2015

New Insights into William James's Personal Crisis in the Early 1870s: Part 1. Arthur Schopenhauer and the Origin & Nature of the Crisis

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NEW INSIGHTS INTO WILLIAM JAMES'S PERSONAL CRISIS IN THE EARLY 1870s: PART I. ARTHUR SCHOPENHAUER AND THE ORIGIN & NATURE OF THE CRISIS

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ABSTRACT

This article, the first in a two-part sequence, will cast new light on the well-known "crisis of William James" by presenting evidence regarding the previously unrecognized role of Arthur Schopenhauer's thought in shaping and intensifying the way in which James experienced this crisis. It will also relate Schopenhauer's influence to prior issues that had concerned James, and in an appendix it will provide an overview of other areas in which Schopenhauer seems to have influenced James, both during and after his personal crisis. The second article in this sequence will present evidence in support of the strong possibility that John Bunyan's The Pilgrim's Progress *played a previously unrecognized role in inspiring James's means of defense against the frightening hallucination and panic fear that characterized his crisis. It will also present an argument regarding the probable influence of his defensive measures upon his subsequent views on the nature and importance of attention and will in human life. Along the way, it will identify James's specific, newly discovered copy of Bunyan's* The Pilgrim's Progress *and the specific, newly discovered Bible through which he developed familiarity with the scriptural phrases that helped him get through his ordeal.*

THE STATUS QUO AND RECENT DISCOVERIES

Paul J. Croce (2009) has provided a very thorough review of the extensive literature on "the crisis of William James" as portrayed in James's classic passage on "the worst kind of melancholy" in *The Varieties of Religious Experience* (1902/1985).[1] Croce's carefully articulated contention is that this passage presents a "mannered memory" offered by James as a "teachable moment" within the unfolding argument of his chapter on "The Sick Soul." This is an entirely reasonable conclusion, especially given James's own comments on stylized memory-reports:

> The accounts we give to others of our experiences…we almost always make both more simple and more interesting than the truth. We quote what we should have said or done, rather than what we really said or did; and in the first telling we may be fully aware of the distinction. But ere long the fiction expels the reality from memory and reigns in its stead alone. This is one great source of the fallibility of testimony meant to be quite honest. Especially where the marvellous is concerned, the story takes a tilt that way, and the memory follows the story. (James, 1890/1981, Vol. 1, p. 353)

Over the past two decades, scientific research on false testimony has confirmed James's remarkable insight regarding the "narrative demands" placed upon producers of verbal reports. As Jerome Bruner (2002) has illustrated with examples drawn from law, literature, and life, a considerable amount of "smoothing" and "filling" takes place as actual events, with all their edges and

gaps, are converted into more continuous and coherent accounts. This is now a well-established phenomenon (see, e.g., Loftus et al., 2013, and Schacter, 1995).

Even so, there is good reason – and compelling evidence – to think, as Croce does, that James's report is generally truthful if not, in fact, the Holy Grail of Truth Entire.[2] And that could be the end of it, except that there is more to say about James's crisis and its resolution, prompted in part by the recent discovery of books that were in James's hands just before, and manifestly on his mind during, his hallucinatory encounter with the greenish-skinned, idiotic youth whose image prompted James's panic fear that "*That shape am I*...if the hour for it should strike for me as it struck for him" (James, 1902/1985, p. 134).

Although absolute proof is too much to expect, I believe that a very compelling story can be told (in this article) about how Arthur Schopenhauer's works shaped and intensified the way that James experienced his frightful vision and, furthermore, that the story can be extended (as it will be in Part II of this two-part sequence) to show how a work of John Bunyan's – and more particularly, James's recently discovered personal copy of *The Pilgrim's Progress* (1678-1684/1869) – could have provided a model that James followed in his time of "quivering fear" and "horrible dread" (James, 1902/1985, p. 134). In telling the first part of this story I will connect the issues raised by Schopenhauer's works to a larger set of issues that had concerned James for more than a decade, and (in the next installment) I will show how Bunyan's model of defense against the adversary – or more precisely, the model provided by Christian, Bunyan's pilgrim – very possibly helped James get through his moment of crisis and thus served as the kernel that he nurtured into his later accounts of attention and will, which were so central to his *Principles of Psychology* (1890/1981) and so important to his mature philosophical views. I will also identify the specific, newly discovered Bible (*The Holy Bible*, 1856) that prepared James to follow Christian's example.

DISCOVERIES REGARDING JAMES'S READING OF SCHOPENHAUER

That James read here and there in Arthur Schopenhauer's works has always been known. Though he didn't write much about this reading, James referred to Schopenhauer from time to time in his letters, lectures, manuscripts, and published works. Yet, probably because these references were typically brief, rarely involved sustained analysis, and almost always conveyed a reaction *against* Schopenhauer – or more precisely, against an idea, approach, or tone for which James used Schopenhauer as a mere representative – and also because James, in later years, expressed disdain for Schopenhauer and his philosophy, no one has ever made much of James's relation to Schopenhauer or his thought. In fact, even Ralph Barton Perry, who went further than anyone else (so far as I know), devoted only four out of 1,612 pages in his classic *Thought and Character of William James* (1935) to James and Schopenhauer, mostly to quote a long letter from 1883 that clarified what the more mature James *didn't like* about Schopenhauer and his thought (Vol. 1, pp. 721-724).[3]

Perry did note in passing, however, that James "credited Schopenhauer with being the first among philosophers to speak 'the concrete truth about the ills of life'" (p. 721). That comment bears directly upon the important attraction that Schopenhauer exercised over James, which in turn signals the critical debate that James was waging within himself, throughout the 1860s and early 1870s, regarding the nature of the world, its evils, and the possibility that those evils could be ameliorated through willful efforts on his part and that of others. As this article will show, Schopenhauer played a previously unrecognized role in this inner debate, up to and beyond James's personal crisis.

Before surveying some information that has recently come to light, a review of facts mentioned by Perry (1935) will help to situate the significance of this new information. First, in 1858, a 16-year-old James brandished a copy of "a volume of Schopenhauer" and read "amusing specimens of his delightful pessimism" to his Newport, R.I. friends. Ten years later, in 1868, James bought his own copy of Schopenhauer's major work, *Die Welt als Wille und Vorstellung* (3d ed., 1859). Subsequently, in the early 1870s, he made notebook entries on empiricism and idealism, echoed later in *The Principles of Psychology* (1890/1981), that suggest he had been reading Schopenhauer's *Über die vierfache Wurzel des Satzes vom zureichenden Grunde* (3d ed., 1864). And in 1873 and 1875 respectively, he wrote another notebook entry and a book review that dismissed the kind of "pessimism" for which Schopenhauer was widely known. Finally, in 1877, he was reading *Die Welt als Wille und Vorstellung* as he worked on "The Sentiment of Rationality," a seminal publication that included several references to Schopenhauer when it appeared in 1879 (James, 1879/1978c). The only then-known fact not mentioned by Perry, at least as regards the period that concerns us, is that James cited Schopenhauer in his diary as one of the authors he read in 1869 and 1870.[4]

So it isn't that nothing has been known about James's various contacts with Schopenhauer during his formative years; it's just that little has been made of those contacts, perhaps because (in addition to the reasons given above) James was reading so many authors on so many topics during those years (especially since late 1868, when he purchased Schopenhauer's *magnum opus*), despite his continuing physical and psychological problems.

What has prompted another look at James's relation to Schopenhauer are some facts I discovered while going through the library charging ledgers for both the Harvard College Library and the Boston Athenaeum: James checked out Schopenhauer's *Parerga und Paralipomena* (1851) and Wilhelm Gwinner's *Schopenhauer aus persönlichem Umgange dargestelt* (1862) from the Harvard College Library on January 31, 1867; he took out Gwinner's book again from the same library on December 1, 1869; he withdrew Schopenhauer's book again, though this time from the Boston Athenaeum, on December 22, 1869; he checked out Schopenhauer's *Die beiden Grundprobleme der Ethik* (1841) from the Harvard College Library on January 13, 1870; and finally he took out another book by Schopenhauer, probably *Über die vierfache Wurzel des Satzes vom zureichenden Grunde* (3d ed., 1864), but possibly *Parerga und Paralipomena* or *Die beiden Grundprobleme der Ethik* (the ledger simply indicates Schopenhauer, not the individual volume) from the Harvard College Library on March 7, 1870. Meanwhile he was also reading his own personal copy of *Die Welt als Wille und Vorstellung*.[5]

Clearly, more was going on between James and Schopenhauer than has been realized by scholars in the past, though there are mitigating circumstances for this oversight: not only the obscure and unfrequented location of the library charging records, but more significantly the silence of James himself regarding his reading of Schopenhauer during this period – a silence that is all the more intriguing since he was typically open and even eager to discuss what he was reading, both in his own letters and in conversations with others, which sometimes led to second-hand reports in *their* letters. And besides the silence in his letters and those of others, there is silence in James's diary, notebooks, and other documents. True, some pages and other materials from this period have been destroyed, but those that remain contain nothing about James's *now apparent* extensive reading of Schopenhauer.

It seems reasonable to conjecture that James kept his reading of Schopenhauer to himself because he didn't want to explain or defend this reading to members of his family or to friends who were concerned about his emotional and intellectual state of mind. (Schopenhauer would not have been

on anyone's list of recommended reading for a depressed, sometimes suicidal young man. As noted in the second installment of this two-part sequence, James tried to shield his mother, in particular, from awareness of his disturbed state of mind – unsuccessfully of course.) But whatever the reason for James's silence, we shall see clear evidence of the impact of his encounter with Schopenhauer when we revisit the report of his personal crisis that he published in *The Varieties of Religious Experience* (1902/1985). That evidence is there for all to see, once the doors of perception are opened. As James himself wrote several decades later, "the only things which we commonly see are those which we preperceive, and the only things which we preperceive are those which have been labeled for us" (James, 1890/1981, Vol. 1, p. 420, italics deleted). Although the signs of Schopenhauer's thought are clearly embedded in James's report, no one has yet labeled their provenance or identified their significance. Before saying more about this, however, I need to say a few words about James's personal crisis.

A GENERAL OVERVIEW OF JAMES'S PERSONAL CRISIS

No one is certain about the exact time that James suffered the frightful apparition and fear reported in *The Varieties of Religious Experience*, though the strong consensus, as Croce (2009) has indicated, is sometime in 1870 or thereabouts, most probably in the winter of 1870, but possibly a bit later. In fact, it could well have been associated with that "great dorsal collapse" that James dated "around the 10th or 12[th]," of January, 1870, especially since this physical collapse was accompanied, he said, by "a moral one" that left him questioning what he called "the moral business" (James, 1868-1873, entry for February 1, 1870).[6] For although a full accounting of James's personal crisis would involve extended discussions of his ongoing poor health, frequent depression, occasional suicidal impulses, prolonged career indecision, the declining health and then death of his beloved cousin Minny Temple, and other issues, the core of his crisis – as reported explicitly in *The Varieties of Religious Experience* – was a very specific fear: not a fear of continuing depression, or indecisiveness about his career, or the potential or actual loss of a loved one, or anything else other than the fear that if fate so determined – if the impersonal laws of physical and physiological causation just happened to work out that way – he would go insane just as pitifully and unavoidably as the idiotic youth of his frightful vision.[7]

What grabbed James by the throat and shook him to his innermost being was thus a consequence of a more fundamental fear that "we are nature through and through" and, hence, if his time to go insane were to come, there would be absolutely nothing he could do about it. So, while insanity was the immediate object of his fear during his moment of crisis, it was the more general possibility of *being at the complete, passive mercy of causal forces* that lent such shattering force to his experience, making him panic like a non-swimmer in a sinking life raft in the middle of an ocean. His raft until then had been buoyed, if barely, by a desperate patchwork of hopes regarding "the moral business" mentioned above, held together by a cluster of ideas related to a deep longing to believe in free will and a passionate desire to make a difference in the world, both through opposing the evils he perceived and through his collaborative fellowship with others.[8]

James had struggled with these hopes and associated fears as well as with his too-tentative belief in free will for a good many years, but a death spiral of concerns and apprehensions seems to have come to a head in January, 1870. Even after February 1, when he guessed that he had "about touched bottom," he

continued to struggle until, understandably, he seems to have hit a new bottom when he learned, a day after the fact, that Minny Temple had died on March 8. In any case, James's response to his cousin's death, exacerbated by the intimate communications the two had shared in the months before her death, led to the often cited turning-point of April 29, 1870, when James was moved by his reading of Charles Renouvier's second *Essai de critique générale* (1859) to *choose* to believe in free will: As he famously wrote in his diary, "My first act of free will shall be to believe in free will" (James, 1868-1873). Although this significant moment plays a pivotal role in all of his biographies, it is clear that James wasn't able to follow his intentions as consistently as he had hoped; his willful conviction about free will wavered over the next few years. Even though he moved forward (and upward) in general, the road he trod was rough and uneven.[9] So, whether or not the incident reported in *Varieties* took place at some point between mid-January and late April, 1870, as seems highly probable (and all the more so in light of what follows in this article), James continued to struggle, most commentators agree, until he reached higher ground and stayed there for the most part, following his marriage to Alice Howe Gibbens on July 10, 1878. By that time he had established himself at Harvard, delivered important lecture series in Baltimore and Boston, and begun writing the first articles that would lead, over a long twelve years, to the publication of his *Principles of Psychology* (1890/1981).

Now it is time to tell the story that emerges from my recent discoveries about the extent and timing of James's reading of Schopenhauer.

JAMES'S CRISIS IN LIGHT OF HIS READING OF SCHOPENHAUER

Here are some selected portions of the classic account that James gave of his personal crisis in *The Varieties of Religious Experience*:

> Whilst in this state of ***philosophic pessimism*** and general depression of spirits about my prospects...suddenly there fell upon me...***a horrible fear of my own existence***. Simultaneously there arose in my mind the image of an epileptic patient...with greenish skin, entirely idiotic....This image and my fear entered into a species of combination with each other. ***That shape am I*****, I felt, potentially**. Nothing that I possess can defend me against that fate, if the hour for it should strike for me as it struck for him. ***There was*** such a horror of him, and such ***a perception of my own merely momentary discrepancy from him***, that…I became a mass of quivering fear. After this ***the universe was changed for me altogether***. I awoke morning after morning with a horrible dread at the pit of my stomach, and with a sense of the insecurity of life that I never knew before, and that I have never felt since. ***It was like a revelation***; and...***the experience has made me sympathetic with the morbid feelings of others*** ever since. (James, 1902/1985, pp. 134-135, none of the bold print and only the italics for "*That shape am I*" are in the original)

The instantly striking thing in this account is that James identifies his preceding state not simply as one of "pessimism" but as one of "*philosophic* pessimism," which is in itself a clear reference to Schopenhauer, whose thought was commonly discussed under this banner. Then comes the jarring "horrible fear of my own existence." Why fear one's own existence? Did James fear what it means to be human – his being subject to the human condition? Or did his fear

perhaps involve a concern for his own existence, at least as he would like to conceive it? The key to interpreting this vaguely articulated fear revolves around the central thought in James's entire report: "*That shape am I*, I felt, potentially." James's fear was that *he* could be the same as *him* – that his "discrepancy" from the idiotic, epileptic patient was "merely momentary," a contingent matter of "fate." And this devastating thought changed not just his perception of himself but his perception of the entire universe. It was "like a revelation," like the kind of life-changing realizations that Tolstoy, Bunyan, and others had, as James had been discussing just prior to his self-report in *Varieties*. And among the fruits of his horrific experience, James said, was a newfound "sympathy" – literally, a feeling at one – with others.

The central key or fulcrum in James's report, as already noted, was his fear that "*That shape am I*...potentially," and this statement – even more than his general reference to "philosophic pessimism" – brings us to Schopenhauer's very specific influence upon the form and intensity of James's frightful experience. For the critical thrust of Schopenhauer's thought – the contention around which his works revolve – is that the *principium individuationis* (the principle of individuation) is false and that individuality is, therefore, an illusion. Or, stated in the terminology Schopenhauer borrowed from ancient Indian thought, the experience of individuality and the associated belief in the indeterminacy of individual will are chimeras resulting from seeing one's self and the world through "the veil of Maya," which is to say, from seeing them as they are represented in the dream-like phenomenal world of mere appearances. True enlightenment – and true freedom – come from ripping that veil asunder and ridding ourselves of the illusions (or more precisely, the delusions) resulting from unexamined human experience. We must get beyond self-encapsulated "egotism" by realizing the wisdom in the *Mahavakya* (the Grand Word or Pronouncement) of the Chandogya Upanishad, "*Tat twam asi*." Schopenhauer never tired of repeating this Sanskrit phrase along with its German translation as "*Dies bis du*" which equates to the English "*This art thou*." In this simple formulation of the fundamental doctrine of Hinduism, shared by some forms of Buddhism and adopted by Schopenhauer as a succinct and accurate expression of the conclusion – and moral foundation – of his own systematic thought, "*This*" stands for Ultimate Reality, Brahman, or, in Schopenhauer's conceptualization, Will, and "*thou*" stands for each and every living creature in the universe. Thus, each and every living creature is understood to be a representation of the very same underlying nature, and their mutual identification with that singular nature renders each identical to every other. Any sense of individuality is simply a trick of phenomenal experience – an "illusion" – on this side of "the veil of Maya."[10]

Here is the crucial point: This defining statement – "*Tat twam asi*" or "*This art thou*" – captures precisely what James suddenly felt and expressed in only slightly different words: "*That shape am I*," at least potentially. And all the "dread" and "insecurity" that he felt during his revelatory experience was apparently – from his own description – the result of his being overwhelmed by the thought that *this could be true*, that only contingent considerations had created and preserved his phenomenal sense of "discrepancy" from others: a sense that was crucial for "the moral business" (involving free will, individual effort, and personal contributions) that meant so much to him.

Thus, as indicated, the internal evidence within James's report, by itself, provides *prima facie* reason to accept a Schopenhauerian interpretation of James's personal crisis, but additional weight as well as suggestive evidence regarding the dating of James's personal crisis can be gained through an examination of some of his diary entries between 1870 and 1873 (in James,

1868-1873). As already mentioned, James's entry for February 1, 1870 – the one in which he noted that he had "about touched bottom" – raised the issue of "the moral business." He had come to perceive, he wrote, "that I must face the choice with open eyes: shall I frankly throw the moral business overboard, as one unsuited to my innate aptitude, or shall I follow it, and it alone, making everything else merely stuff for it? – I will give the latter alternative a fair trial. Who knows but the moral interest may become developed." Clearly, he was having trouble convincing himself that he could be successful in cultivating what he called his "moral interest," which ultimately concerned (he said) getting "my moral life to become active," so that – as he had previously put it – "I might make my *nick*, however small a one in the raw stuff the race has got to shape" (James, 1868/1995b, p. 250). But as relevant as this entry may be for understanding James's general frame of mind, it also reveals that what he was questioning was his *individual* ability to follow through on something that *he* chose to do; in short, he was not (yet) questioning his individuality or even, at the moment, the *potential* efficacy of his will.

But in his next diary entry on March 22, 1870, written two weeks after Minny Temple's death, a very significant shift has taken place. In this heart-wrenching entry, addressed to Minny, James wrote:

> By that big part of me that's in the tomb with you, may I realize and believe in the immediacy of death! May I feel that every torment suffered here passes and is as a breath of wind – every pleasure too. Acts & examples stay. Time is long. One human life is an instant….Minny, your death makes me feel the nothingness of all our egotistic fury. The inevitable release is sure; wherefore take our turn kindly whatever it contain. Ascend to some sort of partnership with fate, & since tragedy is at the heart of us, go to meet it, work it to our ends, instead of dodging it all our days, and being run down by it at last. Use your death (or your life, it's all one meaning) *tat twam asi*. (James, 1868-1873)

Note that James started this entry by expressing his identification with Minny.[11] A big part of him is in the tomb with her. Their individuality – their seeming difference – even his being alive and her being dead – is no longer relevant. They are one, and all petty egotism, at least for the moment, has come to nothing. We need to submit to fate, he says, recognizing the tragedy of human life and accepting that death and life are ultimately the same. All of this – the very wording as well as the sentiments expressed – smacks loudly of Schopenhauer, but the ultimate corroboration of the Schopenhauerian connection is the "*tat twam asi*" that concludes this diary entry. It provides a clear and evident link between Schopenhauer's thought, this diary entry, and James's later account of his personal crisis in *The Varieties of Religious Experience*.[12]

A little over a month later, on April 30, in the diary entry that reports James's decision to follow Renouvier's lead and believe in free will (an entry that thus underscores that he had been *doubting* the existence of free will in a way that he hadn't admitted on February 1), James makes the telling comment that he sees no reason why the belief in free will, which after all was a belief in the efficacy of his own individuality, "need be the definition of an illusion." In fact, he wrote, "I will assume for the present – until next year – that it is no illusion." These hedged assertions (that belief in one's ability to act on one's own initiative *need not* be an illusion, and that one can at least provisionally *assume* that it is not) seem clearly to allude to Schopenhauer's argument that belief in individuality and in the indeterminacy of human will is not just wrong,

but is an "illusion" created by the veil (or dream) of Maya. In addition, James's vow in this entry to "abstain from the mere speculation & contemplative *Grübelei* [musings] in which my nature takes most delight, and voluntarily [to] cultivate the feeling of moral freedom, *by reading books favorable to it*, as well as by acting" (italics added), is entirely consistent with the contention that James was now *reacting against* the kinds of reflection *and reading* that seem to have precipitated his moment of crisis. ***This suggests that James's personal crisis, with its apparent Schopenhauer-inspired fears, had already taken place, and that James was now attempting to move beyond it*** by implementing a twofold strategy of (1) believing and acting as if he were in control of his life and (2) avoiding the kinds of ideas and written materials that could cast doubt upon this working premise.[13]

Eventually, James noted in the same entry, he might "return to metaphysic study & skepticism without danger to my powers of action," but for now, he pledged to avoid such study and skepticism – and by implication, to avoid Schopenhauer. Then, expanding upon his earlier statement, James proclaimed that he would go "a step further" than simply believing in his own individual will; he would "believe in my individual reality and creative power," precisely the things that Schopenhauer would have prompted him to doubt. (In fact, it is only in the context of Schopenhauer's thought that it makes sense for James to add this affirmation of "individual reality and creative power" to his already stated affirmation of the efficacy of his will.) Yet even here James offered a qualification: "My belief to be sure *can't* be optimistic – but I will posit life, (the real, the good) in the self governing *resistance* of the ego to the world." With this final proposition, James had completed his turn-around: Instead of envisioning the universe pressing down and threatening to absorb him against his will and against any other power at his disposal, as he had, so frighteningly, during his personal crisis, he now took his stand by asserting the reality of his ego and positing that its "self governance" consisted in the ability to push back and resist the way of the world. However tentatively, he was back into "the moral business."

It is possible that James went on in his diary to comment more explicitly about his rejection of Schopenhauer's thought, but this is precisely the point at which he (or someone else) ripped some pages out of his diary, including the lower half of the page from which I have been quoting. That truncated entry now ends with a line that has been made out to read "Life shall be built doing & suffering & creating…."

Three years passed before James made another extant diary entry. It is a short entry, written on February 10, 1873, that reported his decision "to stick to biology as a profession" even though he would continue to regard philosophy as his "vocation." Just over a month later, on March 18, James's father wrote to his brother Henry that "Willy" was (finally!) going along "swimmingly" and that he, William, had reported that "my mind [is] so cleared up and restored to sanity. It is the difference between death and life." Death and life were no longer the same! One reason for his recovery, William said, was the positive reading he was doing (the kind of reading he had vowed to do back on April 30, 1870), especially works by Renouvier and Wordsworth. But the primary reason that William gave, his father wrote, was "his having given up the notion that all mental disorder required to have a physical basis," which was a point that Schopenhauer (along with others) had argued and that James had specifically feared during his moment of crisis (letter quoted in Perry, 1935, Vol. 1, pp. 339-340).[14]

That James hadn't entirely escaped Schopenhauer, despite his apparent improvement, was manifest on April 10, 1873, in the second diary entry that he wrote after that three-year gap:

> Philosophical activity as a *business* is not normal for most men, and not for me….I fear the constant sense of instability generated by this attitude [i.e., the critical and skeptical attitude appropriate to philosophical inquiry] wd. be more than the voluntary faith I can keep going is sufficient to neutralize – and that the dream-conception, 'Maya,' the abyss of horrors, would 'spite of everything grasp my imagination and imperil my reason.

This passage harkens back to James's encounter with Schopenhauer and the concept of "Maya," which apparently *still* posed a threat to his imagination and sanity. For a budding naturalist and empiricist, the specter that phenomenal experience, including the experience of individual differences, might be illusory was understandably disturbing. Clearly, James had not yet fully exorcised the earlier impact of Schopenhauer.

Two years later, in October 1875, James again looked back on his personal crisis, this time in a more distanced and objective way. He did so in a review of "German Pessimism," which provides virtually conclusive support for the argument I have been making about the significance of Schopenhauer's thought in shaping and intensifying his crisis. In this review, **after admitting that Schopenhauer was "assuredly one of the greatest of writers," James cautioned that "when he [Schopenhauer] morbidly reiterates the mystic Sanskrit motto, *Tat twam asi* – This [maniac or cripple] art thou – as the truth of truths, he will of course exert a spell over persons in the unwholesome sentimental moulting-time of youth"** (James 1875/1987b, p. 312, bold print added). Take special note that the bracketed "maniac or cripple" was inserted into the middle of James's translation of *Tat twam asi* ("This art thou") *by James himself*; it is not a later or editorial emendation. ***Read this quotation again!*** I don't know how much closer we could ever hope to come (short of an out-and-out admission by James) to proving that in his own "unwholesome sentimental moulting-time" he had fallen under Schopenhauer's spell, thus allowing his memory of an idiotic ("maniacal") and epileptic ("crippled") patient to enter into "a species of combination," as he put it in *The Varieties of Religious Experience*, with the fears prompted by Schopenhauer's denial of the reality of individual differences, thus leading to the horrific thought – "*That shape am I*…potentially" – that stood at the center of the experience we have come to know as "the personal crisis of William James."

Although I believe that I have now provided more than sufficient evidence to support the central thesis of this article, there is yet another piece of evidence that I would like to share. It comes from James's posthumously published *Some Problems of Philosophy* (1911/1979c). In this work, the first substantive problem that James addressed, after making some preliminary comments on metaphysics in general, was "The Problem of Being." Not by chance, we might now assume, James began his discussion with a long quotation from Schopenhauer, noting that "Schopenhauer's remarks on this question may be considered classical" (p. 26). And after providing the quotation, which he took from Schopenhauer's chapter "On the Metaphysical Need of Man" (this is James's translation of the chapter's German title, "*Ueber das metaphysiche Bedürfniss des Menchen*"), James went on to write that "one need only shut oneself in a closet and begin to think of the fact of one's being there, of one's queer bodily shape in the darkness (a thing to make children scream at, as Stevenson says), of one's fantastic character and all, to have wonder steal over

the detail as much as [over] the general fact of being" (pp. 26-27). A sense of wonder at one's "queer bodily shape"? while "in a closet"? and "in the darkness"? I assume you have already noted the similarity between "one's queer bodily shape" and "*That* [terrible] *shape am I*," but what about one's being "in a closet" and "in the darkness"? In quoting from James's account of his personal crisis in *Varieties*, earlier in this article, I omitted a clause – not needed at the time – that is relevant in the context of this later statement. According to his full account, James's personal crisis occurred, not only while he was in a "state of philosophic pessimism and general depression of spirits about my prospects," but also when he "went one evening into a dressing-room in the twilight to procure some article that was there" (James, 1902/1985, p. 134). The parallel between being "in the darkness" and going into an enclosed room at "twilight" is obvious, and the interchangeable use of the words "dressing-room" and "closet" in those days is widely known. (In fact, the term for dressing-room in French, the supposed original language of James's report, is *cabinet* [closet] *de toilette*.) Although James reported "wonder" rather than "panic fear" as the typical *metaphysical* state of mind, the general parallel between the occasion of his personal crisis and his prescription for getting in touch with the problem of being seems more than coincidental. Indeed, it is relevant to add that Schopenhauer's comments on the problem of being include the observation that metaphysical "wonder" passes into "unrest" at "the thought [that] the non-existence of the world [and hence of one's own individual being] is just as possible as its existence," and that "wonder" then passes beyond "unrest" into "brooding" over the possible "fatality" that could produce a world that is "hostile to our own interests." Philosophy thus begins, Schopenhauer says, in "a minor chord" (as translated and quoted by James, 1911/1979c, p. 26). Doesn't this seem more than a mere echo of James's own journey through a moment of crisis to a life of philosophical reflection?

CONCLUSION

I said earlier that the dating of James's personal crisis cannot be determined with absolute certainty, but the sequence of events I have surveyed in this article suggests very strongly that his crisis took place between Minny Temple's death on March 8, 1870, and James's declaration of free will on April 30 of that same year.[15] But whenever it happened, I think I have shown beyond any reasonable doubt that it assumed its unique form and intensity due to James's reading of Schopenhauer.

One might nonetheless ask if the account given in this article isn't perhaps "more simple and more interesting than the truth," as later accounts tend to be according to James (1890/1981, Vol. 1, p. 353). In response, all I can do is admit that James's lived experience was inevitably more complicated than any of us – even James himself – could describe. One doesn't need to be a Freudian to believe that history and individual lives as well as cognitive and emotional processes are all overdetermined. One thing that has been omitted from this account, for instance, is James's contemporaneous delving into his father's views on evil and selfhood. Another is James's earlier reading of the Stoics, especially Marcus Aurelius. Though formulated within very different intellectual frameworks, Henry James, Sr.'s arguments and Marcus Aurelius's aphorisms were in their own ways as challenging as Schopenhauer's – and not so different in their implications as one might think. And it is important to note that James's fear of "fate" took its initial shape from his concern about scientific determinism, which was on his mind before – and after – Schopenhauer's philosophical determinism and ontological reductionism seem so obviously to

have had their sway.[16] But even though nothing complicated ever happens along simple direct lines alone, that doesn't mean that there aren't some relatively simple, direct lines within the tangle of aspects from which historical and personal events can be viewed. This article has laid out an argument and evidence regarding one such line that has not previously been noted. To the extent that it has been successful, it should have enriched our understanding of the origin and nature of James's personal crisis.[17]

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APPENDIX ON SCHOPENHAUER AND JAMES

Every student of philosophy is familiar with Schopenhauer's name, and many know that Schopenhauer influenced Nietzsche. Far fewer realize that Schopenhauer also touched the lives and thought of Wagner, von Hartmann, Turgenev, Renan, Tolstoy, Mahler, Wundt, Durkheim, Hardy, Freud, Vaihinger, Conrad, Proust, Zola, Bergson, Maupassant, Strauss, Mann, Einstein, Jung, Lawrence, Thomas, Beckett, and Borges in significant ways, or that both Wittgenstein and Popper acknowledged being drawn to philosophy by their early contact with Schopenhauer's work. And even the rare student who has a sense of Schopenhauer's significance in the history of Western thought is unlikely to have read more than a snippet of his work, if that. For generations, Schopenhauer seemed formidable, forbidding…and unnecessary to read.

This is changing, slowly but surely, as more attention is directed to Schopenhauer, largely (in the English speaking world) because of the scholarly efforts of Patrick Gardiner (1963), Bryan Magee (1997b), David Cartwright (2010), and others. A recent work by Frederick C. Beiser (2014) should add significantly to this change. (Much that he says is relevant to understanding Schopenhauer's impact on James.) Yet even as this occurs, it will surprise many to learn that James's older and more conservative colleague, Francis Bowen, taught a popular course on Schopenhauer (among other figures) for years and years at Harvard; that Josiah Royce, James's close intellectual colleague, was steeped in Schopenhauer's thought and credited it with launching and guiding important aspects of his own notable work in psychology as well as philosophy; that Charles Renouvier, that great patron of free will, took Schopenhauer very seriously, if also critically; and that Max Horkheimer argued that Schopenhauer was ahead of his time: that in the broken world of post-World War II, Schopenhauer's vision no longer seems so negative or pessimistic, but rather honest, bracing…and necessary.

In this context it won't seem so surprising that James may have taken more than we have realized from this post-Kantian titan, who did philosophy and the world the favor of following his fundamental insight, unblinkingly, as far as it would lead. He may well have been wrong about many things – let's simply assert that he was – but he did precisely what James himself argued a philosopher should do, perhaps with Schopenhauer in mind: He offered an alternative perspective on the world for us to consider (James, 1867/1978a). (James may have come to his perspectivism, at least in this regard, through considering Schopenhauer's claim that "philosophy can never do more than interpret and explain what is present and at hand….It does this, however, in every possible relation and connexion and from every point of view" [Schopenhauer, 1859/1966, Vol. 1, p. 271].) As Magee (1997a) has written, there is real value in a philosopher offering a vision that is "illuminating" even if it does not represent "literal truth." Advancing the same point that James was

making, though without any apparent awareness of that fact, Magee has argued for the importance of philosophers who "throw light" on issues from a "distinctive angle," thus enriching "our view of the way things are" (p. 401). This is tantamount to saying that Schopenhauer did what the best artists do, which is doubly apt since he is acknowledged to be one of the finest philosophers of the arts. (On the importance of "perspective" in "the art of human understanding" according to James, see Leary, 1992.)

So, if James *was* in fact influenced by Schopenhauer more than we have realized (and it wouldn't take much to reach this criterion), let's not assume that this is somehow unusual or even shocking. Anyone who chooses to investigate the connection between James and Schopenhauer should keep an open mind about the possible outcome, as Schopenhauer himself – yes, and James too – would have done if they were in our place.

This is not the time for an extensive, much less exhaustive treatment of the relationship between Schopenhauer and James. (In any case, I am not capable of providing one at this point in time.) But a few words about James's relation to Schopenhauer in the years after 1875 and a few hints about possible areas of influence seem in order. Hopefully, they will provide some initial guidance for scholars who may wish to look more closely into the connection between Schopenhauer and James. Whatever "loathing" James may have felt for Schopenhauer's tone and attitude (see Note #3), he seems to have been inspired by Schopenhauer's honesty about the evils of the world, by his criticism of the stagnant habits of the philosophical community, by his clear and sprightly writing (including his frequent and effective use of clinching metaphors), and by his careful and unfettered analysis of previous human thought, including Kant's first Critique, which formed the root of Schopenhauer's own work. Getting other thinkers *right* was always a concern – a matter of justice as well as utility – for both Schopenhauer and James.

The first tangible example of Schopenhauer's influence on James became apparent in 1877 as he worked on publications that appeared in 1878 and 1879. I mentioned in the text that James took out Wilhelm Gwinner's *Schopenhauer aus persönlichem Umgange dargestelt* (1862) several times during the late 1860s. Gwinner's book focused on Schopenhauer's life and character as well as his system of thought. James's repeated return to this book indicates an early interest in the relation between the philosopher's character or temperament, on the one hand, and his way of thinking, on the other, an interest that was generalized in James's "The Sentiment of Rationality" (1879/1978c), which made pertinent references to Schopenhauer (1859) and led to James's later distinction between the philosophical tendencies of "the tender-minded" and those of "the tough-minded" (James, 1907/1975a) and to his claim that "a philosophy is the expression of a man's intimate character, and all definitions of the universe are but the deliberately adopted reactions of human characters upon it" (James, 1909/1977, p. 14). All three works reflect James's underlying interest in the psychology of philosophers, or more precisely, "The Psychology of Philosophizing," which he had tentatively considered as a title for "The Sentiment of Rationality" (James, ca. 1877/1978d, p. 359). His views on this topic, underlying his defense of "the subjective method" (e.g., James, 1878/1978b), were thus almost certainly influenced by his reflections on Schopenhauer – and more than that, they were probably influenced by Schopenhauer's own reflections "On the Metaphysical Need of Man" (Schopenhauer, 1859, Vol. 2, Ch. 17), which James made a special note of having read in late 1869 (James, 1868-1873). His annotated copy of Schopenhauer's (1859) masterpiece confirms the care that he took in this reading.

Schopenhauer also seems to have made a deep impression upon James through his discussion of moral principles. This was first apparent in James's initial article (1875/1987a) on the vivisection controversy of the mid-1870s, in which he expressed respect but also some reservation regarding an unbending application of the Buddhist principle *neminem laede* ("injure no one"). This way of stating the principle, in Latin, clearly comes from Schopenhauer, who frequently invoked this formulation in his works (e.g., Schopenhauer, 1841/2009, p. 140). (The full principle, in Latin, is *neminem laede, imo omnes, quantum potes, juva*, i.e., "injure no one; instead, help everyone as much as you can.") The final proof that this is so comes from the fact that, when James (1879-1885/1988) cited this principle in his later lectures, he gave Schopenhauer credit for it (p. 175).

In various ways this principle is deeply consonant with "the moral business" to which James had dedicated his life. In fact, it seems eventually to blend for him, as it did from the start for Schopenhauer, into a far-reaching view of how we should understand and approach one another. Toward the end of the century, James wrote "On a Certain Blindness in Human Beings" (1899/1983), which he considered his most important essay since it reveals "the perception on which my whole individualistic philosophy is based" (James, 1899/2000, p. 522). In this essay, undercutting later criticisms (based on misunderstanding) of his individualism, he argued that his individualistic philosophy is founded upon the perception that *each and every* individual – not just "I" or a limited group of "we" – is to be treated with the same respect and accorded the same dignity because of the underlying humanity shared by all. This essay, which has been called the first modern manifesto for multiculturalism (Sollors, 1996), is both *pluralistic* in its emphasis on variation and difference, and *monistic* in its emphasis upon equal rights and mutual dependency. In defense of a theme that James expressed in various ways in multiple writings (e.g., that each of us contributes a different syllable to the common message of human experience), James argued that every person enjoys "a partial superiority of insight from the peculiar position in which he stands" (1899/1983, p. 149). He spelled out the implications of this view in subsequent works (e.g., James, 1907/1975b & 1909/1975c), and the same attitude suffused his notion that the community – ultimately the world-wide community – is the operative agent for the advancement of knowledge, ideals, values, and behavior. This is not an exact replication of Schopenhauer's views, but it suggests that James eventually came to see the identification of individuals with each other, which caused him such anxiety in the early 1870s, in a more positive light. By then, sympathy and compassion, Schopenhauer's key moral virtues, had become fundamental to his own ethical and social thought.

James also came to have a more positive view of Hindu thought and of *Tat twam asi* in particular, as seen in the mysticism chapter of *The Varieties of Religious Experience*, where he wrote:

> This overcoming of all the usual barriers between the individual and the Absolute is the great mystic achievement. In mystic states we both become one with the Absolute and we become aware of our oneness. This is the everlasting and triumphant mystical tradition….'That art thou!' [*Tat twam asi*] say the Upanishads, and the Vedantists add: 'Not a part, not a mode of That, but identically That, that absolute Spirit of the World.' (James, 1902/1985, p. 332)

That James now saw what had previously *scared* him as a positive thing, as the essential "mystical truth" (p. 333), is demonstrated by the entire context in which he wrote this passage. Like "such self-contradictory phrases as 'dazzling

obscurity,'" he now regarded talk about melding many into one as being closer to "music" than "conceptual speech" (p. 333). Schopenhauer, the great advocate of music, would have understood and appreciated this statement, which underscores a point made above, about the artistic rather than literal significance of Schopenhauer's thought. Such music gives us a way of comprehending our common, shared humanity, warts and all. And that comprehension led James to the implicit poly- or pantheism, mentioned earlier, that held humans responsible for assisting in the creation of a more ideal world (see James, 1882/1997a, p. 195; 1902/1985, p. 413; & 1907/1975b, pp. 131-144). In this way and others, Schopenhauer seems to have provided a stimulus that eventually sensitized James to the claims, rights, and significance of "the other."

Of course, Schopenhauer also provided ideas that James *pushed against*, which surely constituted as important – sometimes a greater – influence than ideas he *agreed with.* For instance, in understanding and then opposing both naïve *optimism* and rebarbative *pessimism*, the latter being represented by Schopenhauer, James came to his own middle position of *meliorism*, which treats "salvation" as neither inevitable (as optimism does) nor impossible (as pessimism does) but as *possible*; and from early on, *possibility* was a word that opened up for James a vibrant, challenging, and ultimately invigorating world of risk and opportunity (see James, 1875/1987b, p. 313, & 1907/1975b). In a closely related matter, Schopenhauer served as an unacknowledged but apparent interlocutor regarding a question that Schopenhauer was famous for prompting many others to consider, namely, Is life worth living? (On Schopenhauer's role in "the pessimism controversy" of the late nineteenth century, see Beiser, 2014, Ch. 5.) James addressed this issue squarely in an 1895 address to members of Harvard's YMCA, which was later included in *The Will to Believe and Other Essays in Popular Philosophy* (James, 1895/1897b). In this address he spoke of pessimism as "essentially a religious disease" (p. 40) and underscored its "nightmare view of life" (p. 41), specifically relating it to "that metaphysical *tedium vitae* which is peculiar to reflecting men" (39) and to the "suicidal mood" (p. 52) associated with it. In the end, he exhorted his young listeners to "Be not afraid of life. Believe that life *is* worth living, and your belief will help create the fact" (p. 56). This advice foreshadowed not only his subsequent address on "The Will to Believe" (James, 1896/1897a) but also the conclusion of *The Varieties of Religious Experience* (1902/1985), in which he asserted his own strong preference for a life in which the "keynote" is "hope" rather than "resignation" (p. 414). (As in his earlier addresses, he made it clear that the prevalence of "hope" over "resignation" does not depend upon any demonstrable truth about the ultimate character of the universe, since such truth lies outside our human ken; rather, it depends upon one's temperamental inclination as well as one's will to believe.) Though James did not refer to him in this context, Schopenhauer's presence is clearly signaled in James's use of "resignation," which was widely known to be Schopenhauer's recommendation regarding the appropriate attitude to show in the face of reality. (Schopenhauer's recommendation was accepted explicitly by many, including Sigmund Freud.) For James, uncertainty about the ultimate nature of the universe and the efficacy of individual effort was sufficient to allow him to respond to what "*feels* like a real fight" and real "possibilities" (James, 1895/1897b, p. 55) by asserting his willingness to live on the "chance" that fighting back, resisting the pressures of the world, and being strenuous in standing up for one's own preferences could make a difference in the world (James, 1902/1985, p. 414).

Much more could be said – for example, about Schopenhauer as the inspiration of James's understanding of the problem of being, as a stimulant of

his treatment of perception, as a possible source of his beloved concept of the "sting" of certain precious moments of experience, as an interlocutor regarding immortality, and so forth. But it is time to end. In doing so, I want to be clear: More research is needed before it can be said, without qualification, that Schopenhauer was a *major* influence on James, but on the basis of what has been disclosed in this article and noted in this appendix, it seems reasonable to conjecture that Schopenhauer was in fact among the more significant figures in James's life and work. At minimum, even without further study, it can be said that Schopenhauer was instrumental at an important moment in James's life and that he remained on the edges of James's consciousness, prodding and provoking, throughout his career.

It will be interesting to see how the connection between Schopenhauer and James will come to be understood if and as other scholars subject it to closer inspection.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I thank Bay James as well as Harvard University's Houghton Library for permitting extensive quotations from James's diary for 1868 to 1873, and I thank Houghton Library for making available James's personal copies of Arthur Schopenhauer's and Marcus Aurelius's major works. I also thank the Harvard University Archives and the Boston Athenaeum for allowing me to peruse their library check-out ledgers. (The Harvard ledgers are catalogued as UA III 50.15.60.) The Boston Athenaeum membership was in James's father's name, but it is easy to distinguish the books checked out by father and son, assisted (in the case of Schopenhauer's text) by James's own report of going to the Athenaeum on the day the book was returned (James, 1869/1992, p. 133).

I dedicate this article to the memory of Eugene Taylor (1946-2013), a distinctive person and dedicated scholar who contributed a great deal to our understanding of William James and to our knowledge of the relation between James, Western psychology, and Eastern thought. (For his own overview of his latter contribution, see Taylor, 2003.) I would like to think that Eugene would be both surprised and pleased to read the evidence and argument presented in this article regarding a connection between James and Eastern thought – at least as mediated through Schopenhauer – decades before James entered into conversations with the Harvard Buddhist scholar Charles Rockwell Lanman, the Hindu Vedantist Vivekananda, and others, as Eugene has documented and elucidated. The fact that Eastern thought as cited and used by Schopenhauer had a *negative* impact on James in the early 1870s might have bothered Eugene, but he surely would have relished rolling up his sleeves to explore the *positive* influences of that early encounter, which seem to have emerged later and to have made a difference in James's subsequent life and thought, as suggested in the appendix to this article.

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NOTES

[1]This passage, which appears on pp. 134-135, is attributed in the text to a French correspondent, whose communication James has allegedly translated "freely" into English. It is now universally accepted, given James's own admission to the translator of *Varieties* into French (!), that the communication was in fact a report of his own case – of his "acute neurasthenic attack with phobia," as he called it – whose "*provenance*," he said, he had "naturally

disguised" (from a letter reproduced in an appendix to James, 1902/1985, p. 508).

[2]I am personally satisfied with "generally truthful" as a description of James's account of his personal crisis. Still, I am going to argue that James's account is likely to have been *less* "a composite composition" than Croce (2009, p. 57) had reason to suggest, without knowledge of the discoveries I will discuss. And I can see no reason or evidence that bars me from *imagining*, at least, that James, fluent enough in French, *may* actually have written an initial account of his crisis in French, and that he *might* have translated that account later into English, as he claimed to have done in *Varieties* (James, 1902/1985, p. 134). If a written account, either in French or English, still existed when James died, it could have been destroyed by his widow or eldest son, Henry James III, who burned many personal letters and papers in the years after his death. Of course, if James *had* written an account at the time of the incident, he would almost certainly have done so in his private diary – the same diary from which entries between April 30, 1870, and February 10, 1873, have been removed (James, 1868-1873). In fact, given everything else that he was writing down in this diary between 1868 and 1873, including comments on his suicidal inclinations, it would be surprising if he *hadn't* written a report in his diary. And if he did so, mightn't he have done so in French, perhaps to disguise its "provenance" in case someone – a parent? – happened to open his diary? Though not typical, there was a precedent for his writing a personal entry in French, surrounded by quotation marks, as if he had copied it from some French clinical source: On July 22, 1868, he wrote what Richardson has called "a conversation with himself" in French, which began (as translated) "So – you want to die?" (James, 1868-1873, discussed by Richardson, 2006, p. 93). Clearly, both instances (this passage and a possible later report of his hallucinatory experience) involved deeply troubling personal incidents in James's life. If James *did* write a diary account of his frightful experience, one could wonder if it was James himself who later tore it out…and whether he did so to share it with Alice Howe Gibbens, when he determined that she should know *everything* about him before deciding upon his fitness as a potential husband, as illustrated by his sharing of two entries written in his "memorandum pad" during what he identified to her as his "pessimistic crisis" in the earlier 1870s (James, 1877/1995g, p. 572). Or, less dramatically, he could have ripped it out in order to use it in writing *Varieties*. These are all things that I can *imagine*, as I say. While I cannot and will not *argue* for any of these possibilities, they are nonetheless consistent with what is known at the present time.

[3]Menand (2001) suggests that "there was no philosopher (Schopenhauer was a possible exception) for whom James felt a deeper loathing than Hegel" (p. 358), and Richardson (2006) notes that James "came to loathe Schopenhauer's pessimism" (p. 14). It's easy to see how they came to these conclusions, but I would suggest that the loathing had more to do with attitude than substance (granting that attitude overlapped with substance for James), and that it obscures an underlying respect. The ultimate source of Menand's comment may be the passage in *The Varieties of Religious Experience* (1902/1985) in which James belittled Schopenhauer and Nietzsche, despite their sometimes "ennobling sadness," for their othertimes "peevishness" that comes across like "the sick shriekings of two dying rats" (p. 39). Richardson's conclusion is related to a negative comment made when James refused to serve on a committee working toward the construction of a statue in honor of Schopenhauer – a comment from the same letter that Perry quoted at length. But James's deep respect for Schopenhauer is also apparent in this letter, though underplayed in his typically playful manner. Noting that "I really *must* decline to stir a finger for the glory of one who studiously lived for no other purpose than to spit upon the lives of

the like of me" (a statement that is directly relevant to the analysis that follows in this article), James wrote that "if there be any kernel of truth in Schopenhauer's system, (and it seems to me there is a deep one) it ought to be celebrated in silence and in secret, by the inner lives of those to whom it speaks" since "taking some things seriously is incompatible with 'celebrating' them" (James, 1883/1997b, p. 456). Despite this hint of a more positive view of Schopenhauer, no biographer or scholar has attended to James's relationship with this important philosopher. Not even Feinstein (1984), who focused so closely on the details of James's early development (extending into the 1870s), picked up on the hints elaborated upon in this article.

[4]I am focusing in this paragraph, as was Perry, on the period between 1858 and 1877. There is a good amount of evidence about later contact between James's thought and Schopenhauer's, some of which will be reviewed in the appendix to this article. And, of course, there is more evidence *now* about James's contact with Schopenhauer before 1875, as I will discuss in what follows.

[5]There are now good English translations of the works that I have mentioned: Schopenhauer (1841/2009, 1851/1974, 1859/1966, & 1864/2012). James purchased and signed his own copy of Schopenhauer's two-volume *Die Welt als Wille und Vorstellung* (3d ed., 1859) in Paris in early November 1868. Both volumes, annotated by James, are in Houghton Library at Harvard University. Although he read an earlier (1841) edition of *Die beiden Grundprobleme der Ethik* in 1870, at some subsequent date (1881 or later) he purchased and annotated an (1881) edition that was sold in 1923, according to a list of "William James's Sources" composed by Ralph Barton Perry and deposited in Harvard's Houghton Library, catalogued as MS Am 1092.9 (4578). There is also good reason to suppose that James discussed Schopenhauer's ideas with Oliver Wendell Holmes, Jr., in the late 1860s. See Holmes (1923/1964, p. 215) for confirmation of his familiarity with Schopenhauer, which almost certainly stemmed from this period (see Howe, 1957, p. 260). And he probably saw and read various articles on Schopenhauer, including three English translations that appeared in *The Journal of Speculative Philosophy* (Schopenhauer, 1867a, 1867b, & 1871). His primary reading of Schopenhauer's works, however, was in the original German.

[6]It is relevant to note that James's dual (physical and moral) collapse occurred, by his own reckoning, around the time that, in fact, he checked a book by Schopenhauer out of the Harvard College Library, though the argument in this article doesn't depend upon this possible conjunction, largely because of James's propensity for backsliding – for making some progress and then falling back into physical and mental doldrums. The forward-and-backward, sometimes zigzagging nature of James's development during this period is illustrated by James's on-and-off acceptance of the conscious automaton theory, as I've discussed elsewhere (Leary, 2013) at considerable length. It is also illustrated by the various times at which he seems to have accepted Charles Renouvier's argument for free will, only to lapse in that acceptance and have to accept it all over again. (This point is related to but not exactly the same as the point made in Note #9.) The issues surrounding James's vacillating views on the conscious automaton theory and free will go hand-in-hand with his broader wresting with "the moral business," as discussed below.

[7]I won't rehearse all of the issues associated with James's crisis since Croce (2009) has already discussed most of them. I do want to note, however, that among the possible issues (according to Sander L. Gilman, Kim Townsend, and Donald Capps) are guilt and fear prompted by James's reading of the medical literature on "sexual abuse" and "insane masturbators" (see Croce,

2009, pp. 43, 44, & 49). I agree with Croce's conclusion that "there is very little evidence to support this reading of the crisis" (p. 45). In addition, Capps' association of "auto-eroticism" with James's mention of his "moral degradation" (touched upon by Croce, 2009, p. 49) seems to me to misconstrue the significance that "the moral business" had for James, as seen throughout his earlier and later letters as well as many entries in his diary.

[8]Even at the age of 16, James felt that "everyone's object in life" should be "to be as much use as possible" and that "the best way to serve God is to serve your fellow men." After all, he asked, "which of us would wish to go through life without leaving a trace behind to mark his passage"? This foreshadowed his later concern about "the moral business" in which "every man can do as much as is in his power and having done so will have fulfilled his mission. We must all lead an active life and live for others, not for ourselves….We must try to bring about that happy time when everyone will have enough for him self [sic] materially, and will work for the common good" (James, 1858/1995a, pp. 11-13). Ten years later, despite many vicissitudes in other regards, he still held the same opinion: "The thought that with me outlasts all others…is the thought of my having a will, and of my belonging to a brotherhood of men….And if we have to give up all hope of seeing into the purposes of God…we can by our will make the enjoyment of our brothers stand us in the stead of a final cause and…lead a life so active, and so sustained by a clean-conscience as not to need to fret much….Contribute your mite in *any* way to the mass of work wh. each generation subtracts fm. the task of the next, and you will come in to *real* relations with your brothers….*Every thing* [sic] we know & are is through men. We have no revelation but through man" (James, 1868/1995b, pp. 248-250). For all his wavering about whether or not he *had* a free will and thereby *could* fulfill his deepest hope, James never wavered regarding the nature of "the moral business" that would make his life meaningful. Even when he was "swamped in an empirical philosophy" that made him "feel that we are Nature through and through, that we are *wholly* conditioned, that not a wiggle of our will happens save as the result of physical laws," he held out hope that "we are [also, somehow] en rapport with reason." But "how to conceive it? who knows?" (James, 1869/1995c, pp. 370-371). Richardson (2006) nicely summarizes what James meant by "the moral business," namely, "that, after all, we are able to will and to choose our path in life, that we are not powerless pawns in an all-determined universe. It is not what fate does to us that matters; what matters is what we do with what fate does to us" (p. 111). To James, the great question was whether or not we do, indeed, live in "a moral universe" in which our efforts make a difference. Later in life he related his conviction that we do live in such a universe to a virtual poly- or even pantheism that held humans responsible for assisting in the creation of a more ideal world. (See the appendix to this article.)

[9]This is illustrated best, perhaps, by the fact that James had to return to Renouvier's text for periodic booster shots. After *one* of these shots – two and a half years after he reported the positive effect of Renouvier's essay in late April 1870 – he wrote to Renouvier himself to inform him that he was *just then* "beginning to experience a rebirth of the moral life" due to the influence of his philosophy (James, 1872/1995e, p. 430; trans. in Perry, 1935, Vol. 1, p. 662). And this incipient rebirth took place a full five months before his father reported that James was *just then* showing a vast improvement based partly on his reading of Renouvier (quoted in Perry, 1935, Vol. 1, pp. 339-340), an improvement that will be mentioned later in this article. Clearly, recovery from depression, anxiety, physical exhaustion, and other problems is always likely to be a slow and uneven process. I mention all of this simply to caution against any simplistic view that James was converted and transformed once and for all by his reading of Renouvier's text in April 1870.

[10]A rapid rise in Western knowledge about Eastern thought, fueled by scholarship as well as translations of ancient texts, was a widespread phenomenon throughout the nineteenth century. Although Schopenhauer reached the basic conclusions of his philosophy in the early decades of the century before he encountered Hinduism and Buddhism, he soon realized that their affinity with his own ideas, coupled with their ancient origins and multitude of adherents, made them a boon to his own purposes. He not only became an advocate of Eastern wisdom but also adopted its moral principles (in particular, its fundamental principle of sympathy and compassion for all living creatures). On these topics, see Cartwright (2010), Droit (2003), and Magee (1997b). Here are some representative statements by Schopenhauer, which James would have read prior to his personal crisis and which are relevant to points I will be making. First, from *Parerga and Paralipomena* (1851/1974; loosely translated as "Additions and Omissions"), which James, like most readers outside the German-speaking world, encountered first among Schopenhauer's publications (in its German version, of course, not in its later English translation): "The readers of my *Ethics* know that with me the foundation of morality rests ultimately on the truth that has its expression in the *Veda* and Vedanta in the established mystical formula *tat tvam asi* (This art thou) which is stated with reference to every living thing, whether man or animal, and is then called the *Mahavakya* or Great Word" (Vol. 2, p. 219). Note that this English translation, like all English renderings of this saying (other than James's!), transliterates the German *w* (in *twam*) into the English *v* (in *tvam*) to preserve the same sound. This will be relevant to my argument. "With the Hindus and Buddhists…the *Mahavakya* (the great word) '*tat tvam asi*' (this art thou) applies and is always to be expressed over every animal in order that we may have before us, as a guide to our conduct, the identity of his inner nature and ours" (p. 373). And now from a later English translation of the third edition of *The World as Will and Representation* (1859/1966), the edition that James purchased and read in German: "*Plurality* in general is necessarily conditioned by time and space, and only in these is conceivable, and in this respect we call them the *principium individuationis*….This thing-in-itself [the underlying nature of all, namely, the will, according to Schopenhauer]…lies outside time and space, and accordingly knows no plurality, and consequently is *one*" (Vol. 1, pp. 127-128). "If we had to convey to the beholder, for reflection and in a word, the explanation and information about their inner nature, it would be best for us to use the Sanskrit formula which occurs so often in the sacred books of the Hindus, and is called *Mahavakya*, i.e., the great word: *'Tat tvam asi*,' which means "This living thing are thou'" (p. 220). "Historical philosophy," concerned with things in time, "stops at what Kant calls the phenomenon in opposition to the thing-in-itself, and what Plato calls the becoming…in opposition to the being…, or finally what is called by the Indians the web of Maya" (p. 274). "Birth and death belong only to the phenomenon of the will, and hence to life….Birth and death belong equally to life….The wisest of all mythologies, the Indian, expresses this by giving to the very god who symbolizes destruction and death…the lingam, that symbol of generation….In this way, it is intimated that generation and death…reciprocally neutralize and eliminate each other" (pp. 275-276). "The individual is only the phenomenon, not the thing-in-itself….As soon as we enter into ourselves…and wish for once to know ourselves fully by directing our knowledge inwards, we lose ourselves in the bottomless void; we find ourselves like a hollow glass globe, from the emptiness of which a voice speaks" (p. 278). "The life of every individual, viewed as a whole and in general,…is really a tragedy" (p. 322). "The Maya of the Indians, the work and fabric of which are the whole world of illusions, is

paraphrased by *amor*" in that love-making produces what *seem* to be ontologically distinct individuals (p. 330). "The eyes of the uncultured individual are clouded, as the Indians say, by the veil of Maya….He sees not the inner nature of things, which is one, but its phenomena as separated, detached, innumerable, very different, and indeed opposed" (p. 352). "We find the direct presentation in the *Vedas*, the fruit of the highest human knowledge and wisdom, the kernel of which has finally come to us in the *Upanishads* as the greatest gift to the nineteenth century. It is expressed in various ways, but especially by the fact that all beings of the world, living and lifeless," have "pronounced" over them, "*tat tvam asi*, which means 'This art thou'" (p. 355). "The veil of Maya envelops the mind" so that an individual "regards his person as absolutely different from every other" and "adheres with all his might" to this illusion "since it alone suits and supports his egoism" (p. 365). "Whoever is still involved in the *principium individuationis*, in egoism, knows only particular things and their relation to his person" (p. 378). These quotations, all taken from the first volume of Schopenhauer's *World as Will and Representation* (the first edition of which appeared in 1818, though dated 1819), should suffice as background evidence supporting the claims I will make. The second volume, first published in 1844, is composed of supplementary elaborations and commentaries on the sections of the first edition.

[11]In directly addressing Minny in his diary, James was doing something that was unprecedented in earlier entries and unparalleled in later ones. But then, in addressing her in his Schopenhauerian frame of mind, he was actually addressing himself as – consistent with the argument in this article – he had dropped the veil that separated him and her and had come to realize his fundamental identification with her. He graphically represented this moment in his life by drawing a tombstone in his diary with the inscription "March 9 / M+T / 1870." Note that Minny Temple died on March 8. March 9 was the date on which James learned about Minny's death, and died along with her.

[12]This is a good place to address a very reasonable question that might be in the reader's mind. Weren't the transcendentalists – and Ralph Waldo Emerson, in particular – interested in Eastern thought? Didn't they advance translations of the sacred documents of the East, and didn't Emerson himself publish essays on "Spiritual Laws" (1841/1903a), "The Over-Soul" (1841/1903b), and "Illusions" (1860/1903c) as well as a poem on "Brahma" (1867/1903d) that convey fundamental insights of Eastern thought? Couldn't these writings, with which James was familiar, have been the source of his thinking during his period of crisis? That's a sensible conjecture, but in fact the first two essays, appearances aside, were drawn primarily from Emerson's immersion in Neoplatonic thought, and none of Emerson's writings includes a reference to the Sanskrit *Tat twam (or tvam) asi*. Meanwhile, the strongest evidence that James's use of *Tat twam asi* and its related cluster of ideas came from Schopenhauer rather than Emerson (or any other transcendentalist) is that single letter – the '*w*' in *twam* – in James's spelling of that word each time he cites it. This indicates that James was quoting a *German* source (see Note #10), and hence Schopenhauer, since no other German source with which he was familiar included the same cluster of terms and ideas. James's interest in Buddhism was clearly piqued, however, and in the latter half of 1870 he read parts, at least, of Alabaster's *The Modern Buddhist* (1870), the first volume of Köppen's *Religion des Buddha* (1857), and Taine's "Le Boudhissme" (1865), followed by Bastian's *Die Weltauffassung der Buddhisten* (1870) in early 1871. He also read Sen's *Brahmo Somaj* (1870) in late 1870, though this work treated a newly Christianized form of Hinduism. (All these texts are listed in James, 1868-1873; Köppen's was checked out of Harvard College Library on September 13, 1870.) Interestingly, James didn't mention any of this reading in his extant letters and manuscript notes. More significantly, he had cited *Tat*

twam asi in his diary on March 22, 1870, well before reading these other books, which eliminates them as potential sources of his knowledge of that Sanskrit phrase. Finally, his reading of Taine's article, with its more positive spin on "the cult of nothingness," might have started James thinking in a less negative light about Hindu and Buddhist views. See Droit (2003, especially pp. 133-148), which includes a discussion of Nietzsche's contemporaneous reaction to Buddhism. Droit begins his book discussing the widespread Western reaction against Buddhism in the middle of the nineteenth century, a reaction that depicted Buddhism as "a paradoxical and horrible religion of nothingness," thus reinforcing the then-common belief that Eastern thought is inherently negative or pessimistic (pp. 4-5). He doesn't mention James but James's initial reaction fits within the pattern he describes. Droit's book is devoted to "an analysis of this error" (p. 5).

[13]It is relevant to note that, so far as letters, diary entries, and library records indicate, James followed through on his intention *not* to read Schopenhauer's books for some time, thus confirming (to the extent that a negative can imply a positive) that it was Schopenhauer to whom he was referring.

[14]It might seem strange that James was relieved to think that mental disorder didn't require a physical basis – that it could also be due to circumstantial and psychological causes – but the flip side was that one could do something, potentially, about circumstances and psychological phenomena (like misperceptions and phobias) whereas James's great fear was that physical causes could not be thwarted in the same way. In fact, before the conversion reported to his father, he had worried that the James family had some congenital weakness ("s'thing in the blood") that predisposed them to mental and physical troubles, which had led him to swear off marriage for himself and to counsel his brother Robertson to avoid marriage as well (James, 1869/1995d). Note that James's personal crisis revolved around the fear that if nature so decided – if physical processes just happened to work out that way – he would be reduced to the same imbecilic state as the poor epileptic patient he had seen in an asylum. As regards Schopenhauer's views, although he admitted that mental disorder could result from "external, objective occasions" such as unrequited love and the strains of war, he argued that "madness…depends more often on purely somatic causes" (Schopenhauer, 1859/1966, Vol. 2, p. 401). As for Wordsworth, the chief work that James had been reading was Wordsworth's long narrative poem "The Excursion" (1814/1977), which argues, in essence, that nature is the product of both mind and matter – that the mind is not a passive recipient of matter's causal pressures, but rather, that it actively confers order, meaning, and value to matter. This was a message that James needed. Especially the poem's fourth book on "Despondency Corrected" provided "authentic tidings" of "the mind's *excursive* power" (pp. 154-155; James, 1874/1995f, p. 488). Wordsworth himself foresaw the effect of his poem: "To enfeebled Power, / From this communion with uninjured Minds, / What renovation had been brought; and what / Degree of healing to a wounded spirit" (p. 289).

[15]It is worth noting that this dating accords with the best estimate of James's son, Henry James III, which was accepted by John E. Smith in his introduction to the definitive edition of James's *Varieties of Religious Experience* (1902/1985, p. xvii).

[16] On January 1, 1870, the first two sets of "works" that James resolved (in his diary) to finish reading that year were his father's and Schopenhauer's (James, 1868-1873). According to a list in that same diary, he had already read his father's *Moralism and Christianity* (1850) in the months after receiving his M.D. on June 21, 1869 – in fact, right after he had read Schopenhauer's chapter

on "man's need for metaphysics" (see this article's appendix on Schopenhauer and James). Later that year he had read his father's *Lectures and Miscellanies* (1852). Then, the first book he listed in his diary as read in 1870 was his father's *Nature of Evil* (1855). Subsequently in 1870, he read two more of his father's works. His father was, of course, a more than subtle presence in nurturing James's sensitivity to evil and an indirect influence with regard to Schopenhauer, by making the collection of the Boston Athenaeum available to him. In addition, his father's own personal crisis (his famous "vastation" experience of 1844) became entangled with James's recollections of his own crisis to the extent that he drew attention to it (in a footnote) when he reported on his own moment of crisis in *The Varieties of Religious Experience* 1902/1985, p. 135). As for Marcus Aurelius, whom James had read earlier and to whom he returned from time to time, Harvard's Houghton Library has the annotated copy of *The Thoughts of the Emperor M. Aurelius Antoninus* (1864), inscribed by "Wm. James / Boston Feby 1865." For information on James's relation to Aurelius, see Sutton (2009). As regards James's concern about scientific determinism, see Leary (2013).

[17]Just as I was completing this article, I received from John Kaag a photocopy of the title page of the first volume of Julius Frauenstädt's *Schopenhauer-Lexikon: Ein philosophisches Wörterbuch* (1871). This dictionary of Schopenhauer's philosophical terms has no annotations in it but the title page bears the following inscription: "W. E. Hocking / from the library of William James / May 1923." This previously unknown possession of James doesn't appear in R. B. Perry's list of volumes sold from James's library in 1923 after his widow Alice died in 1922 (regarding this list, see Note #5), presumably because Perry included only volumes that were annotated by James, though it is also possible that the volume was given rather than sold to Hocking, who taught at Harvard in the decades following James's death in 1910. The discovery of this volume, which underscores James's interest in Schopenhauer's work, serves as yet another reminder of the ephemeral nature of historical evidence and the resulting gaps in the historical record (a reminder, that is, of something already illustrated by the discoveries related in this article and its sequel). When James purchased this volume and how he may have used it cannot now be determined; but the existence of another bit of Jamesian Schopenhaueriana belies any claims about his lack of interest in Schopenhauer's thought. John Kaag found this volume when he recently stumbled upon the previously unknown library of (William) Ernest Hocking at the Hocking family's New Hampshire estate (see Kaag, 2014). It is relevant to add that among the other books once owned by James, also found by Kaag in Hocking's library, were Henry Clarke Warren's *Buddhism in Translation* (1896) and Paul Carus's *Buddhism and Its Christian Critics* (1897). (Warren's book is included on Perry's list, mentioned above and in Note #5; Carus's is not, though his 1898 *Gospel of Buddha* is listed there.) James *did* annotate these books, and his annotations have allowed Kaag (2012) to clarify the significance of Buddhism for some of James's important analyses and assertions in *Varieties* and other late-life works. Additional sources that offer similar clarification (including the results of archival research by David Scott and Eugene Taylor) are discussed by King (2005).