generalizations drawn from statistical results is incompatible with nomothetic theorizing (see Hammond, 1966; Lewin, 1935). He would argue that what characterizes good science is that it tries to elucidate something particular about a phenomenon, something related to other phenomena that also have to do with particulars.

What, then, would be the aspirations of an educational psychology grounded on the Jamesian tradition? One need not look far to imagine it—deeply contextual, pragmatic, individualistic, functionalist, phenomenological, pluralistic, interdisciplinary and multifaceted, unapologetically eclectic. My time is nearly up, and so I will briefly touch on only one of those aspirations. A Jamesian educational psychology would be in constant dialogue with other social sciences, with the arts and humanities, and even with the "hard" sciences. Interest in and attention to interdisciplinary scholarship has of late soared in Academe. Many have contended, however, that the interdisciplinary dialogue that takes place between most psychology departments and other departments of a university takes place primarily in the other departments (Bruner, 1996; Derry, 1992; Gardner, 1992; Taylor, 1996). It is not unusual for professors of language arts, philosophy, anthropology, sociology, history, or law to profess on psychological interpretations of the people or texts relevant to their discipline, but it is unusual for psychology professors to profess on matters and problems beyond their own discipline. Classes on the psychology of ethics or religion are more likely to be found in departments of religion or colleges of theology than in departments of psychology (Taylor, 1996). Gardner (1992) has argued that cognitive psychology has itself been appropriated by other disciplines. In educational psychology, being interdisciplinary too often means including a variable from a competing theoretical perspective into one's own statistical model. More important, perhaps, a Jamesian educational psychology would be in constant dialogue with schools and with students, and it would endeavor to convey its theoretical insights and research findings directly and unequivocally to teachers, school administrators, and makers of educational policy.

Let me complete this transparent tribute to William James by ending it as he ended his essay, "The Will to Believe," with a portion of a passage from Fitz James Stephen that he deeply admired. For James to close such a personal essay with the words of another, he must have believed them to have special import.

What do you think of yourself? What do you think of the world? These are questions with which all must deal as it seems good to them. They are riddles of the Sphinx, and in some way or other we must deal with them . . . In all important transactions of life we have to take a leap in the dark . . . if we decide to leave the riddles unanswered, that is a choice; if we waver in our answer, that too, is a choice: but whatever choice we make, we make it at our peril.

Will educational psychology aspire to embrace a Jamesian tradition—to reformulate the manner in which it construes meaning, rethink the questions it finds

significant, expand the methods through which it seeks answers to the questions it has selected, and reexamine the way it looks at itself and the way it looks at the world? Such redefinition and altering of purpose would require long and thoughtful introspection. It would require pragmatically assessing the cash value that the broader world of education places on the fruits of its labors. It would require the breaking of well-established mental habits and settling into new opinions. It would require talking to teachers again.

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NOTES

1. Biographical sources include Barzun (1983), Bjork (1997), Hunt (1993), Lewis (1991), King (1992), Mathiesen (1947), Miller (1997), Moore (1965), Perry (1935a, 1935b, 1958), and Simon (1998).
2. The actual date is difficult to pin down. Some sources list the date as 1891 (e.g., Simon, 1998). Bird Baldwin (1911), writing but a year after James's death, provided the specific date of October 27, 1891, for the first lecture. Other authoritative sources give the date of 1892 (e.g., Barzun, 1983; Bolton, 1930; Perry, 1935b; Paul Woodring in his introduction to James' *Talks to Teachers*, 1958). James himself writes in the preface to the book that "In 1892 I was asked by the Harvard Corporation to give a few public lectures on psychology to the Cambridge teachers." Subsequently, I have selected 1892. Of course, one should not take James' memory as authoritative—"I myself 'founded' the instruction in experimental psychology at Harvard in 1874–75, or 1876, I forget which," James once wrote (Bolton, 1930, p. 85).
3. Unless otherwise noted, page numbers provided are from James' (1899/1958) *Talks to Teachers*.

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