

BOOK REVIEW: YOUNG WILLIAM JAMES THINKING

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When the playmates of his children asked about his profession, Henry James, Sr., “replied banteringly, ‘Say I’m a philosopher, say I’m a seeker of truth, say I’m a lover of my kind, say I’m an author of books if you like; or best of all, just say I’m a Student. Wilkey [one of Henry’s children]...envied a playmate who said his father was a ‘stevedore.’ He didn’t know what a stevedore was, but it was definite and sounded impressive. Why, he asked his brothers, couldn’t their father have been a stevedore?” While in becoming an instructor at Harvard he secured a profession in its own way as definite if not as impressive as that of a stevedore, Henry Senior’s oldest son was until the end his father’s son in this critical respect (*ever* the Student, the seeker). While the son would josh, “it is better to *be* than to define your being” (quoted by Croce, p. 9) or simply (!) to illuminate Being. As it turns out, however, part of William’s being was bound up with, if not defining Being or his being, coming to terms with being, in the idiosyncratically personal form it took in the unique life of a human self or, more broadly, in the experientially multitudinous forms observable in the natural world. If nature or reality is (as the mature James would proclaim) but a name for excess, this facet of it is nowhere more manifest than in the innumerable forms of being, becoming, and relation so ceaselessly and indeed tumultuously disclosed to us in our experience. Arguably, the being of any self is also a name for excess, for processes of becoming opening out and running into the world far beyond the determinate locations of its finite striving. At any rate, the life of William James suggests as much.

As far as humans are concerned, the drive or desire to *be* cannot but assume the form of being someone specifically, not anyone generally, and this entails both doing something and, conjoined to doing, being something such as a stevedore or a scientist, a physician or a physiologist, a psychologist or a philosopher. As James would write in 1898, there is “no difference in abstract truth which does not express itself in a difference of concrete fact, and of conduct consequent upon the fact, imposed on somebody, somehow, somewhere, and somewhen.”¹ To be a self is to be, at every actual

¹ Gay Wilson Allen, *William James* (NY: Viking Press, (1967)

moment of one's uncertain existence, "somebody, somehow, somewhere, and somewhen."² That is, it demands being determinate and decisive, wherein determination entails negation (saying no to certain possibilities for the sake of realizing other ones) and decisiveness demands self-denial (saying no to certain impulses, often very strong and even seemingly imperative impulses, for the sake of carrying other ones forward).

Some temperaments seem naturally disposed to being decisive, whereas other ones are often overwhelmed by the exigency of making and sticking to a decision. In the case of the latter, the habit of seeing alternatives (cf. Croce, p. 26), so valuable in our theoretical pursuits, frequently turns out to be actually crippling in practical contexts. Obviously, the decision to pursue this vocation rather than these other possibilities, to marry and, if so, to wed this woman rather than another, and to characterize the universe as, say, "so much cosmic weather," "a theatre for heroism," or in some other way is each a momentous decision. As easily and confidently as Henry James glided into a literary life, his older brother William only haltingly and anxiously tried on the role of a scientist. After a short time, he played it more or less convincingly but never entirely sunk himself into this role to the point of transfiguring himself into *being* unquestionably or unqualifiedly a scientist, as, say, Wundt or Helmholtz did. As a young man, he might have written: "[M]y only ideal of life is a scientific life" (quoted by Croce, p. 95), going so far as to claim, "if I were able by assiduous pottering to define a few physiological facts however humble I shd. feel I had not lived entirely in vain" (p. 96). No less an authority on science than C. S. Peirce, in a letter dated 1877, noted James was "not only "deeply read in old Philosophies" but also "thoroughly a scientific man" (quoted by Croce, p. 75). In identifying James as such a scientist, Peirce was giving him his highest praise. As it played out, James's life however demonstrated he did not accurately calibrate the reach of his ambition. Contenting himself with discovering a few such facts was not possible for a youth given to the most debilitating self-doubts, but one in a life-and-death struggle at

² This is of course adapted from WJ's *Pragmatism. Pragmatism & The Meaning of Truth* (Harvard), p. 30.

least to neutralize these doubts. Nothing less than devoting himself to confronting the fact of being in its invincible opacity and its unbounded suggestiveness would ultimately content him, insofar as contentment was a possibility for his ceaselessly restless mind. At the time when he was trying on the role of the scientist, he was already in the grip of such questions as those put so memorably in “The Sentiment of Rationality.” His embrace of science did little, if anything, to loosen the grip of such questions. On the contrary, this embrace seems to have intensified the lure of such questions. In time, the “intrusion” of metaphysics in his treatise on psychology would be yet another exemplification of this aspect of his thinking.

While providing his children with “a sensuous education,” and encouraging them to go in the direction of their natural impulses, it turns out that, when his oldest child William was seriously considering a career in painting, Henry, Sr., strongly discouraged his son from pursuing this passion. “I had always counted on,” William’s father emphatically asserted, “a scientific career for Willy” (quoted by Croce, p. 9). In temporary defiance of paternal disapproval, Willy studied painting but the very delight he took in sensuous particulars and in the creative integration of contrasting elements quickly led him to the study of science (above all, physiological psychology as it was just coming into being due to the efforts of Wundt, Helmholtz, and others). *Young William James Thinking* is the story of James’s intellectual development after he turned from art to science, specifically, from figurative painting to physiological psychology, even if an aesthetic sensibility is evident, from first to last, in his scientific and philosophic pursuits.³ It is instructive to recall Wundt’s appraisal of James’s most singular contribution to natural science, *The Principles of Psychology* (1890): “It is literature, it is beautiful, but it is not psychology” – that is, however admirable *The Principles* is, it is not science. So much the worse of science! Of course, not all scientifically

³ Jacques Barzun. The “mind is natively not a scientist but an artist.” In James, it is “artist first and last.” “William James: The Mind as Artist” in *A Century of Psychology as Science*, ed. S. Koch and D. E. Leary (Washington, D.C.: American Psychological Association, 1992), pp. 904-10. Quoted by James Campbell, *Experiencing William James* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2017), p. 7

oriented psychologists would pronounce so harshly on James's singular achievement.

Even for the privileged offspring of Henry James, Sr., the task of establishing a career was as much in William James's day as our own a daunting one. William was born in 1842 and thus was, at the point of forging a path for himself, beginning around 1862. This involved more than the choice of a career. It also involved coming to terms with the traditional institution of marriage and, without exaggeration, with nothing less than (in words drawn from his later years) "the total push and pressure of the cosmos" (*Pragmatism*, p. 9). That is, it meant, at least in the case of James, the choice of a career, a stance toward marriage (first and foremost, confronting the question of whether to marry at all), and the refinement of his orientation toward the universe. The decisions confronting the young James ranged from the most intimately personal to the sweepingly cosmic, from the most mundanely practical choices to the most ethereally theoretical commitments (at least, seemingly ethereal commitments). Even so, each had to do with how he comported himself in the world. For thinking was one form of conduct bearing upon other, more directly public or tangible forms.

The process of identifying a profession, one especially congenial to an individual's talents, interests, and (somewhat paradoxically) also to that person's flaws and even neuroses, ordinarily encompasses the challenge of forging a self-identity more or less in line with the demands, expectations, and promises of, for most individuals, historically instituted professions. Even in the case of, say, a "born" scientist, the innate inclinations and gifts need to be shaped over time to fit the rigorous demands of experimental inquiry. Put otherwise, individuals chose the path of science by *making* themselves into someone capable of making their way along this path and through the thickets of the bypaths onto which they are inevitably forced, at least if their minds are in "an earnestly inquiring state." Innate inclinations and talents do not suffice. An experientially acquired sensibility and a typically wide range of specific skills are needed.

The university is, as Adam Phillips astutely suggests, "for some

people essentially a crisis of ambition".⁴ But, as the life of J. S. Mill (Phillips's example) reveals, simply the first years of early manhood can also be such a crisis. So, too, does the life of the young William James, quite apart from the university. To use Croce's telling expression, "the school of experience" no less than the university can be the site of such crises. From his late adolescence until his first appointment in 1873 at Harvard, as an instructor of anatomy, James's young adulthood was indeed a protracted crisis of not only professional but also erotic ambition. Selves are not found. They are forged. How a bright, multitalented, but deeply insecure and, in the presence of young women, socially awkward youth forged himself into a professional self makes for a fascinating and instructive tale. While many of the details are familiar to students of James, a detailed narrative of how William James became William James is unquestionably such a tale.

We, and indeed James, are extremely fortunate to have such an intellectual historian as Paul Croce devote himself to the reconstruction of this story. Croce has immersed himself in the published and private writings of James (diaries, letters, and miscellanea) for the purpose of exploring in depth and detail the series of acts by which James made himself into an empiricist or a thinker animated at every turn by his fidelity to the facts of experience, however much these facts might conflict with the sanctioned categories of the most secure disciplines. This meant initially trying to make himself into a scientist, though even the young James felt the tension between becoming a scientist and becoming a thinker increasingly faithful to the disclosures of experience. Above all else, he was committed to a broader, deeper empiricism than that exemplified in the natural sciences, though this only became fully apparent in his later years. His empiricism drove him both *to* and *beyond* the science of his day, but one suspects that, in his father and Emerson, William saw a too easy way of reconciling experimentally acquired knowledge and spiritually needed guidance. That is, he was not altogether given to go beyond science in the manner of his elders. Stringing the bow demanded Herculean effort, not literary flourishes,

⁴ Adam Phillips. *On Flirtation* (Cambridge: Harvard, 1994), p. 46.

no matter how uplifting or suggestive. As Croce so skillfully sketches his story, the protracted crisis at the center of the years when James turned from painting to science was both an integral phase in James's intellectual development having its own inherent fascination and a proleptic time in which we can observe clear anticipations of the mature James. But the author wants us to tarry with James as he works through his subject's crisis of ambition. The rewards of doing so are many. For Croce has an exquisite eye for the revelatory detail, also an equally discerning ear for the resonant phrase or sentence. We are the great beneficiaries of his archival explorations, but no less of his storytelling skills. Passages from James's letters or diaries are inserted into the story at the points where they are most apt. Moreover, James's talent for, and delight in, visual experience are honored in this book.

In his earlier book on James, as its subtitle indicates, Croce examined the young James in the context of overlapping cultural crises. No crisis was more central or disconcerting than, to recall the subtitle, *The Eclipse of Certainty* (or, to use Dewey's expression, the abandonment of the quest for certainty, specifically, the increasingly fantastic quest for absolute or apodictic certitude). Part of the irony is that, in the case of James's personal and professional struggles, the eclipse of theoretical certainty was the crucible in which the young James forged the existential self-assurance to make himself into a scientist, at the same time into an empirically responsible theorist. As already indicated, there is a tension at the heart of such self-fashioning, for scientific empiricism was unduly limited when compared to the empirical orientation of a truly earnest inquirer who had the courage to identify the limits of science for what they were: artificially self-limiting perspectives imposed for the sake of making a field of inquiry amenable to narrowly focused observation and experimentation. These self-limits or -constraints are to a great extent enabling constraints. They are indispensable to establishing a specific field of empirical inquiry. Even in their totality, however, they fall far short of defining human experience in its full scope. Their power is in large measure a function of the limits within which their devotees conscientiously impose upon their work. James was as appreciative of the necessity for a science to impose such limits on its field of inquiry

as he was committed to exemplify the need for empiricists to transgress such boundaries.

The Eclipse of Certainty is the story of the overlapping contexts in which James's intellectual life took its singular shape, whereas *Young William James Thinking* is focused on "the center of these circles" (p. 7), the process of thinking through the central controversies in especially the natural sciences but, no less, through the complex entanglement of these controversies with the broader culture. These enveloping crises were superimposed upon the thinker's deeply and, in some respects, idiosyncratic crises. The gerund in the title of the later book is critical. It underscores, no doubt deliberately, the process of maturation, of halting steps, decisive breakthroughs, prolonged arrests, quick reversals, and much else, so evident from the documents so painstakingly investigated by Croce. It also recalls, intentionally or not, Emerson's characterization of the scholar as man thinking.

This is a deeply personal book in at least two senses, while being a study meeting the highest standards of historical scholarship. For it is an intimately personal portrait of the young William James thinking and doing so in contexts in which he his doubts and anxieties worked both to undermine and drive his efforts to stake an identity in the world beyond the circle of his family and friends. (There is one respect in which it is arguably not intimate enough, a point to which I will return.) But this study is also framed by a personal revelation by the author regarding the final phase of this book's precarious completion. Its writing appears to mirror its subject, for the process was protracted. In his characteristic manner, Croce reads his experience through the lens of James's reflections on life, above all, James's advice that "Results shd. not be too voluntarily aimed at or too busily thought of" (quoted on p. xviii). The writing of this book exemplifies the complex process the author presents in a section entitled "Acceptance and Struggle" (pp. 218ff.). Part of the paradox here is that acceptance can, in some instances, extend all the way to the acceptance of failure or defeat and, from the depths of that experience, drive toward a renewal of struggle (think here how soldiers who realize they will soon be utterly vanquished fight with intensified vigor, often greater vigor than they have ever before

marshalled). Blurry vision in his left eye prompted Croce to seek a medical diagnosis, including “an MRI, [in the words of one of his doctors] ‘just to rule some things out’” (p. xviii). As it turned out, the result of the MRI revealed “a tumor near my pituitary gland that was pushing on my optic nerve.” “After immediately imagining the worst, and getting advice on the next steps, within a few hours,” Croce informs his readers, “I was back at my writing desk, revising the paragraph I had written the day before.” He further reveals to us: “Like James [i.e., like especially the young James so often in his early maturity], I too was discouraged, but also, like him, letting go of results had a ‘potent effect in my inner life.’” He had no plan “for publication or for even for just completing the book.” The hours of his days were sufficient unto themselves, the task at hand without prospect or promise of completion (“the process, the doing”) “was what mattered” (pp. xviii-xix).

This is, I am disposed to imagine, the unifying thread not only of James’s story and the author’s own, but also of Croce’s portrait of the young James (i.e., it is what ties together author and subject as well as the author’s treatment of that subject). This points to the need of accepting one’s frailties, limitations, and even failures as a condition for taking up the interminable task or struggle: To give up can be a decisive step in going on. Croce does not quite say this, though he nearly does. He finished this book by distancing himself from the resolve or determination to finish it, by throwing himself into the process for its own sake, come what may. In doing so, he appears to have been content with utterly transient achievements (e.g., writing several pages that might never make their way into a published work) and an uncalculating engagement in a radically uncertain endeavor.

Experience had or lived is one thing, experience understood or simply illuminated, however partially, is quite another. As Croce so masterfully shows at various turns, the young James lacked the conceptual resources to illuminate his struggles and crises, his ambitions and ambivalences, while the mature James crafted far more adequate *Denkmittel* (*Pragmatism*, p. 84; *The Meaning of Truth*, 208). Even so, an important question is the extent to which the resources provided by William James, *after* he became William James, are

adequate. For example, as erotic a person as James, young and old, manifestly was, he did not confront this facet of his existence with his characteristic candor. His admirable anti-reductionism disinclined him to make too much of Eros, but it possibly disposed him also to make too little of it (an overcompensation on his part to certain tendencies already evident in the closing decades of the 19th and the opening years of the 20th century). Croce's mention of Pauline Goldmark (p. 212) points to an aspect of James's character and temperament worthy of much deeper examination than Croce provides. He is all too close to James here, too prone to divert attention from the patent facts in their glaring obviousness, to turn from them all too quickly. While he calls attention to James being susceptible to being smitten by attractive young women, he leaves the matter unexamined. In one sense, James's marriage to Alice resolved the erotic crisis of his youth, just as his securing a position at Harvard resolved his career crisis. But, in another sense, it seems it did nothing of the sort, in either case. He evolved into an emotionally and intellectually promiscuous being. His career at Harvard was a series of transitions to philosophy and, then, from within philosophy, a series of transitions from one position to another more experientially adequate one. James's experience reveals, especially in his later but already in his younger years, a deeply erotic persona, but the conceptual resources provided by him, regardless of the specific phase of his intellectual development, do little to throw light on this prominent feature of his idiosyncratic psyche.

In a work in which an intellectual historian of such impressive gifts focuses on "the center of the circles" or contexts in which James fashioned himself into an empiricist, open to all facets and levels of experience, it is somewhat disappointing to have him evade such questions. Given what Paul Croce has so skillfully illuminated, however, this is a trivial complaint. For no one has enabled us to see better how the young William James, as often as not "thinking through his pen" (Perry, I, 491) in writings intended solely for himself, became the figure so many of us admire and adulate (in Whitehead's words, became that "lovable genius") than the author of the book under review. It is possible to imagine the self-portrait on the cover of

Science and Religion in the Era of William James, the reproduction of the photograph on the cover of *Young William James Thinking*, and finally the portrait by Sarah Wyman Whitman hanging in Emerson Hall at Harvard University superimposed on another one, with the early self-portrait largely hiding the 1965 photograph and the 1903 portrait. That is, it is possible to imagine these and other images of James forming the reverse of a palimpsest. On this construal, Whitman's portrait of the mature James is not superimposed on the images of his earlier self to the point of mostly, or completely, obscuring the underlying images. Rather the self-portrait, with a somewhat sidelong glance, is slightly giving way to the image of the mature James, but for an extended time holds its own. It commands attention in its own right. We cannot help but see the youth as the father of the man, but also the man as himself inextricably entangled in crises of ambition reaching back into his late adolescence. Above all, we see the youth thinking, thinking his way through and into problem after problem. "By the end of his years as a student and then a teacher of science, from 1861 until 1877, when he was searching for direction in his vocation, philosophical orientation, and personal life," Croce stresses, "he didn't solve the problems of his youth; he worked around them, and he worked through them, without expecting results" (p. xix). For Croce no less than his subject, this "was a freeing mental posture that allowed him [James] to take his first 'act of free will' in 1870" (ibid.). "My first act of free will shall be," James proclaimed to himself, "to believe in free will" (quoted on p. 228). As it actually unfolded, however, such an act called for both reiteration and, paradoxically, the willingness to abandon ambition and goals, allowing oneself to work without "too" busily thinking of, or voluntarily aiming at, results (quoted on p. xviii). Even at this juncture in his life, the gospel of work seems to be conjoined with that of letting go, of even giving up. Whether it has the warrant of the Absolute or not, *the willingness* of the young person, especially one aspiring for an exalted career, *to take a vocational holiday* might be, for certain youths at least, one of the best approaches to vocational self-fashioning. The crippling Calvinist sense of being utterly unworthy of one's chosen vocation can rob the talented individual of that vocation before the individual has even begun to

fashion himself into a minimally competent practitioner. On this account, grace alone saves one, though the recovery of the capacity to work is a sign of the influx of grace. In more mundane terms, giving up is often the most effective way of going on. It is perhaps simply a way of tricking oneself into persisting in a task when one's increasingly strenuous efforts have proven to be increasingly enervating. One is reminded of a passage from Robert Louis Stevenson quoted by James in *The Varieties of Religious Experience*: "There is indeed one element in human destiny that not blindness itself can controvert. Whatever else we are intended to do, we are not intended to succeed; failure is the fate allotted." James notes, but only in a footnote: Stevenson "adds with characteristic healthy-mindedness: 'Our business is to continue to fail in good spirits.'" Whatever truths we discover, we do so by means of making mistakes. Whatever success we attain, it is itself wrested from lessons learned by failures, often of a humiliating or devastating cast. While this is only one strand or perhaps pattern in the tapestry woven by Croce, it is an arresting one. There is more to William James becoming William James than this dialectic of surrender and exertion, or acceptance and struggle. One of the many virtues of Croce's book is that he sets this dialectic alongside other patterns of development.

One of the greatest benefits is that it (paradoxically?) achieves its goal. "The stories [assembled by Croce here] present a chance to meet James again for the first time" (p. 25). This is obviously a singular opportunity, also a significant accomplishment. Much like William James's own conception of experience, our debt to the author of *The Eclipse of Certainty* has grown wider and deeper with *Young William James Thinking*. The story of how James moved, so haltingly, so uncertainly, from his youthful embrace of science to his first appointment as an instructor of science, is, in truth, a sequence of stories, coursing through an intense engagement with ancient philosophy and through sectarian alternatives to mainstream medicine. He revealed himself to be his father's son ("Say I'm a philosopher, say I'm a seeker of truth ... or best of all, just say I'm a Student") but also much more than that (for the task of reconciling the scientific and the spiritual impulses of the human psyche was much

more demanding, complex, and dangerous than either Henry, Sr., or Emerson appreciated). In seeing the student becoming a scientist, we see the empiricist from the very first suspicious of the pretensions of scientific imperialism, that is, attentive to the limits of purely scientific empiricism and, thus, open to possibilities of human encounter beyond the methods of the natural sciences. In becoming a scientist, James was already moving beyond science, by remaining a Student in his father's sense or a Scholar in Emerson's. He also was animated by a faith he inherited from his father, a faith in the benefits which science was destined to bestow on humanity, especially if its practitioners accepted the limits of their own practice and hence did not use the authority of Science to rule out of court other approaches than those sanctioned by that authority. While Freud was drawn to physiology and anatomy out of an almost strictly theoretical interest, the humanitarian desire to relieve human suffering being secondary, William was here once again his father's child, motivated by the desire to relieve human beings from needless suffering. In an early study, Freud set as his goal transforming neurotic misery into ordinary human unhappiness. In his early years no less than later ones, James was unabashed to fly in the face of respectability and defend whatever might prove effective in alleviating especially the paralyzing effects of human misery, neurotic or otherwise.

At the heart of this story, then, there is more than the embrace of science itself. There is the embrace of ambivalence, in diverse contexts. The forms of conciliation championed by James were, in Hanna Segal and thus in Freud's sense, achievements of ambivalence. Our deepest ambivalences are not resolved: they are *worked through*. The process of working through ambivalence always encompasses to some extent that of working through loss (in a word, mourning), since some part of what is loved on both sides must be let go (or its having been destroyed by the countervailing love must be more candidly acknowledged than our love of what has been lost tends to allow). "A close look at his youth shows," as Croce stresses in his Introduction, "James refining the burdens of his indecisions in his development of a *decisive ambivalence*, a decisiveness within his ambivalence, in the creation of perspectives boldly integrating contrasts" (p. 26; emphasis

added).

In sum, we encounter, in *Young William James Thinking*, a student of science whose apprenticeship makes him aware of the limits of science in a manner doing nothing to undercut his passionate commitment to experimental methods; someone whose training in medicine, at the time when medical materialism was taking decisive hold of mainstream medicine, took seriously *some* of the “quacks” denounced by champions of the mainstream; the wisdom of ancient thought, not least of all classical Stoicism, as a counterbalance to both Christianity, as an anxious struggle for individual salvation, and the newly emerging scientific ethos as an all too confident regime for human betterment, social and personal; the crisis, the confrontation with the shape of madness as possibly that of his own insecure, precarious self, and the decision in the face of this to use his freedom as a resource for his and freedom’s radical self-affirmation (“My first act of free will shall be to believe in free will” [quoted on p. 228]); a traditional marriage, one in which gender roles in a stereotypical form tended to be securely in place, allowing for emotional promiscuity, at least on the part of the husband; an empiricist for whom the tender promptings of our spiritual side are as deserving of candid, indeed unblinking, recognition as the brute confrontation with irreducible facts; and the impulse to philosophize, at the center of which is the disposition “of always seeing an alternative” (quoted on p. 26), but an impulse, since it is that of a human actor implicated in one dramatic situation after another, not that of an idle spectator floating with a foothold nowhere in the natural world, to conciliate between (or among) alternatives. Such conciliation does not preclude an uncompromising commitment to what can never be anything more than an inherently uncertain stance. Ineradicable ambivalence itself does not preclude “decisive ambivalence,” a steady enough decisiveness in the context of the countervailing lures and pushes of rival loves. If William James was, as Charles Taylor called him, “a great philosopher of the cusp” (quoted on p. 26) – and I, along with Croce, endorse this characterization – then it is in no small part because James wrested his decisiveness from his dividedness, a dividedness more than personal (put positively, a broadly cultural dividedness as well as

a deeply personal one).

This is nowhere more apparent in his attitude toward philosophy itself. Let us move toward our conclusion by recalling what is, in miniature, an encomium to his philosophical ambivalence (perhaps also his ambivalent philosophizing):

Philosophy is at once the most sublime and the most trivial of human pursuits. It works in the minutest crannies [contemplatively grubbing among the sheer particulars imaginable by theoretical reason] and it opens out the widest vistas. It 'bakes no bread' ... but it can inspire our souls with courage; and repugnant as its manners, its doubting and challenging, its quibbling and dialectics, often are to common people, no one can get along without the far-flashing beams of light it sends over the world's perspectives. These illuminations at least, and the contrast effects of darkness and mystery that accompany them, give what it says an interest much more than professional. (*Pragmatism*, pp. 10-11).

On this score, the young William James in his passion for philosophizing thought no differently than the mature James who penned this encomium to his deep ambivalence toward this peculiar human pursuit. But the capacity to give such arresting form to this definitive ambivalence was the fruit of many years, rooted deeply in the soil of youthful hesitation, uncertainty, indecisiveness, gusto, and an irrepressible if also frequently stultified vitality. Paul Croce shows, in detail, how James's thought drove deeply into the darkness of that soil and, at the same, how the plant growing from these roots struggled to break the surface and radiate in the open-air of variable weather.