

### James and Psychical Research in Context

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### Abstract and Keywords

James's open advocacy, practice, and defense of unrestrictedly empirical approaches to telepathy, mediumship, and other alleged "supernatural" phenomena was a central part of his work, yet it is still often misunderstood or passed over. By placing James back into an international network of contemporary elite intellectuals who were also preoccupied with reported occult phenomena as fundamental scientific anomalies that may or may not have spiritual significance, this chapter argues that James's psychical research can be reconciled with the progressiveness for which his canonical ideas are often regarded. When appreciated within important political and medical contexts of his time, and in view of his long-term collaborations in the study of trance states and hallucinations in non-pathological populations with F. W. H. Myers and other figures connected to Henry Sidgwick in England, James's psychical research was an integral part of his evolving experimental psychology. Growing out of James's deep discontent with dogmatism in science and religion, his unorthodox work also shared mutual origins with his pragmatist and radical empiricist philosophy. Moreover, by illustrating the polemical nature of simultaneous attacks on James's psychical research and pragmatism by fellow psychologists, and the employment of religious arguments by supposedly scientific critics, this chapter suggests the story of James and psychical research is a reminder that "scientific naturalism" as an inconsistently defined yet absolute standard of modern Western academic activity has grown out of concerns that were not as self-evidently science-based or humanistic as we may be accustomed to believe.

Keywords: William James, psychical research, scientific naturalism, Europe, degeneration, psychopathology, absolute idealism, science professionalization, experimental psychology

## Introduction

James is widely respected as a philosopher and regarded as a "founding father" of modern psychology. But not many like to talk about his unorthodox preoccupations with telepathy and other "psychic" phenomena, which tend to be viewed as an embarrassing

stain on his otherwise progressive record. After all, modern curricula of psychology adhere to a prescription spelled out by Cornell psychologist Edward B. Titchener over a century ago, who declared in *Science* magazine: “No scientifically-minded psychologist believes in telepathy” (Titchener 1898, 897).

Titchener’s article triggered a heated exchange with James as perhaps the most eminent though by no means only scientifically minded psychologist who did believe in telepathy.<sup>1</sup> This was not the first dispute between James and a psychological colleague over questions concerning “psychic” phenomena. In fact, his anger over Titchener was in part a hangover from a recent skirmish with another fellow psychologist, James McKeen Cattell, concerning Cattell’s misrepresentation of a report on experiments with the Boston trance medium Leonora Piper by James’s friend and fellow psychical researcher, Richard Hodgson (cf. EPR 1898, chap. 25). Discovered by James in 1885, Mrs. Piper was rigorously tested by himself, Hodgson, and various other investigators in the United States and England, most of whom agreed that the most rational counter-explanation for actual spirit communication in her case was not fraud or chance coincidence, but the assumption that benign “split personalities” appearing in her trances conformed to sitters’ expectations by telepathically tapping the minds of the living to convincingly play the roles of spirits of the departed (cf. EPR 1890, chap. 12; 1909 chap. 37).

Mediums were rarely prepared to undergo the level of critical scrutiny endured by Mrs. Piper (whose trance state was tested through blistering, forced inhalation of ammonia, and other intrusive measures), but a more frequent complaint by James concerned the difficulty of finding experimenters willing to investigate them in the first place (e.g., EPR 1869, chap. 1; 1901, 195; 1909, 36; PP 1890, 1.374–375; PBC 1892, 190; EP 1890, 248–249). For example, in a letter to Cattell written shortly after his debate with Titchener, James stated that he had invited skeptical Harvard colleagues Hugo Münsterberg and Josiah Royce to freely examine Mrs. Piper at his house, only to receive blank refusals. What’s more, James likened such colleagues who refused firsthand tests while publicly declaring heretical researchers dupes to the legendary “astronomers who wouldn’t look through Galileo’s telescope at Jupiter’s moons” (CWJ 1899 8.483).

Many will consider James’s comparison of antipathies to research into stereotypically “supernatural” phenomena with the story of Galileo an affront to the secular and naturalistic tradition in which Western academics have been trained. After all, the installment of research groups investigating psychic phenomena at universities all around the globe since the 1930s notwithstanding (cf. Mauskopf and McVaugh 1980), associations of telepathy with gullibility and fraud are perhaps as widespread as the (now considered wrong) image of Galileo as an iconic quasi-martyr of modern secular science in the battle against religious dogmatism.<sup>2</sup> But the purpose of this chapter is not to engage in ongoing debates over the reality of telepathy. Instead, I will suggest that the supposedly long-running “naturalism” of contemporary science and Western academic culture at large is a retrospective construction of relatively recent vintage, built partly on unchecked, and ultimately problematic, ongoing historical assumptions.

With James as my obvious focus, it should be understood that he needs to be regarded as but one specimen among a considerable number of figures who are often assumed to have helped humanity make the critical shift from an unenlightened past to a progressive modernity, while at the same time appearing to sin against a basic modernist principle: at the very time when modern sciences began to emancipate themselves from theological interference through professionalization, James and other elite intellectuals actively contested the view that “naturalism” was a direct and inevitable outcome of the growth of scientific knowledge.<sup>3</sup> Sometimes adorned with the prefix “scientific,” “naturalism” is now perhaps the most basic precondition for professionalized academic work, and yet an unambiguous definition of the term turns out to be surprisingly difficult. In fact, minimal definitions of *any* standard notion of ontological as well as methodological naturalism appear to be identical with the manner in which Thomas H. Huxley first used “scientific naturalism” in 1892, i.e., by mere contrast with a rather evasively construed “supernaturalism” (Huxley 1892, 35).<sup>4</sup>

Several authors have already outlined with varying accuracy what James’s unorthodox science comprised of. However, no secondary text can be a substitute for James’s original writings on the “supernatural” as compiled in *Essays in Psychical Research*. And while Robert McDermott’s Introduction and editorial notes by Ignas Skrupskelis to *EPR* are important, much more needs to be said about the wider context to which James’s corpus responded as a whole. Indeed, his open advocacy, practice, and various defenses of unrestrictedly empirical approaches to the “occult” still await to be rigorously situated within the context of his own time.<sup>5</sup> By providing a necessarily rough sketch of this wider context, I hope to offer a perspective which counters prevalent but unhelpful views that interpret *any* critical responses to “naturalism” as self-evident regress. On the contrary, I argue that if reconstructed on its own terms rather than through the epistemological filters of the present, James’s psychical research can be reconciled with the progressiveness for which his canonical ideas are often regarded.

## Scientists, Miracles, and the Politics of Degeneration

As Paul Croce reminds us in his contribution to this volume, the word “scientist” is a fairly recent invention. Proposed in the 1830s by the English polymath William Whewell as a unifying label for members of the newly founded British Association for the Advancement of Science, the term was initially rejected and ridiculed by many science icons particularly in England, including, for example, Lord Kelvin, Lord Rayleigh (a colleague of James’s at the Society for Psychical Research), and “Darwin’s bulldog,” Thomas Huxley (Ross, 1962, 77–78). It was not until the 1890s, around the time when Huxley first used “scientific naturalism” roughly in the sense in which it is deployed today, that “scientist” became more widely accepted and commonly denoted an empirical worker committed to a “naturalistic” outlook which categorically excluded from the inventory of nature the kinds

of debated anomalies of which James and fellow psychical researchers were trying to make sense.

While “scientist” was more readily accepted in the United States than in Britain, James would never completely embrace the term. In his writings, he often put the word in inverted commas, and to the vocal opponent of psychical research James McKeen Cattell he explained that he once used “*soi-disant* scientist” to deliberately “cast contempt on the word ‘scientist’, for which I have a dislike, though it is evidently doomed to acquire the rights of citizenship.” To James, the word suggested “the priggish sectarian view of science, as something *against* religion, *against* sentiment, etc.,” and he meant “to suggest the narrowness of the sort of mind that should delight in *self-styling itself* ‘scientist,’ as it proceeded to demolish psychical researchers” (CWJ 1898 8.364, original emphases).

Back in England, Huxley’s first use of “scientific naturalism” occurred a decade after another neologism was invented by a nephew of Whewell’s, Frederic W. H. Myers. In November 1882, Myers, a co-founder of the Society for Psychical Research (SPR) and the man who was to become James’s most significant collaborator in psychology, coined “telepathy.”<sup>6</sup> In hindsight, it might be tempting to assume it was predestined from the start that “scientist” and “telepathy” were terms that would never go well together in the academies. Still, the making of modern psychology, for which James took such great credit, marked a short but historically significant period when a reconciliation of these terms did not seem entirely out of the question (cf. Sommer 2013a, 2013b). Moreover, Myers’s neologism signifies a continuity of certain ideas and beliefs which, as fundamental revisions in current historical scholarship have revealed, had not simply been killed off through the growth of scientific knowledge during the Scientific Revolution and the Enlightenment (cf. Porter 1999; Sommer 2013a, chap. 1, 2014; Josephson-Storm 2017; Hunter 2020).

In England, for example, future physics Nobel laureate SPR members such as Lord Rayleigh and J. J. Thomson would follow with critical but sympathetic interest the unorthodox investigations of more active colleagues like the discoverer of thallium and collaborator with the Curies in the exploration of radioactivity, William Crookes (Marie Curie would join the SPR in 1911); the Professor of Experimental Physics at the Royal College of Science for Ireland, William F. Barrett; and the pioneer of electromagnetism research and radio technology, Oliver Lodge (Noakes 2019). With James’s friends Edmund Gurney and Frederic Myers as the Society’s most industrious workers, however, the major projects of the English SPR explicitly sought to contribute to the fledgling field of experimental psychology. In this regard it is also vital to acknowledge that James was by far the SPR’s most active American representative. Indeed, modern psychologists writing histories of their discipline are prone to forget that most of James’s own empirical and experimental contributions to psychology were published in the *Proceedings* of the American SPR (EPR 1886, chaps. 3–4; 1889, chap. 10; 1890, chap. 12; EP 1886, 190–197, 200–203; 1887 204–215; CWJ 1902 10.1–2; Taylor 1996, 18–20).

Far from being attempts to scientifically prove life after death, however, James's experiments were mainly independent replications of studies of rudimentary "divided selves" in hypnotism and automatic writing, which directly tackled questions about the unity of the mind and cognitive capacities of its subliminal regions. With Gurney, Myers, Pierre Janet, Alfred Binet, Max Dessoir, and others, James actively contested German-style physiological psychology as the predominant mode of psychological science by turning induced automatisms and altered states of consciousness into instruments and domains of psychological experimentation. James cited some of his own results, along with related studies from France and Germany, throughout the *Principles of Psychology* and its abridged version. Moreover, these studies are also vital for an appreciation of the theoretical framework James applied in his lectures on abnormal psychology (ML 1895, 1896, chap. 5 and Appendix III; Taylor 1983) and in the *Varieties of Religious Experience*.

Much has been made of James's discovery of Mrs. Piper in the year he lost his infant boy Herman, which at first glance might suggest that James's prime interest in mediumship was in finding consoling evidence for an afterlife. However, James's studies of Mrs. Piper are long pre-dated by previous mediumistic experiments (cf. CWJ 1874 4.496) and his first published critique of scientists refusing to investigate spiritualism (EPR 1869, chap. 1). Moreover, when James started to collaborate with the English SPR in the early 1880s, their work would actually inspire precious little hope that evidence for survival could be established at all, and on the contrary seemed to directly undermine it. In fact, the initially skeptical stance toward spiritualism particularly by psychologically oriented SPR leaders like Henry and Eleanor Sidgwick, Gurney, Myers, and Hodgson greatly annoyed spiritualists like the "other Darwin," Alfred Russel Wallace, who had converted to the belief that mediums indeed channeled spirits of the dead after studying the claimed marvels of spiritualism essentially as theoretically isolated anomalies.

In contrast to Wallace and other spiritualists, however, Sidgwick, Myers, and Gurney promoted psychical research as an integrative exploration that sought to establish theoretical continuities between the claimed extraordinary phenomena of spiritualism and cutting-edge psychological and medical knowledge of what the *embodied* mind could do. Grounding their studies of mediumistic trance productions in the state of the art of more conventional psychological research suggesting the occurrence of rudimentary "multiple selves" in dreams, hypnosis, and hallucinations in non-mediumistic samples, they offered explanations of mediumship and spirit-seership that did not actually require the "spirit hypothesis." Yet, rather than chiming in with contemporary mainstream theories, which reduced altered states and subliminal cognition to physiology or declared them inherently inferior to the ordinary capacities of the everyday waking self, Myers proposed an alternative model that was parsimonious and heretical perhaps in equal measure.

Mediumship, according to Myers, could in most cases be understood in terms of natural tendencies of the mind to create divisions in itself. The more unorthodox part of Myers's model consisted in its implication that the waking self, far from constituting the inherently superior part of the mind, was already just a partition of a more comprehensive whole. This "hidden self," according to Myers, was the origin of cognitive and creative capacities

that were sometimes vastly superior to those of the habitual waking mind. What's more, the mind's subliminal regions were taken as the conduit of telepathic impressions, which Myers conceptualized in terms of "uprushes" into conscious awareness from a cosmic nexus perpetually connecting all beings. Hence, Myers argued, even when a medium provided highly specific details about a supposedly communicating deceased person, spiritualists were wrong to assume this in itself was sufficient proof for actual spirit identity (cf. Myers 1884, 1885). Myers would later convince himself that some cases of mediumship constituted genuine spirit communication. But when he first proposed his subliminal psychology, Alfred Russel Wallace and other spiritualists who had joined the SPR in the hope its work would confirm their beliefs felt betrayed. Many withdrew their support, and others fiercely attacked Myers and colleagues as dogmatic anti-spiritualists (Hamilton 2009, chap. 4; Sommer 2013a, 104, 165–166).

For a short but crucial period during the professionalization of modern psychology, the approach of Gurney and Myers—taken up by James and another founder of the psychological profession, Théodore Flournoy in Switzerland—seemed to advance into a serious rival of German-style physiological psychology commonly associated with Wilhelm Wundt (Shamdasani 1994; Sommer 2013a, chap. 3, 2013b). From the inception of the International Congresses of Psychology in 1889, members of the "Sidgwick group" (minus Gurney, who died in 1888) were actively involved in their organization, and in fact represented British psychology until Myers's death in 1901. At the first session in Paris, the Congress commissioned an international replication of a previous field study of "telepathic hallucinations" by the SPR, with James taking charge of the American portion (cf. EPR 1889–1897, chap. 11). Moreover, Henry Sidgwick served as president of the second session in London in 1892, with Myers organizing it (jointly with James Sully) as secretary. And while it has been remarked that the early SPR membership directories read like a Who's Who of Victorian physical sciences, they prominently featured early major representatives of modern psychology in particular, including not just James (Freud and Jung would join long after Myers's death), but especially French leaders of fledgling psychology such as Théodule Ribot, Pierre Janet and Henri-Étienne Beaunis.

To understand the centrality of hypnotism as a tool of experimentation in the psychological work of the SPR and James, it is vital to consider the concrete context into which psychology was born as a professionalized university discipline. After the practice and theory of mesmerism was deliberately but not altogether successfully purged of its occult phenomenology by figures like James Braid in England, Jean-Martin Charcot in France, and Rudolf Heidenhain in Germany, it began a partial rehabilitation in the guise of medical hypnotism as well as a method of "mental vivisection" in psychology. James's own hypnotic experiments and hypnotherapeutic efforts—e.g., in the treatment of the famous Ansel Bourne case of multiple personality—are not often elaborated on in histories of psychology. Yet, together with his studies in automatic writing and the psychology of trance, and his participation in research on hallucinations in the "sane," hypnotic inductions and treatments of divided strands of memory and volition by James and other psychologists were not as marginal as might be supposed today. Hypnosis formed part of a discrete integrative method of psychological experimentation, which James himself considered sci-

entifically far more promising than experiments in physiological psychology.<sup>7</sup> Moreover, the supposedly inevitable evolution of mesmerism with its occult repertoire including thought-transference, clairvoyance, and spirit visions into a “naturalistic” hypnotism grounded in the principle of suggestion did not occur in a cultural vacuum. In fact, the “naturalization” of mesmerism was indicative of a larger trend that did not actually begin in medicine or the sciences, or even in the nineteenth century.

In Germany, for example, the rapid decline of mesmerism and Romantic *Naturphilosophie* (Fichte, Schelling, Hegel, and Schopenhauer were all convinced of the reality of mesmeric clairvoyance) cannot be understood without an acknowledgement of the war on the “supernatural” as a shorthand for Catholicism that was waged by political radical theologians, philosophers, writers, and scientists throughout the nineteenth century. Roughly since the days of the Reformation, Catholic miracle belief was widely held to be a necessary condition of theocratic despotism, and campaigns to root out “superstitions” associated with Catholicism were central in developments leading to the French Revolution and related upheavals, which spilled over into neighboring countries. In Germany, related major events like the March Revolution of 1848, the “debate concerning materialism” among naturalists and medics since the 1850s, and Bismarck’s *Kulturkampf* during the 1870s lastingly shaped the way in which modern sciences started to organize themselves into secular professions (cf. Gregory 1977; Blackbourn 1993). Indeed, long before “naturalism” became a basic prescription for professionalized scientific practice, from the late 1830s a new generation of theologians spearheaded by David Friedrich Strauss more than paved the way for the “disenchantment” of nature when they demoted the biblical miracles from preambles of Christianity to vulgar heathen myths.

To say that the professionalization of psychology in Germany by Wundt and others took place in a climate that was not exactly conducive to investigations of occult phenomena would in fact be a gross understatement. After all, Wundt’s inauguration of his experimental psychology coincided with the final phase of the *Kulturkampf* (“struggle for culture”), a virtual war on the Catholic Church throughout the 1870s. As in the days of the March Revolution, politicians and men of science with strong political leanings such as Rudolf Virchow and Darwin’s “German bulldog,” Ernst Haeckel, utilized an Enlightenment rhetoric that did a lot of polemical work in equating Catholic miracle beliefs with political corruption, bigotry, mental disease, and magical beliefs characteristic of the “lower races,” lumping new occult movements like spiritualism readily into the mix.

Wundt himself attacked eminent scientific colleagues who seriously investigated spiritualism in a pamphlet that was published in the year he founded his psychological institute at Leipzig. And Wundt’s polemic is one of many examples illustrating that the war on the “supernatural” by psychologists cannot be understood in simplistic terms such as materialism versus spiritualism, let alone science versus religion. For instance, Wundt and many other critics of spiritualism denounced it not by lamenting that spirituality and science were incompatible, but because for them spiritualism was just not spiritual *enough*. Charging mediumship researchers (including James’s later philosophical hero, Gustav T. Fechner) of high treason against true science and true religion, Wundt in fact condemned

spiritualism as a particularly revolting form of materialism. All that spiritualists did, Wundt argued, was to project grossly physicalist categories of space, time and matter upon the sacred realm of pure spirit (e.g., Wundt 1879, 592–593).<sup>8</sup>

Shortly before the second International Congress of Psychology took place under the aegis of SPR president Sidgwick in 1892, Wundt fired off another fusillade, now directed at the SPR, its French collaborators, and young German psychologists who had founded psychological societies in Munich and Berlin to emulate the SPR's and James's research program (Sommer 2013a, chap. 4, 2013b). What the "father" of German psychology had previously dismissed as an "aimless chase after wonders" (Wundt 1879, 593) was now threatening to compete with his own research program, and was represented by none other than his American counterpart James. Bypassing concrete methodological criticisms, Wundt dismissed experiments in the hypnotic manipulation of divided strands of the self as "nothing but an atavistic residue of those age-old ideas of possession," and he declared psychical research a "through and through pathological line of present-day science" (Wundt 1892, 38, 110, my translation).

Terms like "atavistic residue" may strike psychologists as obsolete today, but to simply filter them out in our reading of nineteenth-century sources is to miss their key function in the fight against "occult belief." Atavisms formed a prominent part within an arsenal of medical entities born out of the fear of degeneration—the flipside of nineteenth-century obsessions with mental and racial evolution, which long pre-dated the advent of Darwin's and Russel's works. Nourished by deep worries that evolution and thus progress could be reversed, atavistic throwbacks served as standard explanations for madness, political unrest and indeed all sorts of ills, including deviations from social, political, and sexual norms, thus also laying the foundations for eugenics and associated race theories of the twentieth century (cf. Pick 1989; Shamdasani 2003, chap. 4; Porter 2018). Concepts of atavisms—spawned by political and metaphysical anxieties of anti-clerical anthropological and medical writers such as Adolf Bastian, E. B. Tylor, and Cesare Lombroso—became prominent weapons in the fight against the occult by many psychologists. Considered regrettable but normal in "savage" indigenous societies, belief in occult phenomena held by members of "superior" white races was widely explained and decried as a dangerous morbid atavistic relapse into lower stages of mental and racial development.

The professionalization of psychology in the United States and Britain did not see major religiopolitical upheavals comparable to events in Europe, which catalyzed medical and psychological theories of degeneration. Yet, particularly the German and French battles for secularization served as templates in ongoing British and American struggles to emancipate scientific work from dogmatically theological censorship. Mesmerism may officially have been "naturalized" into medical hypnotism. But fears of suggestive influence as quasi-witchcraft saturated mainstream theories of "crowd psychology," whose leading representatives such as Gustave Le Bon (1896) subsumed as instances of "mental epidemics" spiritualism along with religious fanaticism and political despotism.<sup>9</sup>



The famous physiologist William B. Carpenter, a particularly committed “enlightener” of the people in Britain, railed against a related shibboleth, “epidemic delusions.” Carpenter belonged to a scientifically distinguished group of men including Michael Faraday, Huxley, John Tyndall, and others who fought for major educational reforms, and advanced the professionalization of science along the lines of secularization efforts in Germany. Faraday and Carpenter were devout Christians and did not see eye to eye with Huxley and Tyndall on religious grounds. But they all shared a central concern that guided their joint campaigns in what we might now call the “public understanding of science”: belief in marvelous phenomena had to be rooted out once and for all, and by any means necessary (cf. Winter 1998).

A pious Unitarian, Carpenter believed in the immortality of the soul and professed his faith that the biblical miracles were historical facts, but maintained that the age of miracles had passed (e.g., Carpenter 1873, 132). When eminent scientific colleagues like Alfred Russel Wallace and William Crookes began reporting positive results of their experiments with mediums, Carpenter became their most aggressive antagonist, targeting them in his public lectures, popular articles, and academic writings as self-deluded victims of their undisciplined and un-Christian curiosity. Explaining belief in marvels observed in the practice of mesmerism and spiritualism as an “epidemic delusion” and “diluted insanity” (Carpenter 1875, 632–633), he merely expressed a standard view held by medical communities in Europe and the United States—a view, it should be stated, that was not arrived at through clinical tests, let alone was motivated by humanistic concerns over patient welfare (cf. Brown 1983; Shortt 1984; Williams 1985; Le Maléfian, Evrard, and Alvarado 2013).

When James reviewed Carpenter’s *Principles of Mental Physiology*, he took issue with his dogmatic metaphysics of the will (the cultivation of which psychologists generally saw as the panacea to solve all sorts of social problems and religious differences), and noted the “running polemic against Spiritualism which seems to be the second great purpose of the book” (ECR 1874, 275). According to Carpenter’s principles, his own son, the Sanskrit scholar, biblical critic and Principal of Manchester College at Oxford University, Joseph Estlin Carpenter, would have to be diagnosed as quasi-insane when he later put on record bafflement concerning his sittings with James’s “white crow,” the trance medium Leonora Piper. Like James, J. E. Carpenter openly confessed his conviction that Piper’s trance states were as genuine as her capacity to tap the minds of the living to impersonate deceased loved ones (Hodgson 1898, 525–526, 528–529; CWJ 1894 7.619, 1898 8.617).

But critics of James’s heretical science such as psychologist and *Science* editor James McKeen Cattell—who swept J. E. Carpenter’s observations along with James’s and many similar ones under the carpet in his review of the latest report on Piper (Cattell 1898; cf. EPR 1898, chap. 25)—had no use for such testimony. Cattell was part of the nascent American psychological profession whose members were deeply divided over specific metaphysical and religious positions, personal animosities, and methods and objectives of fledgling academic psychology. If there was something Cattell and several other psychologists could agree upon, however, it was this: not to impartially study what if anything was behind the

alleged psychic phenomena, but, as E. B. Titchener put it in a letter to Cattell, to “stem the James tide.”<sup>10</sup>

# James and the American Society for Psychical Research Revisited

James’s psychical research cannot be understood in isolation from mainstream positions and theoretical frameworks of the contemporary human and medical sciences which we just sketched and which served to undermine the credibility of any empirical approach to the “occult” through a priori pathologization. Direct responses to what James saw as excessive applications of degenerationism in psychology and medicine were, for example, his 1896 Lowell lectures on exceptional mental states (Taylor, 1983, esp. lecture 8 on Genius) and other talks and lectures on abnormal psychology (e.g., ML 1895–1896, 56, 79–80, Appendix III, 517–518), reviews of the pertinent medical literature (e.g., ECR 1895, chaps. 163–165), and of course his critique of sweeping pathologizations of mystical experiences throughout the *Varieties*.<sup>11</sup> An appreciation of this wider context also helps us understand why members of the “Sidgwick group” were James’s most important allies in psychology.

James’s priorities were no doubt different from those of Myers, whose primary aim was to find empirical evidence for postmortem survival within a theoretical framework of the mind that could incorporate mundane as well as extraordinary mental functionings. Yet, their assessment of the evidence for occult phenomena aside, the work of James and his English colleagues went against the grain of contemporary medical and human sciences in another rather fundamental regard: it appeared to refute the view that hallucinations, trance states, and automatisms like those observed in hypnosis and mediumship were inherently morbid (Taylor 1983; Williams 1985; Sommer 2013a, chap. 3). Examples are James’s observations in the *Principles of Psychology* (e.g., in the chapter on self-consciousness) and his review of Myers’s posthumous book, where James stressed that trance states and automatisms occurred in a large number of persons showing no other mental abnormalities (EPR 1903, 214).<sup>12</sup> One such person was James’s “white crow,” Leonora Piper.

James had published his initial experiments with Mrs. Piper in the first and only volume of the *Proceedings* of the original American SPR, which he had helped found in 1884. Yet, other ASPR members were not exactly happy about James openly coming out guardedly but unambiguously in favor of the reality of psychic phenomena. In fact, contrary to the standard view of the ASPR being the American “sister organization” of the English SPR (Knapp 2017, 2), it is no exaggeration to say that some of its most active members had joined not to promote but to police Jamesian psychical research. Leading among those working directly against James and the English SPR were the ASPR’s first president, the astronomer and prime American popularizer of scientific naturalism, Simon Newcomb;

the embryologist Charles S. Minot; and psychologists G. Stanley Hall and Joseph Jastrow (cf. Sommer 2013a, chap. 4).

Newcomb was one of the most vocal anti-occultism crusaders in the United States and joined the ASPR with one goal in mind—to save American science from being “infected” by spiritualism and other occult grassroots movements.<sup>13</sup> James’s Harvard colleague at the ASPR, Charles S. Minot, in fact sought to publicly cement the priorities of the Society in this very sense during its formation in 1884. In an unsigned article in *Science*, Minot declared that “spiritualism is an evil in the world, — in America it is a subtle and stupendous evil; a secret and unacknowledged poison in many minds, a confessed disease in others,— a disease which is sometimes more repulsive to the untainted than leprosy,” and he frankly conceded that “a stimulus to inaugurate the work of the American society” was the “hope that psychical research may liberate us from a baneful superstition” (Minot 1884, 369, 370).

Newcomb was no doubt motivated by worries that the advocacy of psychical research by famous physical scientists in Britain would hurt his own mission to secularize science in America. That he accepted the ASPR presidency to rid American science of investigations of what he saw as ridiculous old-wives’ tales is also reflected in his public clashes with Gurney and James, which revealed Newcomb’s rather superficial familiarity with the English research he derided.<sup>14</sup> Psychological colleagues of James—most notably Hall and Jastrow—joined the ASPR for similar reasons: Hall had publicly derided open-mindedness to psychic matters long before he served as an ASPR vice-president, and Jastrow published anti-spiritualist polemics while sitting on the ASPR council, declaring any belief in the occurrence of occult phenomena a morbid mental condition. Central in many of their polemics was again the concept of atavisms (e.g. Hall 1881, 1887, 1910, Jastrow 1886).<sup>15</sup> Moreover, Hall’s writings in particular are replete with appeals to religion. In a review misrepresenting methodological standards and attitudes of the English SPR, for example, Hall declared spiritualism “the common enemy of science and true religion” (Hall 1887, 145), which along with many similar examples again indicates the inadequacy of simplistic science-versus-religion frameworks for an understanding of dominant responses to Jamesian psychical research.

Another suggestive instance along these lines is the involvement in psychical research by James’s friend and colleague at Harvard, Josiah Royce. After playing a relatively active role in the ASPR between 1886 and 1889, in 1900 Royce defended James against newspaper allegations that his studies of Mrs. Piper indicated that James was mentally unsound. Taken together, these circumstances are occasionally assumed to demonstrate Royce’s sympathetic interest in occult matters (e.g., Zedler 1974). However, Royce’s psychical research publications are mainly limited to attempts at undermining the results of the English SPR. His refusal to follow James’s invitation to investigate Mrs. Piper (CWJ 1894 7.611, 1899 8.532), for instance, was long preceded by a dispute with Gurney in the journal *Mind* over the latter’s study of “telepathic hallucinations,” which James had applauded as a display of exemplary scientific qualities in a review in the previous year (EPR 1887, chap. 7). In his critique, Royce proposed that the whole idea of veridical hallucina-

tions was in truth nothing but an erroneous inference from “*a not yet recognised type of instantaneous hallucination of memory, consisting in the fancy, at the very moment of some exciting experience, that one has EXPECTED it before its coming*” (Royce 1888, 245, original formatting). Gurney (1888) replied by politely reminding Royce that questions of timing in many of the roughly 700 analyzed cases were to varying degrees addressed through independent corroborations and thus Royce’s criticism was not apt. Yet, instead of responding, Royce simply reprinted his argument verbatim in the ASPR *Proceedings* one year after Gurney’s death, without mentioning the latter’s rebuttal (Royce 1889, 366–370).

And two years after James’s death, Royce summed up his views on psychical research this way:

Man needs no miracles to show him the supernatural and the superhuman. You need no signs and wonders, and no psychical research, to prove that the unity of the spirit is a fact in the world. Common-sense tacitly presupposes the reality of the unity of the spirit. Science studies the ways in which its life is expressed in the laws which govern the order of experience. Reason gives us insight into its real being (Royce 1912, 272).

He might as well have written this before he joined the ASPR.

## The “Disenchanted” Absolute

It is hard to imagine that a solemn declamation like Royce’s could ever emerge from James’s pen. It is undisputed that James thought highly of his colleague as a friend and in many respects as a philosopher. Yet, Royce’s sermon-style prose indicated just the kind of deliberate aloofness from the realities and indignities of life down on earth that James detested in countless similar declarations by fellow philosophers and scientists, and to which his work in psychology and philosophy responded as complementary strands of one project: to tear down system-building traditions and normative metaphysics that failed to do justice to the concrete experience of the individual, and which on the contrary downplayed if not censored experiences that deviated from highbrow ideals and supposed norms.

In absolute idealism as the dominating philosophical framework of his time (with Francis H. Bradley in Oxford and Royce at Harvard among its leaders), James opposed the aloofness of “high and noble” conceptions which tended to belittle human suffering as an illusion if not tacitly glorified it as a necessary byproduct of cosmic evolution, and he fervently attacked absolute idealism as “noble in the bad sense” and “inapt for humble service” in “this real world of sweat and dirt” (P 1907, 40). In science, James lamented that champions of “naturalism” typically shirked their scientific duties by refusing to impartially study anomalous experiences like those claimed by legions of practitioners of spiritualism and other occult grassroots religions, and instead reduced them to fraud and mental ill-

ness from a safe distance. In his obituary of Frederic Myers, for example, James noted that psychologists typically dismissed reports of anomalous phenomena using “vague terms of apperceptions” like “fraud,” “rot,” and “rubbish” (EPR 1901, 195). Without denying that separating the wheat from the chaff in occult matters was difficult business indeed, James insisted that Myers’s unrestrictedly empirical research program signaled a stage in scientific psychology in which such dismissals “will no more be possible hereafter than ‘dirt’ is possible as a head of classification in chemistry, or ‘vermin’ in zoology” (loc cit).<sup>16</sup>

James shared tenets of Myers’s quasi-Neoplatonism that had inspired his coinage of “telepathy,” but differed from his colleague on the question of personal survival. While Myers’s eventual conviction of continued individual mental activity after death was absolute, like Gurney and Sidgwick, James was prepared to consider what materialist and positivist fellow researchers like Charles Richet in France and Enrico Morselli in Italy postulated more explicitly: some “occult” phenomena were genuine scientific anomalies, but it was perfectly possible that they might have absolutely no inherent spiritual significance whatsoever (CWJ 1900, 9.164; EPR 1909, 369). Yet, as is obvious from countless references to psychic and mystical experiences in his writings and correspondence, James considered psychical research a prime arena in which to study manifestations of unchurched religious life in the concrete.

There is of course something that strikingly sets James apart from most other contemporary and current writers on religion: a refusal to proselytize any specific religious doubts or theological doctrines of his own. Not that it would be easy to specify what James’s faith actually comprised of. In letters to friends and colleagues he disavowed Christian faith more than once (e.g., CWJ 1886 6.124, 1901 9.501), and as he was working out his pragmatist and radical empiricist philosophy, he would insult the orthodox sensibilities of many fellow philosophers and psychologists by hypothesizing a deity that was imperfect or “finite” (e.g., CWJ 1898 8.336) at best.

Other reasons should also prevent us from considering James a clear-cut theist, and his hostility to the practical “aloofness” of absolute idealism should not divert from the fact that his psychical research still presupposed a certain theoretical congruence particularly with Bradley’s metaphysics (cf. Kelly 2015, 521-526). For instance, in the *Principles of Psychology* James confessed: “I find the notion of some sort of an *anima mundi* thinking in all of us to be a more promising hypothesis, in spite of all its difficulties, than that of a lot of absolutely individual souls” (PP 1890, 328; see also EPR 1909, 374). James’s own quasi-mystical and psychedelic experiences of a oneness of the self with the cosmos certainly informed and motivated the prominent place of altered states in his psychology long before the *Varieties* and statements of belief in a mental “cosmic reservoir” along the lines of Gustav T. Fechner (cf. John McDermott’s Introduction to EP, xxxiii-xxxiv; Taylor 1996, esp. chaps. 5 and 7).

Perhaps the fiercest antagonist of Bradley’s was James’s closest pragmatist ally, Ferdinand C. S. Schiller at Oxford, who like James was an anti-absolutist as well as an active

psychical researcher.<sup>17</sup> Regarding James's growing enthusiasm about Fechner, Schiller once noted: "Apropos of what you say of Fechner & an all inclusive consciousness; the only argument for anything of the sort that ever seemed to me to have anything in it is that from telepathy etc. It wd. be amusing if we cd. drive absolutism back on that line of defence!"<sup>18</sup> On Royce's philosophical attitude to investigations of psychic phenomena we have already heard him speak for himself, and it is perhaps not surprising that Bradley also followed the work of the SPR. However, he did so apparently with greater sympathy than Royce. In a letter to James, Bradley in fact once accused Myers of failing to acknowledge his supposed debt to Hegel (CWJ 1897 8.310–311). Over a decade later, Bradley became an SPR member (Society for Psychical Research 1909, 83) and confessed to James his guarded support for the Society's current work, which was now much more directly focused on assessments of mediumship for the "survival hypothesis" than before (CWJ 1909 12.155).

Yet, as far as I'm aware Bradley never became practically involved in psychical research and seemed careful not to publicly express his moderate sympathies with it. And though he did not seem to share hostilities to the occult with other major proponents of idealism like Hermann Lotze in Germany<sup>19</sup> and Royce in the United States, his brand of idealism was still a rather different animal from the more overtly "mystical" systems of Fichte, Schelling, or Hegel. Whereas the Romantic idealists had typically viewed dreams, somnambulatory trances and other altered states of consciousness as conduits for transcendental influxes from an all-connected world soul, less than fifty years later medicine along with fledgling anthropology and psychology dominated the discourse over magic and altered states by dismissing them as symptoms of morbid degenerative tendencies. Indeed, at the height of Bradley's influence, idealism had followed suit and undergone a programmatic "disenchantment" no less than large parts of theology.

## The Right to Investigate: Pragmatism and Pathologies of Prior Belief

Once we familiarize ourselves with relevant primary sources, it's hard to escape the rather unpopular conclusion that vocal critics of Jamesian psychical research consistently employed strategies and methods that most of us would struggle to find particularly "scientific." Common to all were programmatic misrepresentations of James's and the Sidgwick group's work in their public conflation of elite psychical research with uncritical spiritualism and accusations of methodological incompetence. When critics like Carpenter, Wundt, Jastrow, and Hall deployed concepts like epidemic delusions and atavistic relapses, they consciously conflated belief in the very *possibility* of the occurrence of certain alleged phenomena with full-blown and supposedly inherently morbid spiritualist faith. Hardly conducive to differentiated analysis, the standard strategy of declaring those taking the phenomena seriously as quasi-insane was a sure way to inherently disqualify evident dupes along with hard-nosed investigators like James, who believed the occurrence of fundamental anomalies had been empirically established but struggled to

interpret them theoretically. This is also the wider context in which to read one of James's most bitter public complaints about critics like Cattell, whom he accused of violating basic scientific standards in his misrepresentations of Richard Hodgson's second major report on Mrs. Piper (EPR 1898, chap. 25; CWJ 1989 8.362–365): rather than offering dispassionate methodological critiques, James argued, Cattell and other public opponents of psychical research appeared to follow the principle that “in our dealings with the insane the usual moral rules don't apply. Mediums are scientific outlaws, and their defendants are quasi-insane. Any stick is good enough to beat dogs of that stripe with” (EPR 1898, 185).

Outspoken hardliners were no doubt personally as averse to anything smacking of magic as anybody could well be. But there was a tangible political dimension as well. Pioneers of the “new” experimental psychology in the United States and elsewhere struggled enormously to gain the public and institutional support they desperately needed to obtain laboratory space and funding for research, and to create permanent positions for themselves and their protégés. Seeing James as the leader of American psychologists openly investigating phenomena that were widely considered as the very epitome of backwardness, they felt he was sabotaging their efforts by severely damaging the public image of the “new” psychology (e.g. Coon 1992; Leary 1987). In this regard, not many psychological opponents of James's psychical research admitted as much in public as Cattell, who concluded his debate with James over Hodgson's report on the Piper mediumship by openly admitting that he had tackled James

only because I believe that the Society for Psychical Research is doing much to injure psychology. The authority of Professor James is such that he involves other students of psychology in his opinions unless they protest. We all acknowledge his leadership, but we cannot follow him into the quagmires (EPR 1898, 186).<sup>20</sup>

Indeed, it turned out that the timing of Cattell's and Titchener's seemingly unconnected public attacks (which we mentioned earlier) was not accidental. It is unlikely that James would ever be aware of the private correspondence between the men, which reveals their attempts at shaping public opinion was orchestrated, in Titchener's already quoted phrase, to “stem the James tide”—that is to counterbalance what he and Cattell despised as “James' influence both in philosophy & psychology.”<sup>21</sup> And perhaps unsurprisingly, James's philosophical work would sometimes be treated in the same undifferentiating manner as the unorthodox side of his psychology. In fact, the title of James's *The Will to Believe* promptly became akin to a dirty word in both psychology and philosophy, and often began to be used in slogan-like parlance to discredit his pragmatist philosophy along with his psychical research wholesale.

The purpose of most essays which comprised James's *The Will to Believe* was to offer a defense of the individual's right to believe in transcendental principles as long as such belief served tangible constructive functions and grounds for it were not conclusively refuted (see also Stephen Bush's chapter in this volume). Moreover, the book included the chapter “What Psychical Research Has Accomplished,” which was one of James's defens-

es of members of the Sidgwick group against polemical attacks on their heretical research as self-evident “superstition” and vulgar obsession with “miracles.” Indeed, those who began openly misrepresenting the meaning behind James’s defense of the right to believe were often the same figures whose public portrayals of elite psychical research were little more than caricatures of what James and his collaborators at the SPR actually did. Psychological critics such as Jastrow, Hall, and Lightner Witmer did not engage with James’s observations on the psychology of belief (e.g., ECR 1879, 355; PP 1890, chapter 21; WB 1897, *passim*; ERM 1905, 124-8), but began appropriating the phrase “will to believe” in their continuing public attacks on the occult to denote willful gullibility in the face of obvious counter-evidence, accusing James of irresponsibly providing his audience with a license to indulge in reprehensible superstitions (e.g., Jastrow 1900, 38; Hall 1908, 678, 683, 1910, xxxi; Witmer 1909, 43-44).

James was particularly grieved about an instance of simultaneous affronts on psychical research and pragmatism that came from Hugo Münsterberg, whom he had persuaded to leave Germany and run the Harvard psychology laboratory from 1892. This double attack on James’s philosophy and psychical research occurred in Münsterberg’s claim to have exposed the famous medium Eusapia Palladino as a fraud. Previous investigators who came to believe in the reality of some of her marvels had openly conceded that Palladino cheated whenever she was given the opportunity, but Münsterberg’s specific claim of having caught her in the act has been accepted a little too readily as a historical fact (e.g., Bjork 1983, 66-67; Bordogna 2008, 106; Knapp 2017, 294).

Apart from making evidently false claims about his alleged unmasking of Palladino, which conflicted with the minutes of the experiments in question he himself had signed (cf. Carrington 1954; Sommer 2012), Münsterberg more than just insinuated that her previous investigators, who had included materialists, positivists, and agnostics like the physician Enrico Morselli, the physiologists Richet and Filippo Bottazzi, and not least Marie and Pierre Curie, believed her phenomena were caused by spirits. Even more absurdly, and to the particular despair of James, Münsterberg implied that they were disciples of pragmatism (CWJ 1910 12.432; Sommer 2012, 33).

Indeed, Münsterberg’s article, which he entitled “My friends the spiritualists,” and which lumped together spiritualism, psychical research, and pragmatism, reads like an advertisement for the kind of “naturalistic” standard position to which any psychological work had to conform if it was to stand a chance of receiving institutional support. A rejection of ontological materialism on the one hand, it was a simultaneous attack on “superstitions” like Jamesian psychical research and pragmatism: “Materialism,” Münsterberg proclaimed, was “an impossible philosophy,” which may be “necessary in natural science” as a merely methodological maxim but was “entirely unfit for an ultimate view of reality,” which could be “given only by idealism” (Münsterberg 1910, 146). As a tacit explanation of what set him apart from elite scientists who unlike himself were unable to see Palladino as nothing but a fraud, Münsterberg stated, “I am not a pragmatist,” and continued:



With every fiber of my conviction I stand for idealism in philosophy, as far from materialism as from pragmatism. I believe that our real life is free will, bound by ideal standards which are absolute and eternal. The truth is such an eternal goal. We have to submit to it and not to choose it as the pragmatist fancies. But the obligation which truth forces on our will does not come from without as the materialist imagines; it is given by the structure of our own truth-seeking will. (Münsterberg 1910, 147)

## Conclusion

Though the contexts outlined earlier are painted with a necessarily broad brush, their appreciation seems essential for a qualified historical understanding of James's heretical corpus. Placed back into their original circumstances, past controversies over occult phenomena to which James's work in psychology and philosophy responded throw fresh light on the significance of psychical research for James's canonical works.

Moreover, the story of James and fellow elite psychical researchers is a crucial yet remarkably understudied chapter in the history of scientific naturalism. Providing a convenient window into the past to help us reconstruct causes that have cemented "naturalism" in modern Western academic curricula, it shows that rather than being inherently secular let alone materialistic, notions of naturalism which are as axiomatic as they seem impervious to accurately historicized definitions have been nourished by many beliefs and anxieties. After all, squarely religious sentiments motivated the war on empirical approaches to supposedly "supernatural" phenomena during James's lifetime perhaps even more than did materialism. At the same time, contrary to received wisdom, open-minded approaches to alleged spiritualist and related marvels were practically outlawed not through careful, dispassionate scientific tests, but through polemical writings by often otherwise mutually opposed religious and irreligious figures.

Neither science nor philosophy were ever practiced in the proverbial ivory tower, and the boundaries of permissible academic inquiry were shaped and determined by conditions that were characteristic not of our time but of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Fears over degeneration, and the complementary arch bogeys of "superstition" and "materialism," inextricable as they were from dramatic religio-political upheavals, may mean little to us today. But they positively occupied the minds of those who negotiated the curricula of the sciences as they became modern university disciplines. And it is no miracle that the professionalization of modern psychology as the "science of the soul" was particularly affected by these tensions.

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### Notes:

(1.) For the James-Titchener controversy see EPR 1896–1899, chapter 22. I investigated the significance of Jamesian psychical research for the historiography of modern psychology in my doctoral thesis (Sommer 2013a), and will further develop arguments presented here in a book I'm currently working on.

(2.) On Galileo, see Shea & Artigas (2004), Numbers (2009).

(3.) For the history of scientific naturalism see, e.g., Turner (1974), Lightman (1987), Stanley (2015), Harrison & Roberts (2019).

(4.) Huxley simultaneously used and rejected Humean notions of supernaturalism tied to biblical miracles as self-evident violations of natural law. Spiritualists and psychical researchers were typically rather vocal in their own rejection of Humean pre-interpretations of certain phenomena as disruptions of laws of nature, yet Huxley referred to spiritualist phenomena as “supernatural” throughout his book. See Sommer (2018b) for the context of Huxley’s first usage of “scientific naturalism.” James himself overwhelmingly referred to alleged psychic phenomena by F.W.H. Myers’s term “supernormal.” Occasionally also using “supernatural,” James never deployed the term in a Humean sense (cf. CWJ 1885 6.62, 1899 9.86; EPR 1892, 99n2; WB 1897, 48, 50).

(5.) A recent historical study of James’s heretical corpus (Knapp 2017) is remarkably uninterested in the contexts outlined below. For some other problems with the book, see Sommer (2018a).

(6.) For useful accounts of Myers, see Turner (1974, chapter 5), and Hamilton (2009).

(7.) For James’s hypnotic experiments, and his hypnotherapeutic efforts regarding Ansel Bourne see, e.g., EPs 1886.190–197, 1887.200–203, 1890.269, and Notes (with background information on Bourne), 372–373; EPR 1886.16–17, 1890.82. On hypnosis as a tool of “mental vivisection” in French, German, and English experimental psychology, see Gauld (1992), Shamdasani (2003, 125–129); Sommer (2013a, chapter 3).

(8.) For an interesting letter of Fechner to Wundt regarding his polemic, see Sommer (2013a, 226–227).

(9.) James critically reviewed Le Bon in the *Psychological Review* (ECR 1897, 533–535).

(10.) Titchener to Cattell, November 20, 1898, in Taylor (1996, 173).

(11.) The most thoroughly contextualized analysis of James’s responses to degeneration theory has been offered by Sutton (2013, chap. 4, esp. pp. 260–277).

(12.) It would take over a century for modern Western psychiatrists to abandon hallucinations and trance states as clear-cut indications of mental disease.

(13.) On Newcomb as a popularizer of secular science, see Moyer (1992).

(14.) See, for example, Newcomb’s disputes with Gurney in *Science* (e.g., Newcomb 1884a; Gurney 1884; Newcomb 1884b), and James’s reply to Newcomb’s ASPR presidential address (EPR 1886, chap. 5).

(15.) Another psychologist deeply hostile to spiritualism, George S. Fullerton, served as both vice-president of the ASPR and Secretary of the Seybert Commission at the University of Pennsylvania, which was appointed in 1884 for the investigation of spiritualism following a bequest. Space constraints force me to reserve Fullerton’s ASPR membership in

the context of the Seybert Commission's refusal to investigate Mrs. Piper (cf. CWJ 1890, 7.107; 1894, 7.493-494; EPR 1901, 194) for separate treatment.

(16.) James voiced his view that Myers's framework was the "biggest step forward that has occurred in psychology" in the *Varieties* (VRE 1902 402-403n.25, see also 191, 367, 403), but he had already made similar assessments in various previous writings that are now considered canonical, as well as in letters to his brother Henry and fellow psychologists (CWJ 1901 3.156-157, 1901 9.433, 1902 10.92; Hamilton 2009, esp. chap. 5; Sommer 2013a, chap. 3.3.2).

(17.) Schiller would serve as the SPR's president in 1914. For an excellent study of Schiller that also addresses his psychical research, see Porrovecchio (2011). Apart from Sidgwick, James, and Schiller, other prominent philosopher presidents of the SPR were Henri Bergson (1913), L. P. Jacks (1917-18), Hans Driesch (1926-27), C. D. Broad (1935-36 and 1958-60), and H. H. Price (1939-41 and 1960-61).

(18.) Schiller to James, August 6, 1905, James papers, Houghton Library, Harvard University (bMS.Am.1092 [902]). This letter has only been calendared in CWJ (11.569-570).

(19.) Lotze was a friend and pupil of Fechner, but detested and ridiculed his heretical scientific interests (e.g., Lotze 1891).

(20.) In fairness to Cattell it needs to be pointed out that nobody forced his decision to reprint James's SPR presidential address in *Science*, or James's later obituary of Myers in the *Popular Science Monthly* (which was then also edited by Cattell). James in fact praised Cattell's editorial liberty, writing that "Thinking as you do about the spook business, it has always filled me with admiration to see how freely you gave me my head" (CWJ 1899 9.3). In 1903, Cattell would even defend James against members of the National Academy of Sciences, who opposed his election on the grounds of his psychical research (Sokal 2010, 33; Sommer 2012, 36-37n.3). Yet, these instances were not representative of Cattell's position, and James, whom Cattell greatly admired personally, was the only psychical researcher he ever thought worthy of courteous treatment.

(21.) Titchener to Cattell, November 20, 1898, Library of Congress, Washington D.C., Cattell Papers (MSS15412/42/153).

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## James and Psychical Research in Context

scholarship on historical complexities of science-magic relationships for a broad, educated audience.