

INTRODUCTION

This book is not only a chronological listing of books and articles William James is known to have read, it is also, in many instances, a record of James's responses to what he read. As such this volume has a value above and beyond the usual listing of a person's library; it becomes a source for learning how William James's mind evolved. Philip J. Kowalski deserves enormous credit for undertaking and bringing to public attention this on-going project of assembly, a project that has taken an almost unimaginable amount of time and effort. He inherited a dry and incomplete list of books James read and he at once expanded it so as to illuminate as many titles as possible, often with James's own comments and sometimes with the comments of editors and associates. Kowalski's work thus becomes a major resource for the study of William James, that crucial figure in psychology and philosophy, and a central figure in any study of the American mind.

James came to understand that the classicists, the formalists, the monists, the Hegelians, and the Royceans were finding more order and unity than the world of experience can warrant. James came to see that what matters—what is real-- are not *things* and not *ideas*; what matters and what's real is *process* and *experience*. He saw, with a little help from his friends, that the evolutionary advantage consciousness confers is that it gives its possessor a way “always to choose out of manifold experiences present to it at a given time some one for particular accentuation and to ignore the rest.” He also came to agree with Gustav Fechner that “the entire material universe, instead of being dead, is inwardly alive and consciously animated...in divers spans and wavelengths, inclusions and envelopements.” What we need to understand, says James, is “the idealistic notion that inner experience is the reality, and that matter is but a form in which inner experiences may appear to one another when they affect each other from the

outside.” Once we see that, says James, “it is easy to believe that consciousness or inner experience never originated, or developed, out of the unconscious, but that it and the physical universe are co-eternal aspects of one self-same reality, much as concave and convex are aspects of one curve.”

In ethics, James came to understand that what matters is not what we intend, or hope, or mean; what matters is what we do. Emerson knew this too. “The only path of escape known in all the worlds of God is performance. You must do your work before you can be released.” In psychology James saw that in many cases emotions follow actions, and not the other way round. We do not run because we are afraid, we are afraid because we are running. We have accepted James in some respects; we can now agree that there is no clear line between mind and body. But it is still not widely accepted that, as he thought, attention is the same fact as belief. Nor is it widely enough believed that the universe has no one maker, but that *chance* itself *begets* order. James is both very new and very old. As an unacknowledged founder of AA he understood the old religious wisdom that self-mastery comes only *after* self-surrender. And where Yeats wants to know who can separate the dancer from the dance, James could have told him that the only thinker we really need is the previous thought. The thought is the thinker. Process is everything. “In the order of existence,” James wrote, “behind the facts, for us there is nothing.” Plato was wrong. What William James and his radical empiricism came to say is *there is no eternal order of ideas*.

The aim of Kowalski’s *Guide to William James’s Reading* is to make a single alphabetized list of the books, articles and poems William James (1842-1910) is known to have read. The initial work on this project was done in the late 1990s by Nathan Eddy and Megan Carnes who were working for me as I was working on a biography of James. The first stage was to examine

key volumes of the Harvard University Press edition of the *Works of William James* and through the available volumes of William James correspondence as published by the University of Virginia Press. In addition Eddy and Carnes worked through the list of books in James's Library, which is shelved in Houghton Library's Reading room along with other finding aids for the large James collections. James also made many entries starting in 1864 in a notebook he called Index Rerum (which is here abbreviated WJIR). Two other manuscript lists have been combed for James's reading. One is a notebook James started in Cambridge MA in 1862, (here abbreviated as WJNB1) and a manuscript called William James Sources (here WJS) in which Ralph Barton Perry made notes and marked passages found in books from James's library which were later sold. Perry, of course, went on to write the still indispensable *Thought and Character of William James* 2 vols, Boston, Little Brown, 1935.

A Guide to William James's Reading exists only in digital form. There are substantial reasons to keep it that way. The great Whitman Archive (www.whitmanarchive.org) pioneered by Ed Folsom and Ken Price has demonstrated the superiority of a good digital archive to any possible printed version. Digital archives have an ease of addition and correction that print can only handle in awkward supplemental volumes. A digital archive such as this one can be endlessly updated and corrected, and the editors of *William James Studies* have said they are open to periodic updating of the material in the Guide. Any addition or correction sent to rhardson@gmail.com will be attended to as quickly as possible.

One challenging problem in determining definitively what James read is the difficulty posed by successive numbering systems used in cataloguing the Harvard Libraries and the various systems used to keep track of faculty borrowings. While James was teaching at Harvard, the university changed the book cataloging and numbering system not once but twice. Many of the

faculty charging lists show only the call numbers of books charged out to James, numbers from now abandoned systems. The only way to reattach author and title to these old numbers is to find the numbers in the old obsolete shelf lists which are themselves in deep storage. Eugene Taylor has had more success than anyone else tracking some of these borrowings.

Philip J. Kowalski's work will help anyone who wants to study William James. Thinking and writing about James unavoidably brings a person into close contact with the mind and heart of the man. I have felt that contact as a personal one, a laying-on of mind, giving me, with each reading or re-reading a surge of hope, vision, and power. In his vitality and his gift for kindling it in others, James is himself an endless upwelling source of what we may call, after Whitehead, *reason*, understood as "the self-discipline of the originative element in history." William James remains a force of nature, a man who has given a seismic shakeup to American thought. He is himself a force for evolution, a man who can still show us how to choose one thing over others, and how each choice is a vote for a better way of living.

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