

The Reception of William James in Continental Europe

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[Oral Text Draft]

"Il a pu passer en Amérique pour le plus cosmopolite
et en Europe pour le plus américain des philosophes"
Maurice Le Breton, *La personnalité de William James*, 1929, 35

1. Introduction

"Growing up zigzag" is the title that Robert Richardson assigns to the section dedicated to William James's early years in his well-known biography. Travelling with his family, James attended schools not only in the United States and England, but in France, Switzerland and Germany, and was also privately tutored. According to Louis Menand, "when William was thirteen [1855], William and Henry had attended together at least ten different schools"². On May 26th 1858, William writes to his friend Ed Van Winkle from London:

We have now been three years abroad. I suppose you would like to know whether our time has been well spent. I think that as a general thing, Americans had better keep their children at home. I myself have gained in some things but have lost in others. We have got a general knowledge & *education* which we could never have acquired at home, but on the other hand we have not gone through the general routine which we should have done in America.³

This early observation of sixteen-year-old William already suggests a permanent tension in James. Throughout all his life he was "a nostalgic cosmopolitan, flying from perch to perch, now yearning for home, now equally eager to escape"⁴. He was fluent in French and German, and at least competent in Italian⁵, and traveled a lot throughout Europe. As Jack Barbalet has written⁶,

¹ I am very grateful to Edmundo Balsemao Pires for his kind invitation to take part in this William James centennial celebration in Coimbra. My paper —of which I presented an earlier version in September in the conference held in Oxford by the Rothermere American Institute under the general title "William James and the Transatlantic Conversation: Pragmatism, Pluralism & Philosophy of Religion"—aspires to explore the main lines of James's reception in Europe. I am really grateful to Giovanni Maddalena, Erik Norvelle, Jason Panone and Hilary Putnam for their help, and to the Department of Philosophy of Harvard University for its generous hospitality.

² L. Menand, *The Metaphysical Club*, Farrar, Straus & Giroux, New York, 2001, 92; R. W. B. Lewis, *The Jameses: A Family Narrative*, Farrar, Straus & Giroux, New York, 1991, 72.

³ Letter to Ed Van Winkle, May 26, 1858; *Corr.* 4:16; cf. R. D. Richardson, *William James. In the Maelstrom of American Modernism. A Biography*, Houghton Mifflin, Boston, 2006, 23.

⁴ R. B. Perry, *The Thought and Character of William James*, Little, Brown, Boston, 1936, I, 177.

⁵ "Tell Aleck to drop his other studies, learn *Italian* (real Italian, not the awful gibberish I try to speak)", Letter to his wife, 31 March, 1905; *The Letters of William James*, ed. by his son Henry James, Little Brown, Boston, 1926, II, 222; *Corr.* 10:575.

⁶ J. Barbalet, "Classical Pragmatism, Classical Sociology: William James, Religion and Emotion", in *Pragmatism and European Social Theory*, edited by P. Baert and B. Turner, The Bardwell Press, Oxford, 2007, 17-45 [http://www.jackbarbalet.com/uploads/CLASSICAL_PRAGMATISM.pdf].

By the time he died in 1910 at the age of 68 years, William James was undoubtedly the most influential American thinker of his period; indeed, of any period. His European reputation was possibly even higher than his standing in America. James not only represented to European thinkers the American advances in psychology and philosophy, for which he was largely responsible, but he entered into the formation of contemporary European thought as much as he did American.

In view of the horizon of the William James centennial celebration, the aim of my paper is to try to provide a vivid sense of James's personal involvement with Europe and particularly with Continental philosophy, giving some indications about the different countries. The topic is genuinely immense, and I will give only some thick brush strokes for some countries, paying particular attention to Spain as a case study. Hence, my lecture will be divided into three sections, after this introduction: 2) Europe in James; 3) James in Europe: friends and interlocutors; 4) James in Spain: translations and readers. A number of names and facts will be mentioned, since they provide the general framework for understanding the reception of William James in Continental Europe, but I will try in particular to highlight the personal relations between William James and some of the most relevant European thinkers of his time.

2. Europe in James

It is not easy to establish what in James was European and what was American. With the exception of the year he passed in Newport (1858-59), he lived in Europe from the 13th year of his life until the 19th, "the most fertile years in new experiences, where the spirit is most eager to know", as his early biographer Le Breton writes⁷, and he returned to Europe once and again for health and academic reasons.

James came back to Europe in 1867-68 to recover from his nervous breakdown. He attended physiology lectures in Berlin, stayed in Dresden, took the baths in Teplitz, visited Heidelberg, Geneva, Paris and in November of 1868 he returned to Harvard not really recovered, but to try to finish his medical degree⁸. As is well known, William James credited the reading in April 1870 of the French philosopher Charles Renouvier (1815-1903) and learning of "his definition of free will —sustaining of a thought *because I choose to* when I might have other thoughts"⁹, as a key step in his recovery from depression.

He came back to Europe in October of 1873 (London, Paris, Florence, Rome, Venice, Dresden) and returned to Cambridge in March of 1874 to teach anatomy and physiology at Harvard. In 1880 James was appointed assistant professor of philosophy at Harvard and spent the summer in Europe for "intellectual sustenance": he hoped to meet some of the European philosophers with whom he had been corresponding and to expand his small philosophical 'club'¹⁰. He stayed in London, Heidelberg and the Swiss Alps. James would return to Europe several times in the following years: the sabbatical year 1882-83, alone and "rattling around Europe at a furious pace"¹¹ (Germany, Prague, Venice, Paris and London); with his wife and

⁷ M. Le Breton, *La personnalité de William James*, 1929, Hachette, Paris, 34.

⁸ Cf. L. Simon, *Genuine Reality. A Life of William James*, Harcourt Brace, New York, 1998, ch. 6, "Descent 1866-1870", 102-114.

⁹ William James Diary, 30 April 1870; quoted by L. Simon, *Genuine Reality*, 127.

¹⁰ Cf. L. Simon, *Genuine Reality*, 169.

¹¹ R. D. Richardson, *William James*, 224-225.

children in 1892-93; sabbatical and convalescence in Europe throughout 1899-1902; trip to the Mediterranean with Henry, 1905; Hibbert Lectures at Oxford 1908-09; and the final trip to Europe, March-August 1910, as a last attempt to recover his failing health.

Hundreds of European places, thousands of letters, providing a detailed testimony of his feelings, his meetings and his experiences. Europe invigorated him with its strength and prosperity: "he felt there manly and energetic"¹². In this sense it may also be observed that the Europe familiar to James was —besides England— France, Germany and Switzerland, and in those countries he usually stayed in rich and developed environments. In particular, as Perry notes, "the lack of art in the *environment* made it impossible that James should ever be completely reconciled to the 'American scene'"¹³. For instance, on December 1908, James writes to Charles A. Strong from Cambridge,

On the whole I don't wonder at your choosing to live more and more abroad. We're a thousand years behindhand in so many things; and the *attained* social character of European civilizations generally is more *erfreulich* than those mere suggestions and possibilities of good, that are perhaps more abundant here¹⁴.

In sum, as Perry writes of James, "when he was in America he longed for Europe; when he was in Europe he longed for America (...). His weariness was always associated with the present and communicated a rosy and seductive quality to the absent".¹⁵ During his long stays in Europe James developed a profound ambivalence towards the United States. James's answer in December of 1895 to Carl Stumpf —who had invited him to attend the International Congress of Psychology to be held in Munich in the summer of 1896— is very revealing¹⁶:

I wish for many reasons I could go. Such things keep one from fossilizing and prolong one's possibilities of "adaptation." Nevertheless I have little hope. I ruined myself financially by my last excursion *en famille* to Europe, and nothing but the need of foreign travel for my health could justify so speedy a repetition of the process. Moreover, it unsettles my Americanism (that tender plant) to go too often abroad, and that must be weighed against the intellectual and social advantages of the Congress. It is no light matter to feel foreign in one's native land. I am just beginning to feel American again, when this temptation comes!

As a contrast with this, I cannot resist recalling James's letter to his wife at the end of March 1905 after a two-hour walk through Naples, a Mediterranean city of the *real* Europe:

From ½ past 4 to ½ past six I walked alone through the *old* Naples, hilly streets, paved from house to house and swarming with the very poor, vocal with them too, their voices carry so that every child seems to be calling to the whole street, goats, donkeys, chickens, and an occasional cow mixed in, & no light of heaven getting in doors. The street floor composed of cave like shops, the people doing their work on chairs in the street for the sake of light and in the black inside, beds and a stove visible among the implements of trade. Such light and shade, and grease and grime, and swarm, and apparent amiability would be hard to match. I have come here too late in life, when the picturesque has lost its serious reality. Time was when hunger for it haunted me like a passion, and such sights would have then been the solidest of mental food. I put up then with such inferior substitutional suggestions as Geneva

¹² L. Simon, *Genuine Reality*, 251.

¹³ R. B. Perry, *The Thought and Character of William James*, II, 254

¹⁴ *Corr.* 12:138.

¹⁵ R. B. Perry, *The Thought and Character of William James*, II, 37.

¹⁶ R. B. Perry, *The Thought and Character of William James*, II, 189.

& Paris afforded—but these black old Naples streets are not *suggestions*, they are the reality itself—full orchestra¹⁷.

3. James in Europe: Interlocutors and friends

I have mentioned already how William James credited the reading of the French philosopher Charles Renouvier as a decisive step in his recovery from depression. In fact, the relationship and correspondence between them extended over a quarter of a century¹⁸. Intellectual and personal friendship and fame were two really important elements in James's life. He had a lot of friends in Europe, who opened the doors to his relationships and enhanced his fame. On this issue, I love to recall the anecdote from the end of April 1905, when James was in Rome for the Fifth International Congress of Psychology:

He went to the conference hall to register, "and when I gave my name," he told Alice, "the lady who was taking them almost fainted, saying that all Italy loved me, or words to that effect." His effusive admirer called in one of the officers of the congress, who, just as impressed, implored James to give a talk at one of the general meetings. "So I'm in for it again," James admitted with delight, "having no power to resist flattery."¹⁹

The following year 1906, William James published in the *Journal of Philosophy* his well-known paper on "G. Papini and the Pragmatist Movement in Italy". I want to quote only the opening lines:²⁰

American students have so long had the habit of turning to Germany for their philosophic inspiration, that they are only beginning to recognize the splendid psychological and philosophical activity with which France to-day is animated; and as for poor little Italy, few of them think it necessary even to learn to read her language. Meanwhile Italy is engaged in the throes of an intellectual *rinascimento* quite as vigorous as her political one.

James describes vividly the enthusiasm for pragmatism of Giovanni Papini and the small band associated with the journal *Leonardo* (1903-07): Prezzolini, Vailati, Calderoni, Amendola and others. "The Italian pragmatists," James concludes the paper, "are an extraordinarily well-informed and gifted, and above all an extraordinarily free and spirited and unpedantic, group of writers."²¹ As you may know, there is an historical problem here on the reception of pragmatism in Italy that only recently has started to gain due attention: the appropriation of William James by Mussolini and Italian fascism, after the first World War, in part through the mediation of Papini, but mostly from Mussolini himself, who according to Perry, "not only knew at least fragments of Jamesian doctrine and found them to his liking. He also remembers having made James's personal acquaintance". In his book published in 1935—when *il Duce* still ran Italy—Perry was at pains to do justice to the whole affair.²² A thorough study is still missing, although some steps have been taken in that line suggesting

¹⁷ *Corr.* 10:575.

¹⁸ Cf. R. B. Perry, *The Thought and Character of William James*, chaps. XLI-XLIII. On the 2nd of November of 1872, James writes to Renouvier: "Je puis dire que par elle [votre philosophie] je commence à renaître à la vie morale", *Corr.* 4:430.

¹⁹ *Corr.* 11:17; L. Simon, *Genuine Reality*, 332.

²⁰ W. James, "G. Papini and the Pragmatist Movement in Italy", *Journal of Philosophy, Psychology and Scientific Methods*, III (1906), 337.

²¹ W. James, "G. Papini and the Pragmatist Movement in Italy", 341.

²² See R. B. Perry, *The Thought and Character of William James*, II, 574-9.

that the pragmatist genealogy of fascism is truly unfounded²³. What also can now be said is that this misappropriation of James by fascism had the result of causing in Italy an almost complete neglect of Italian pragmatism until very recently.²⁴

A highlight in the reception of William James's thought and pragmatism in Europe, and in particular in Germany, was the III International Congress of Philosophy, held in Heidelberg in September of 1908, at which the proposals of the pragmatists were in the center of the international debate. James M. Baldwin, Emile Boutroux, Wilhelm Jerusalem, Christine Ladd-Franklin, Emile Meyerson, Hugo Münsterberg, Eugenio d'Ors, Josiah Royce, Ferdinand C. S. Schiller, Giovanni Vailati, and many others attended the conference²⁵. Bergson figures in the program as a keynote speaker, but he was not able to attend due to an untimely illness in Switzerland and was replaced by the president of the conference, the neo-Kantian Wilhelm Windelband.

The first speaker was Josiah Royce on "The Problem of Truth in the Light of Recent Discussion" which opened the general discussion on pragmatism and truth. Royce opposed several forms of pragmatism and all relativism, suggesting as his own position the label of "Absolute Pragmatism."²⁶ According to the reports of the conference, the traditional dominance of Kantism and neo-Kantism of Germany and France (in this country due mainly to the influence of Renouvier) had been challenged by the fresh air of pragmatism coming with juvenile strength from America and England²⁷. The core of the debate was the conflict between the relativistic stance of pragmatism and the metaphysics of idealism, between truths related to real human life and eternal truths. One of the main voices was F. C. S. Schiller arguing that the idea of an "independent, supernatural, eternal, incommutable, unachievable, inapplicable, and useless truth" was a childish delusion: for Schiller, "in its most important sense Truth was a social product"²⁸. In his report of the conference H. Delacroix notices the absence of William James, the "chef d'école" of pragmatism, together with Wundt, Lipps, Flournoy and a few other philosophical luminaries of the day²⁹.

²³ J. P. Diggins, *Mussolini and Fascism. The View from America*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, NJ, 1972, 221-222; G. E. Myers, *William James: His Life and Thought*, Yale University Press, New Haven, CT, 1986, 414-415 and 592-593; G. Maddalena and G. Tuzet, eds., *I pragmatisti italiani tra alleati e nemici*, Albo Versorio, Milano, 2007; G. Maddalena and G. Tuzet, "The Sign of the Four: Italian Pragmatists Retold", *Journal of Speculative Philosophy* (forthcoming).

²⁴ M. Dal Pra, *Studi sul pragmatismo italiano*, Bibliopolis, Naples, 1984; A. Santucci, *Empirismo, pragmatismo, filosofia italiana*, CLUEB, Bologna, 1995.

²⁵ T. Elsenhans (ed.), *Bericht über den III. Internationalen Kongress für Philosophie zu Heidelberg 1.bis 5. September 1908*, Kraus reprint, Neldeln/Liechtenstein, 1974.

²⁶ J. Royce, "The Problem of Truth in the Light of Recent Discussion", in T. Elsenhans (ed.), *Bericht über den III. Internationalen Kongress für Philosophie*, 62-90.

²⁷ Cf. E. Ugarte de Ercilla, "Tercer Congreso Internacional de Filosofía", *Razón y Fe*, XXII (1908), 210-214; "IIIe Congrès International de Philosophie (Heildeberg, 31 août, 5 septembre 1908). Compte Rendu des Séances", *Revue de Métaphysique et de Morale*, XVI (1908), 930-950; G. S. Fullerton, "The Meeting of the Third International Congress of Philosophy, at Heidelberg, August 31 to September 5, 1908", *The Journal of Philosophy, Psychology and Scientific Methods*, 5 (1908), 573-577.

²⁸ F. C. S. Schiller, "Der Rationalistische Wahrheitsbegriff", in T. Elsenhans (ed.), *Bericht über den III. Internationalen Kongress für Philosophie*, 711-719 and his discussion of Royce's paper in the same volume, 92. See also the sketch of D. Tröhler, "Lange as Homeland: The Genevan Reception of Pragmatism", in T. S. Popkewitz, *Inventing the Modern Self and John Dewey. Modernities and the Traveling of Pragmatism in Education*, Palgrave Macmillan, New York, 70.

²⁹ H. Delacroix, "Le IIIe Congrès International de Philosophie. (Septembre 1908)", *Revue Philosophique de la France et de l'Étranger*, 66 (1908), 529; see also, "IIIe Congrès International de Philosophie (Heildeberg, 31 août, 5 septembre 1908). Compte Rendu des Séances", *Revue de Métaphysique et de Morale*, XVI (1908), 928.

James's volume of *Pragmatism* was also published in Germany in 1908, only one year after its original publication, translated by Wilhelm Jerusalem, the Austrian Jewish philosopher and pedagogue. Let us recall the original "Preface":

The pragmatic movement, so-called—I do not like the name, but apparently it is too late to change it— seems to have rather suddenly precipitated itself out of the air. A number of tendencies that have always existed in philosophy have all at once become conscious of themselves collectively, and of their combined mission; and this has occurred in so many countries, and from so many different points of view, that much unconcerted statement has resulted. I have sought to unify the picture as it presents itself to my own eyes, dealing in broad strokes, and avoiding minute controversy. Much futile controversy might have been avoided, I believe, if our critics had been willing to wait until we got our message fairly out.

In that preface of April 1907 William James provides further readings on pragmatism. He mentions John Dewey in America, Schiller in England, four French philosophers (Milhaud, Le Roy, Blondel and de Saily) and a forthcoming book by Papini, but no German philosopher is referred to. In this sense, it is not unwarranted to say that pragmatism was received in Germany with hostility by the academic establishment, which leaned more towards Kantism and Hegelianism. As Perry writes, "although Ernst Mach was an important forerunner of pragmatism, while Simmel and Ostwald were greeted by James as allies, pragmatism gained only a slight foothold in Germany, and that mainly in Austria! Even the three philosophers just mentioned accepted it as an interpretation of method in the physical or social sciences rather than as a philosophy."³⁰

The sympathetic correspondence with Jerusalem beginning in 1900, who was an early admirer of James and his translator into German, is very revealing. For instance, in November 1909 Jerusalem writes him from Vienna: "The misunderstandings of and the opposition against Pragmatism lies deeper than I thought at first. Science wants a theoretic or static, a timeless truth..." At the end of the letter, Jerusalem adds: "Of my translation almost 500 copies are sold, not much but more than nothing. There is hope then, that little by little we may get convertites and with their help to take arms against the barren speculations of pure logic."³¹ As we now know, the first World War changed the entire intellectual European stage, and both pragmatism and idealism soon became part of the past. The strength of Husserl³² and the attraction of Heidegger, in spite of their intellectual connections with pragmatism, eclipsed the figure of William James totally.

Of course there are strong links between William James and several German scientists of his time like Hermann von Helmholtz, Wilhelm Wundt and Carl Stumpf. The continued relations between James and German universities may be perhaps epitomized by the hiring of Hugo Münsterberg to take charge of the Harvard laboratory of psychology in order to replace James³³. All the letters between William James and his German correspondents are nowadays a real treasure of intellectual delight, but it seems to me that there is no real German philosopher amongst his more active correspondents. American pragmatism and German

³⁰ R. B. Perry, *The Thought and Character of William James*, II, 579-580.

³¹ Letter From W. Jerusalem, 6 November 1909, *Corr.* 12: 361-362.

³² M. Herzog, "William James and the Development of Phenomenological Psychology in Europe", *History of the Human Sciences*, VIII (1995), 29-46.

³³ See, R. B. Perry, *The Thought and Character of William James*, II, ch. LX, "James and Münsterberg", 138-154.

philosophy were in opposite camps with a very difficult middle ground³⁴. As Hilary Putnam writes in his preface to volume 10 of James's correspondence, "absolute idealism was indeed to be swept from the scene but not by pragmatism, although pragmatist polemics may have played a part in its demise." It was replaced, first in England and later in the United States by what is now called analytic philosophy. But, "however, —Putnam adds— pragmatism is presently undergoing a revival; the story is certainly not yet finished!"³⁵

Mentioning Vienna, it is fair to make a brief reference to James's relation with Freud. Since this has already been studied³⁶, I want only to mention here James's impression of Freud after meeting him during the twentieth annual celebration of Clark University³⁷. He writes to his Swiss friend Théodore Flournoy: "I hope that Freud and his pupils will push their ideas to their utmost limits, so that we may learn what they are. They can't fail to throw light on human nature, but I confess that he made on me personally the impression of a man obsessed by fixed ideas. I can make nothing in my own case with his dream theories."³⁸ In fact, the boom of Freud and psychoanalysis after first World War and the fading away of James's optimistic account of emotions has a lot to do with Freud's conception of emotions as "irrational forces that, if not properly discharged, lead to neurotic symptoms". As Barbalet concludes this comparison, "Freud's account resonated perfectly with a political, social and economic world that was experiencing not only the irrationality and violence of total war, but also economic depression and dislocation."³⁹

But it is time to move to Paris, since France was the golden door for James's introduction in Europe. Not only Gaston Milhaud, Édouard Le Roy and Maurice Blondel, mentioned in the preface of "Pragmatism", but in particular Henri Bergson and Émile Boutroux were friends and interlocutors of William James in the first decade of the nineteenth century. Also, a really interesting area of research is the impact of James's thought and pragmatism on the French Catholic environment. Very recently a collection of studies on this issue has been published under the general title of *The Reception of Pragmatism in France & The Rise of Roman Catholic Modernism, 1890-1914*, edited by David G. Schultenover.⁴⁰ A similar full-length study for each country would be required to get a clearer view of James's impact in Continental Europe.

³⁴ An essential study about the impact of American pragmatism in Europe, the misunderstanding of pragmatism as a utilitarian theory of truth in Germany (including some connections with Nazism) is H. Joas, *Pragmatism and Social Theory*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1993.

³⁵ H. Putnam, "Introduction", *Corr.* 10: xxxii-xxxiii.

³⁶ For instance, J. L. Singer, "Daydreaming, Consciousness, and Self-Representations: Empirical Approaches to Theories of William James and Sigmund Freud", *Journal of Applied Psychoanalytic Studies*, 5 (2003), 461-483; R. Segal, "James and Freud on Mysticism", in J. Carrette, ed. *William James and "The Varieties of Religious Experience": A Centenary Celebration*, Routledge, London, 2005, 124-32.

³⁷ Cf. S. Rosenzweig, *The Historic Expedition to America (1909). Freud, Jung and Hall the King-Maker*, Rana House, St. Louis, MO, 1994, 2nd. ed.

³⁸ Letter to Flournoy, 28 Sept 1909, *Corr.* 12: 334.

³⁹ J. Barbalet, "William James: Pragmatism, Social Psychology and Emotions", *European Journal of Social Theory*, 7 (2004), 337-353. Jack Barbalet has studied the impact of William James on two key figures of contemporary sociology, Max Weber and Emile Durkheim: "Classical Pragmatism, Classical Sociology: William James, Religion and Emotion", in *Pragmatism and European Social Theory*, edited by P. Baert and B. Turner, The Bardwell Press, Oxford, 2007, 17-45.

⁴⁰ David G. Schultenover, ed. *The Reception of Pragmatism in France & The Rise of Roman Catholic Modernism, 1890-1914*, The Catholic University of America Press, Washington, DC, 2009.

As Perry writes, "without any doubt the most important philosophical and personal attachment of James's later years was that which he formed with Bergson."⁴¹ Henri Bergson was a towering figure in the French philosophical scene. The friendly affinity between both philosophers is clear and mutually acknowledged: "Neither philosopher ever made any claims of priority; each rejoiced to find the other in possession of the truth, and was almost extravagantly appreciative of the other's merit. The similarity of their doctrine", Perry rightly asserts, "is not complete or extraordinary — and does not disparage the originality of either."⁴² I will cite only one quotation from Bergson's letter of July 20, 1905 to James:

[...] to my mind, one of the most striking arguments that one can invoke (from the external point of view) in favor of American "pragmatism" and the "new philosophy" in France is precisely that these two doctrines have established themselves independently of one another, with different points of departure and different methods. When, under such conditions, two doctrines tend to coincide, there is a good chance that both of them are in the vicinity of the truth.⁴³

The second great name to be mentioned is Émile Boutroux, who was the best friend of William James in France during the last two years of James's life. Although their philosophical positions were diverse —as with Bergson— "their friendship ripened quickly into love", Perry writes. As James acknowledged six weeks before his death: "To have known you is one of the pleasantest episodes of my life, and the memory of it will always be a satisfaction."⁴⁴ Only a few months after James's death Boutroux would publish his well-known introductory book to James's life and philosophy⁴⁵.

4. The case of Spain: Early translations and readers⁴⁶

William James sailed on the steamer *Spain* from New York to Europe on October 10th, 1873, but he did not visit Spain nor stay for any length of time in any other Spanish-speaking country throughout all his life. Nevertheless, James's thought and books were received early on in Spain by prominent scholars such as Miguel de Unamuno (1864-1936), José Ortega y Gasset (1883-1955), and Eugenio d'Ors (1881-1954). In fact, it is possible to assert that, contrary to a superficial impression, there is a deep affinity between the central questions of James's thought and the topics and problems addressed by the most relevant Hispanic thinkers of the twentieth century.

Without any doubt, a sign of the warm reception of William James in Spain is the early translation of a number of four of his books during his lifetime. The first translation of James into Spanish appeared as early as 1900. It was a two-volume translation of the *Principles of Psychology* (1890), by Domingo Barnés, a well-known Spanish educator of his

⁴¹ R. B. Perry, *The Thought and Character of William James*, II, 599.

⁴² R. B. Perry, *The Thought and Character of William James*, II, 600. On the contrasts between Bergson and James, besides Perry, ch. LXXXVI, "James and Bergson: Relations and Influences", 599-617, see the volume of H. M. Kallen, *William James and Henri Bergson. A Study in Contrasting Theories of Life & Responses and Reviews*, Thoemmes Press, Bristol, 2001, and H. Putnam, "Introduction", *Corr.* 10: xxxvi-xxxii.

⁴³ Letter of 20 July 1905, R. B. Perry, *The Thought and Character of William James*, II, 616-617.

⁴⁴ Letter of 16 July 1910, *Corr.* 12: 570.

⁴⁵ E. Boutroux, *William James*, Paris, Armand Colin, 1911.

⁴⁶ This last section is an abridged version of the paper co-authored with Izaskun Martínez, "Unamuno's Reading of The Varieties of Religious Experience and its Context", in *Fringes of Religious Experience. Cross-perspectives on William James's The Varieties of Religious Experience*, edited by S. Franzese and F. Kraemer, Ontos, Frankfurt, 2007, 157-168.

time, a member of the famous *Institución Libre de Enseñanza*, and an expert in psychology and sociology. Besides the *Principles*, Barnés translated a dozen books by contemporary authors such as John Dewey, Henri Bergson and others.⁴⁷ The second translation of James into Spanish was *Talks to Teachers on Psychology and to Students on Some of Life's Ideals* (1899), which appeared in 1904 translated by Carlos M. Soldevila. Three years later, the first translation of *The Varieties of Religious Experience* into Spanish was completed by Miguel Domenge Mir under the title *Fases del sentimiento religioso. Estudio sobre la naturaleza humana*.⁴⁸

The fourth translation of James into Spanish was *The Will to Believe and Other Essays in Popular Philosophy* in 1909, under the title of *La vida eterna y la fe [Eternal Life and Faith]*.⁴⁹ The translator was Santos Rubiano (1871-1930), an army doctor who was a pioneer in the application of the methods and concepts of modern psychology in the Spanish army. A veteran of the Philippines and North African wars, he was trained as a psychologist at Cornell University in the United States in 1916, funded by the Spanish Ministry of Public Education⁵⁰. In that year Rubiano translated *Psychology. Briefer Course*, which had a second edition in 1930. After the opening page there is a photographic reproduction of a hand-written text from William James dated on the 22nd of March of 1908. The text is the following:

22.III. 08

... and am very glad
to authorize you as my official translator.

Believe me, dear
Doctor, with sincere and
grateful regards, yours
very truly .

Wm James
Dr. Santos Rubiano⁵¹

Rubiano includes a lively “biographical-critical foreword” in his translation of the *Briefer Course*. He writes that in this book “not only does the professor speak, but also the genius and the believer,” and that James “was able to create from his own personality his own method of teaching, and [that] in his personality it was possible to find not only a philosopher but a good man.”⁵² Besides these two works, Rubiano translated *Pragmatism* into Spanish in 1923, and in 1924 *The Meaning of Truth* as well as a new translation of *Talks to Teachers*.⁵³

47 W. James, *Principios de psicología*. Translation by Domingo Barnés. Madrid, Editorial Daniel Jorro, 1900, 2 vols.; 2nd edition, 1909.

48 W. James, *Fases del sentimiento religioso. Estudio sobre la naturaleza humana*. Translation by Miguel Domenge Mir, Barcelona, Carbonell y Esteva, 1907-08, 3 vols.

49 W. James, *La vida eterna y la fe*. Translation by Santos Rubiano. Barcelona, Heinrich, 1909; reprinted as *La voluntad de creer y otros ensayos de filosofía popular*. Madrid, Editorial Daniel Jorro, 1922.

50 Cf. J. Bandrés, and R. Llavona, “Santos Rubiano: la introducción de la psicología científica en el ejército español,” *Psicothema*, IX/3 (1997), 659-669.

51 W. James, *Compendio de psicología*. Translation by Santos Rubiano. Madrid, Editorial Daniel Jorro, 1916; 2nd edition, 1930.

52 S. Rubiano, “William James. Bosquejo biográfico. Nota crítica sobre su ideario psicológico,” xiii.

53 W. James, *Pragmatismo*. Madrid, Editorial Daniel Jorro, 1923; W. James: *El significado de la verdad*. Madrid, Editorial Daniel Jorro, 1924; W. James: *Psicología pedagógica (para maestros). Sobre algunos ideales de la vida (para estudiantes)*. Madrid, Editorial Daniel Jorro, 1924.

Coming now to the original production on James in the Spanish speaking countries, in 1961 Pelayo H. Fernández studied in detail how Miguel de Unamuno read William James, his frequent quotations of James and his marginal notes in the works by James in his library. Fernández's conclusion was that Unamuno's pragmatism was "original with respect to that of the American, from whom he absorbed only complementary features."⁵⁴ However, Izaskun Martínez has convincingly argued that the abundance of facts that Pelayo Fernández lists bears witness to a permanent impact of James on Unamuno's intellectual development.

In the case of José Ortega y Gasset, John Graham published a careful study in which, after noting Ortega's hostility to American pragmatism, he reveals "many basic connections, similarities and points of identity, so that concrete influence and dependence seem more plausible than 'coincidence' between Ortega and James."⁵⁵ Graham gives evidence that Ortega read James early in his career, and that Ortega was aware of James's radical empiricism as having anticipated the central notion of his own "rational-vitalism."⁵⁶ His evidence of James's impact on Ortega by German sources, themselves influenced by James, is especially convincing.⁵⁷

I want to bring attention to what Ortega writes in a footnote in his well-known *What is Philosophy?*: "With this I suggest that in pragmatism, aside its audacity and naivety, *there is something profoundly true*, even though it be centrifugal"⁵⁸. If I understand this passage correctly, what Ortega is trying to say is that pragmatism is a valuable philosophical tradition, but it is alien, foreign ("centrifugal") to the mainstream of European philosophy. Moreover, as Graham noted⁵⁹, there is an autobiographical text of Ortega in which he seems to assert that pragmatism, which began outside the boundaries of the European stage, did not reach its full maturity until it was integrated in the framework of German philosophy, that is, in the mainstream of his own philosophical position⁶⁰. This is for me one of the main avenues for further exploration concerning the overlapping of pragmatism and Hispanic philosophy: if one understands Ortega's thought as a German flourishing of pragmatist roots, it is possible to bring the most distinctive traits of Hispanic philosophy and James's philosophy closer.

In contrast with Ortega, Eugenio d'Ors is perhaps the Hispanic philosopher most conscious of his personal connection with American pragmatism. By 1907 he had defined himself as a pragmatist, driven by the same desires as moved his American counterparts, whom he hoped to outstrip by recognizing an aesthetic dimension of human action that could not be reduced to the merely utilitarian.⁶¹ In fact, d'Ors was able to meet William James in Paris on May of 1910 when James visited Boutroux at the Foundation Thiers and meet there the "intelligent young laureates at the Foundation."⁶² Forty years later, in 1947, in his *El secreto de la filosofía*, which crowned his philosophical career, d'Ors generously

⁵⁴ P. H. Fernández: *Miguel de Unamuno y William James. Un paralelo pragmático*. Salamanca, CIADA, 1961, 13.

⁵⁵ J. T. Graham, *A Pragmatist Philosophy of Life in Ortega y Gasset*, Columbia, MI, University of Missouri Press, 1994, 145.

⁵⁶ J. T. Graham, *A Pragmatist Philosophy of Life in Ortega y Gasset*, 147-152.

⁵⁷ A. Donoso, "Review of Graham's *A Pragmatist Philosophy of Life in Ortega y Gasset*," *Hispania* 78 (1995), 499.

⁵⁸ J. Ortega y Gasset, *¿Qué es filosofía?*, Espasa-Calpe, Madrid, 1982 (4th. ed.), 41 [my italics].

⁵⁹ J. T. Graham, *A Pragmatist Philosophy of Life in Ortega y Gasset*, 146.

⁶⁰ J. Ortega y Gasset, "Medio siglo de filosofía", *Revista de Occidente*, 3 (1980), 14.

⁶¹ E. d'Ors, *Glosari de Xenius*. Barcelona, Tallers Gràfics Montserrat, 1915, II, 373-375.

⁶² R. B. Perry, *The Thought and Character of William James*, II, 567-569; *Corr.* 12: 570.

acknowledges his debt to the American tradition.⁶³ It might be said that William James was present in d'Ors' thought and writings throughout his entire life⁶⁴.

In brief, in Spain William James was received with enthusiasm by some young scholars like Eugenio d'Ors or José María Izquierdo⁶⁵, but the more common reaction was the hostility of the German oriented philosophers and also Scholastic thinkers⁶⁶.

5. Conclusion

As Cushing Strout has written, James was "a cosmopolitan American patriot who could speak to the world"⁶⁷. William James was credited by the historian H. Stuart Hughes with being "the revivifying force in European thought in the decade and a half preceding the outbreak of the First World War."⁶⁸ I deeply agree with this position; nevertheless I am of the opinion that a full study about James's virtual disappearance from Europe after the First World War is now required.

My impression is that the general resurgence of pragmatism over the last decade has also brought about a rediscovery of William James and his thought, as this centennial celebration testifies. My suggestion is that this event is not only a retrospective view of an academic past figure. On the contrary, the recent recovery of James and other figures of Classic American Pragmatism is for me a key factor for overcoming the poverty of naturalism which dominates the contemporary philosophical scene.

⁶³ E. d'Ors, *El secreto de la filosofía*. Barcelona, Iberia, 1947, 12.

⁶⁴ A. González y J. Nubiola, "William James en Eugenio d'Ors", *Anuario Filosófico* XL/2 (2007), 413-433.

⁶⁵ José M^a Izquierdo, *Del Pragmatismo*, Ateneo de Sevilla, Sevilla, 1910; reprinted in 2009. Available at [<http://www.unav.es/gep/IzquierdoDelpragmatismo.pdf>].

⁶⁶ See, for instance, M. Arnáiz, "Pragmatismo y humanismo", *Cultura Española*, 5-6 (1907), 617-627 and 7-8 (1907), 855-867.

⁶⁷ C. Strout, "William James and the Tradition of American Public Philosophers", *Partisan Review*, 48 (2001) [<http://www.bu.edu/partisanreview/archive/2001/3/strout.html>].

⁶⁸ H. Stuart Hughes, *Consciousness and Society: The Reorientation of European Social Thought 1890-1930*, Knopf, New York, 1958, 397.