

William James and Theodore Dreiser's *An American Tragedy*

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RÉSUMÉ

Lecteur de William James dans les années 1910, Theodore Dreiser possédait plusieurs ouvrages de ce philosophe, parmi lesquels The Will to Believe, A Pluralistic Universe, and the essay "Is Life Worth Living?" Dans An American Tragedy (1925), Dreiser thématise la théorie de la vérité de James et sa critique de la philosophie contemporaine idéaliste. Alors que, pendant son procès pour meurtre, le personnage de Clyde Griffiths tente de comprendre l'étendue de sa culpabilité, les procureurs et les avocats de la défense, en vue d'expliquer le rôle qu'il a joué dans la noyade de Roberta Alden, élaborent des scénarios opposés illustrant les assertions de James selon lesquelles la "vérité arrive à une idée" et la rationalité est un "sentiment," source d'une paix et d'un plaisir provenant d'une libération de la "perplexité." Clyde est victime de la rigidité de diverses structures rationnelles qui reflètent le monisme philosophique ("l'absolu") de Josiah Royce et d'autres philosophes post-hégéliens. Pourtant, tout comme dans "l'univers pluraliste" de James, l'élan vital de Clyde a tendance à "déborder" les structures rationalisées; durant les jours qui mènent à son exécution, sa "résistance" jamesienne aux jugements absolutistes, et sa reconnaissance que la vie dans le hic et nunc vaut la peine d'être vécue révèlent la mesure de l'héroïsme jamesien qui contribue à l'effet tragique du roman.

In the 1911 version of his autobiographical novel *The Genius*, Theodore Dreiser describes how far his alter-ego hero Eugene Witla has risen "in class selection" at the height of his career as magazine editor in New York: "Eugene knew intimately and pleasantly such men as William Dean Howells, Mark Twain, Prof. William James, Sir A. Conan Doyle, and other interesting figures of his time."¹ Dreiser himself was not intimate with any of these men before or after his own years editing women's magazines for Butterick from 1907 to 1910, but he certainly knew many works by the novelists, some of them no doubt intimately. The surprising name is William James, who, with the exception of a recent article by Gregory Phipps,² has escaped the notice of scholars investigating the intellectual backgrounds of Dreiser's masterwork, *An American Tragedy* (1925). While possible echoes of James's influential psychological theories have occasionally been

¹ Theodore Dreiser, *The Genius*, edited by Clare Virginia Eby (Urbana, USA: University of Illinois Press, 2008) 504.

² Gregory Phipps, "One Crime, Two Pragmatisms: The Philosophical Context of Theodore Dreiser's *An American Tragedy*," *Studies in American Naturalism* 8.2 (2014): 214-35. Phipps places the novel in the context of changes in pragmatism from its founding in the late nineteenth century by William James and Charles Sanders Peirce to its revision after the Great War by John Dewey. Taking a broad historical overview, Phipps spends little time on the close reading of James and Dreiser that will follow here, and his James, who looked to social institutions for moral guidance, is not the individualistic James whom Dreiser recognized and cautiously admired.

detected in *Sister Carrie* (1900),³ scholars who have explored what Joseph Karaganis calls the “metaphysical hodgepodge” of deterministic theories found in *An American Tragedy*⁴ have for the most part focused on the psychoanalytic theories of Sigmund Freud and the mechanistic theories of the biologist Jacques Loeb.⁵ At first glance, James does not seem a promising candidate as an influence on a novel of such devastating pessimism. After all, as Henry Steele Commager writes, James’s philosophy “held that man’s fate was not determined by mechanical powers but by man himself. [...] [I]t was drenched with optimism.”⁶ Yet this optimism was hard won, emerging as it did out of a confrontation with “the vast, slow-breathing unconscious Kosmos with its dread abysses and its unknown tides,”⁷ much as Dreiser’s worldview derived from his own confrontation with what he called the “Mystery and Wonder and Terror of Life.”⁸

It is conceivable that the Jamesian ideas governing the following discussion of *An American Tragedy* were simply common-sense inductions by a careful observer of life. After all, Henry James famously quipped to his brother William after reading *Pragmatism*, “I was lost in wonder of the extent to which all my life I have... unconsciously pragmatized.”⁹ Or Dreiser might have derived his ideas about James from the many non-technical accounts of his philosophy in the popular press, or just from give-and-take at Village hangouts like the Liberal Club and Polly Holladay’s restaurant. There is a better than good chance, however, that he was familiar at least with *A Pluralistic Universe* and *The Will to Believe* when he wrote the *Tragedy*. Copies of both books are contained in Dreiser’s Library, along with *On Some of Life’s Ideals*,¹⁰ and I will draw frequently on them in demonstrating how *An American Tragedy* thematizes both James’s theory of truth and rationality and his critique of the idealistic philosophy that governed the academy at the turn of the century. Moreover, to the extent that Clyde Griffiths achieves tragic stature, I will

³ Alan Trachtenberg points out that Dreiser’s treatment of consciousness in the novel “remarkably resembles” the union of thought and external reality that James attributed to experience. See “Who Narrates? Dreiser’s Presence in *Sister Carrie*,” *New Essays on Sister Carrie*, ed. Donald Pizer (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1991) 101. Bertil C. Nelson discusses Dreiser’s characters and their transformations in terms of James’s theory that the “self” consists of a variety of Me’s. See his article “William James’ Concept of Self and the Fictive Psychology of Theodore Dreiser in *Sister Carrie*,” *Essays in Arts and Sciences* 19 (1990): 45-64. James Livingston finds that both James and Dreiser, in *Sister Carrie*, were drafting a “new kind of family romanc[e]” in which “proletarian women and industrial workers could appear as its key figures.” See *Pragmatism and the Political Economy of Cultural Revolution, 1850-1940* (Chapel Hill, USA: University of North Carolina Press, 1997) 157.

⁴ Joseph Karaganis, “Naturalism’s Nation: Toward *An American Tragedy*,” *American Literature* 72.1 (2000): 160.

⁵ For a discussion of these and other influences on *An American Tragedy*, see Ellen Moers, *Two Dreisers* (New York: Viking, 1969) 240-70; Donald Pizer, *The Novels of Theodore Dreiser: A Critical Study* (Minneapolis, USA: University of Minnesota Press, 1976) 211-14; and Louis J. Zanine, *Mechanism and Mysticism: The Influence of Science on the Thought and Work of Theodore Dreiser* (Philadelphia, USA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1993) 103-13. Zanine also argues for Dreiser’s reliance on the mechanistic criminology of Dr. Max G. Schlapp. For a recent account of Freud’s influence on the *Tragedy*, see Stephen C. Brennan, “American Literary Naturalism and Psychology,” *The Oxford Handbook of American Literary Naturalism*, ed. Keith Newlin (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011) 196-99.

⁶ Henry Steele Commager, *The American Mind: An Interpretation of American Thought and Character Since the 1880’s* (New Haven, USA: Yale University Press, 1950) 96.

⁷ William James qtd. in Commager 92.

⁸ See Theodore Dreiser, *Hey Rub-A-Dub-Dub: A Book of the Mystery and Wonder and Terror of Life* (New York: Boni and Liveright, 1920).

⁹ Henry James qtd. in Ross Posnock, *The Trial of Curiosity. Henry James, William James and the Challenge of Modernity* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991) 51.

¹⁰ Roark Mulligan, “Theodore Dreiser’s Private Library,” *Dreiser Web Source*, Web. 22 December 2015 <<http://www.library.upenn.edu/collections/rbm/dreiser/library/j.html>>.

argue, he does so by expressing qualities of character that James associates with the heroic personality.

Jamesian Truth and Rationality in *An American Tragedy*

Among James's most controversial ideas was a subjective nature of truth. As he explains in *Pragmatism*, "The truth of an idea is not a stagnant property inherent in it. Truth *happens* to an idea. It *becomes* true, is *made* true by events. Its verity *is* in fact an event, a process: the process namely of its verifying itself, its *verif-ication*."¹¹ We feel that an idea is validated when its "practical consequences" involve "agreeable leading," or "the progressive, harmonious, satisfactory" agreement with previous experience.¹² The making and testing of competing versions of truth are most evident in Clyde's trial for the murder of his pregnant sweetheart Roberta Alden.

Considering and rejecting an insanity plea and a theory that Roberta committed suicide, Reuben Jephson, junior counsel on Clyde's defense team, concocts a defense drawing upon a Jamesian distinction between facts and truths. "Truths emerge from facts," James argues, "but they [...] add to them; which facts again create or reveal new truth. [...] and so on indefinitely. The 'facts' themselves meanwhile are not *true*. They simply *are*. Truth is the function of the beliefs that start and terminate among them."¹³ Jephson's plan is to "leave all the facts just as they are [...] except, of course, [Clyde's] striking [Roberta] – and then explain them – the letters, the wounds, the bag, the two hats, everything – not deny them in any way."¹⁴ With "cold, eager, practical logic, no trace of emotion or even sympathy of any kind" (698), he lays before Belknap "the safest possible defense that could be made," one that Clyde's "most peculiar actions would most exactly fit" – that Clyde, "being a moral if not a physical coward" (698), had had "a change of heart. [...] He's ashamed of himself – his sin against her. That ought to appeal to these fellows around here, these religious and moral people" (699). Belknap and Jephson adopt this plan believing in the gullibility of "religious and moral" country folk. It is an expedient for saving Clyde from the electric chair, and they hope the "truths" they add to the facts will work better than the ones Mason adds.

James's notion of the subjectivity of truth is closely related to what he calls "The Sentiment of Rationality," the title of an essay in *The Will to Believe*. Here James makes the anti-intuitive argument that a person considers something rational not because of its logical validity but because of "certain subjective marks [...]. When he gets the marks, he may know that he has got the rationality. [...] [A] strong feeling of ease, peace, rest [...] The transition from a state of puzzle and perplexity to rational comprehension is full of lively relief and pleasure."¹⁵ The sentiment is also related to our "passion for parsimony [...] the philosophic passion *par excellence*," which is satisfied when the diverse "facts of the world" are reduced from "their manifoldness to simplicity," when we enjoy "finding that a chaos of facts is the expression of a single underlying fact."¹⁶ This passion has a "sister passion" for clarity, for "clearness and

¹¹ William James, *Pragmatism: A New Name for Some Old Ways of Thinking*, in *William James: Writings, 1902-1910*, ed. Bruce Kuklick (New York: Library of America, 1987) 574.

¹² James, *Pragmatism* 574.

¹³ James, *Pragmatism* 585.

¹⁴ Theodore Dreiser, *An American Tragedy*, edited by Thomas P. Riggio (New York: Library of America, 2004) 698. Subsequent citations will be parenthetical in the text.

¹⁵ William James, "The Sentiment of Rationality," *The Will to Believe and Other Essays in Popular Philosophy*, edited by Gerald E. Myers (New York: Library of America, 1992) 504.

¹⁶ James, "Sentiment," *Will* 505.

integrity of perception, dislike of blurred outlines, of vague identifications.”¹⁷ Whatever the balance of these sister passions in the individual jurors might be, they all crave simplicity and clarity, as well as a pleasurable release from the state of “perplexity.”

In his opening statement, Mason promises to simplify “the mass of evidence that was literally thrust upon [him]” (735) by supplying what James calls “a single underlying fact” and to satisfy the craving for clarity: “In fact, the *sole purpose* which I now announce to you to be behind every word and every fact as it will be presented by the prosecution is that exact justice [...] shall be done. *Exact justice*, gentlemen, exact and fair” (735; first emphasis mine).

In fact, the defense lawyers, too, try to simplify the complex mass of evidence. As Donald Pizer neatly captures it, “The trial is [...] essentially a contest between rival sentimental myths – that of the city seducer versus that of the noble man who had intended to expiate his seduction by marrying and elevating the poor and virtuous maiden because her qualities had at last impressed themselves upon his heart.”¹⁸ Each side also tries to complicate the other side’s story by breaking up its simple, clear structure: Jephson by taking up “piecemeal” all the “various phases of the ‘alleged’ plot and crime” (795) and undermining the prosecution’s interpretation; Mason by taking his time to “pick and choose at random from the mass of testimony as to just what he would quiz and bedevil and torture Clyde with next” (826).

In their closing statements, however, it is easy to see why Belknap fails to create the sentiment of rationality and Mason succeeds. Belknap asks the jury to see nothing but complexity and ambiguity in Clyde: he acted “*almost unconsciously, if not quite innocently*” [emphasis mine]; his “mental and moral cowardice” in addition to “various lacks in Clyde’s early life, plus new opportunities” had “affected his *perhaps too pliable and sensual and impractical and dreaming mind*” (843). With like obfuscations, Belknap offers the jury “a really strong if jesuitical plea which was not without its merits and its weight” (844). In sharp contrast to Belknap, Mason offers instead of a web of almosts, not quites, and perhapses – a clearly limned argument with a single underlying idea and none of the “vague identifications” that James believes interfere with the sentiment of rationality:

And then Mason, blazing with his conviction that Clyde was a murderer of the *coldest and blackest type*, and spending an entire day in riddling the “spider’s tissue of lies and unsupported statements” with which the defense was hoping to divert the minds of the jury from the *unbroken and unbreakable* chain of amply substantiated evidence wherewith the prosecution had proved this “bearded man” to be the “red-handed murderer” that he was. (844; emphasis mine)

The unrelenting thrust of Dreiser’s prose here, with his typical use of the sentence fragment to produce an effect of intensity, is probably intended to stimulate that “unbroken and unbreakable chain of amply substantiated evidence” that so affects the jurors. Whatever “weight” Belknap’s summation might carry, it has no chance to tip the scales of justice: “Truth is the function of the beliefs that start and terminate among [the facts],”¹⁹ James writes, and the belief that governs the facts for the jurors is that Clyde is the cold-hearted city slicker who debauched and discarded a “trusting and self-sacrificing soul” (739). It is reasonable to assume that the “irate woodsman” speaks for the jurors when, with “solemn, vengeful voice” in the midst of Mason’s cross

¹⁷ James, “Sentiment,” *Will* 506.

¹⁸ Donald Pizer, *The Novels of Theodore Dreiser* 273.

¹⁹ James, *Pragmatism* 585.

examination of Clyde, he calls out: “Why don’t they kill the God-damned bastard and be done with him?” (828)

The only “perplexity” left in the jurors’ minds is produced when one of their body with a bias against Mason and sympathy for Jephson threatens to hang the jury, but the threat of the other eleven to boycott the man’s pharmacy cows him into voting guilty. It is unclear whether or not the jurors experience that “lively relief and pleasure” of the sentiment of rationality, for after they affirm their individual votes they sit “like a blackish-brown group of wooden toys with creamish-brown or old ivory faces and hands” (848). There is no reason to believe, though, that their feelings differ from those of the “intensely satisfied” crowd in the courtroom and from the “intense satisfaction” of Mason and his associates that lies hidden “behind masks preternaturally severe” (848).

The Lure of the Absolute

In his 1909 *A Pluralistic Universe*, among his most metaphysical works, James mounts an extended attack on the Hegelian school of idealism that identifies all reality with the universal mind, or, in the terminology of Josiah Royce and other of James’s contemporaries, with the “absolute” (often spelled with a capital A). In *An American Tragedy*, it is largely absolutist ways of thinking, including his own, that constitute Clyde’s prison long before he ever enters the Auburn “death house” (871). At the same time, the absolute promises Clyde the only relief from suffering he knows.

The absolute, James writes, is defined as “an embodiment of objectively perfect rationality” that, while answering to our desire for “peace,” assumes an ultimate reality that, “static and without a history, [...] loosens the world’s hold upon our sympathies and leaves the soul of it foreign.”²⁰ Unfortunately, this desire for perfect rationality tends to infect the larger society: “Take any *real* bit [of finite experience], suppress its environment and then magnify it to monstrosity, and you get identically the type of structure of the absolute.”²¹

Fortunately the absolute cannot contain the world’s flowing energies:

Reality, life, experience, concreteness, immediacy, use what word you will, exceeds our logic, overflows and surrounds it. [...] I prefer bluntly to call reality if not irrational then at least non-rational in its constitution – and by reality here I mean reality where things *happen*, all temporal reality without exception.²²

It was Henri Bergson who led him “to renounce the intellectualistic method”²³ and to understand that only “living sympathy” can connect us to “the expanding center of a human character, the *élan vital* of a man.”²⁴

It is part of Clyde’s tragedy to confront “the structure of the absolute” in a series of embodiments that suppress the external environment and attempt to constrain the overflowing energies of the *élan vital*. Straining against the absolute are various species of irrationality, often described in vitalist terminology. When Clyde’s sister Esta runs off with a traveling actor, their

²⁰ William James, *A Pluralistic Universe*, in *William James: Writings, 1902-1910*, ed. Bruce Kuklick (New York: Library of America, 1987) 681.

²¹ James, *Pluralistic* 766, 725-26.

²² James, *Pluralistic* 725-26.

²³ James, *Pluralistic* 731.

²⁴ James, *Pluralistic* 750.

mother Elvira proves herself “more *vital* [than her husband Asa] in this trying situation” (22; my emphasis), and Clyde finds Hortense’s “gusto” frightening in its suggestion of “a disturbing *vitality* which he might not be able to match” (128; my emphasis). As his fascination with Sondra deepens and Roberta, in her terror of losing him, expresses “a passion he scarcely believed was buried in her in any such volume” (416), he is unable to decide which woman calls out the more *vital* feelings in him. Above all *élan vital* expresses itself in sex, the irrational instinct that turns boys “*clownish*, yet revealing through their bounding *ridiculous* animality the force and meaning of that chemistry and urge toward mating which lies back of all youthful thought and action” (19; emphasis mine).

The first of these embodiments of the absolute is the nondenominational evangelism of Clyde’s parents, the nature of which is suggested by the haphazard collection of “printed but unframed mottoes” displayed on the mission wall: “These mighty adjurations were as silver and gold plates set in a wall of dross” (13). The analogy with plates of precious metals makes the frameless mottoes on the mission wall seem to be timeless abstractions from the surrounding “dross,” an environment that Clyde finds “so dreary and run-down that he hated the thought of living in it” (14). The imprint in Clyde of his religious upbringing is shown clearly once he and Roberta commence their sexual relationship. Both are “painfully convinced [...] that this was sin – deadly, mortal” (345). Yet Clyde seeks to re-create his own “sacred precincts” with Roberta in an image that repeats the structure of those silver and gold mottoes rising out of their drab surroundings: “an ecstatic paradise of sorts in the very center of a humdrum conventional and petty and underpaid work-a-day world” (346). Having been repulsed as well as excited by his experience with the Kansas City prostitute, Clyde seeks even in intense sexual experience an ecstatic transcendence of the flesh. The adoration of Sondra is but a logical next step.

As a bell-hop at the Green-Davidson Hotel, Clyde finds himself subject to another form of the absolute. He must not only wear a uniform and wait on guests according to an inviolable system of precedence; he must suppress the desires aroused by scenes of luxury and sexual license he witnesses daily. It is at his uncle’s factory in Lycurgus, New York, however, that Clyde encounters an even more rigid structure of the absolute. Samuel Griffiths, along with his son Gilbert, runs the Griffiths Shirt and Collar Factory on the basis of a purely rational, inhumane social Darwinism. They start Clyde out in the aptly named basement “shrinking room” in the belief that workers had “to become inured to a narrow and abstemious life” (201) in order to build “their characters. It informed and strengthened the minds and spirits of those who were destined to rise” (201). Probably experiencing the sentiment of irrationality here, Samuel, a good Presbyterian, is unaware that predestination is incompatible with the Alger myth that underlies his theory of success. Clyde rises in the factory, after all, not because drudgery improves his character but because, pragmatically, Samuel anticipates bad social consequences from having a relative exposed to view looking like a common laborer.

When Gilbert instructs him in his obligations as supervisor of young women in the counting room, Clyde faces the absurd contradictions at the heart of the absolute:

Before we place any one here in any position of authority, we have to be *absolutely* sure that they’re going to behave themselves as gentlemen *always* – that the women who are working here are going to receive civil treatment *always*. [...] The men and women who work for us have got to feel that they are employees *first, last, and all the time* – and they have to carry that attitude out into the street with them. And unless they do it, and we

hear anything about it that man or woman is done for [...] And *once we're through with 'em, we're through with 'em.* (265-66; my emphasis)

Forced to agree with Gilbert that the rule is the way it “ought to be,” Clyde also remembers his “abnormal interest in girls” (266) and so, like a budding pragmatist for whom life is a continual series of experiments, he must await the consequences of his decision before verifying the usefulness of the rule: “[A]s a test of himself in regard to life and work, he was going to be all that his uncle and cousin obviously expected of him” (267).

Of course, he soon fails the test, for the counting room is a hothouse of sexual desire where Clyde, with his “disposition easily and often intensely inflamed by the chemistry of sex and the formula of beauty [...] could not easily withstand the appeal” (245). Clyde and Roberta try to “feel that they are employees first, last, and all the time” (266), but outside the factory walls they inhabit a “reality,” where, as James says, “things *happen*” – things like seduction, botched murders, accidental drownings, trials, and executions.

Clyde’s own absolutist bent appears most obviously in his tendency to think in extremes. Recalling with amusement that the Athenians found it “self-contradictory that a boy could be both tall and short”²⁵ (it depends on who is being compared to him), James claimed that:

Everywhere we find rationalists using the same kind of reasoning. The primal whole which is their vision must be there not only as a fact but as a logical necessity. It must be the minimum that can exist – either that absolute whole is there, or there is absolutely nothing. [...] You must stay either at one extreme or the other.²⁶

Again and again Clyde’s thoughts and feelings fluctuate between the poles all/nothing and never/forever: Observing well-off boys on the streets of Kansas City, he believes “he had *nothing*. And he *never* had had” (17); finally earning his own money at the soda fountain, he fantasizes that “*All the joys* of life would then most certainly be spread before him” (28; emphasis mine). The Roberta/Sondra dichotomy illustrates most clearly his tendency to think in extremes, for example, as Clyde awaits Roberta at the Fonda train station to begin the death journey, he ponders: “The difference between the attitudes of these two girls – Sondra with *everything* offering all – asking nothing of him; Roberta, with *nothing*, asking all” (542; emphasis mine).

Having lived in the shadow of Christian eschatology informing the message of his parents’ mottoes – “For the day of the Lord is near” or “For there shall be no reward to the evil man” (13) – Clyde, owing perhaps to deep unconscious guilt, tends to think in terms of eternal consequences. When Sondra turns pragmatic and quashes his hopes for an elopement, Clyde experiences the tortures of the damned. As thoughts of drowning Roberta keep rising into his consciousness, he rejects that way out in absolute terms: “He was not a murderer and never could be” (519).

The question of whether Clyde is ever actually guilty of murder has been widely debated. As Pizer has recently noted in a survey of criticism on the issue, “the most valuable and interesting” recent discussions “find that Dreiser’s representation of the American legal system [...] is characterized by ambivalences, ambiguities, and indeterminacies – that, in short, clear

²⁵ James, *Pluralistic* 660.

²⁶ James, *Pluralistic* 660.

meaning was probably not his intent and certainly not his effect."²⁷ What is fairly clear, however, is that Clyde tries to escape the burden of choice, and hence responsibility, on Big Bittern, by seeking refuge in the absolute.

By the time Clyde and Roberta arrive at the lake, he is disengaging from the concrete particularity that James associates with reality; he is "[i]n a confused and turbulent state mentally, scarcely realizing the clarity or import of any particular thought or movement or act now's" (555). In one of the most puzzling passages in the novel, Clyde is described "assisting Roberta (an almost nebulous figure, she now seemed, stepping down into an insubstantial row-boat upon a purely ideational lake)" (556). Clyde seems to be seeking a state where, as James would put it, nothing is "real" and therefore nothing, "happens" – that is where no thought or movement has consequences, or "import," where material substance becomes "purely ideational." Once the two are out on the water, smooth as "molten glass," sounds fade into the distance and they, ostensibly on their honeymoon trip, achieve a Keatsian moment: "Isn't it still and peaceful. [...] I think it's *beautiful, truly*" (556; emphasis mine), says the pregnant Roberta, ironically evoking the union of truth and beauty in the Grecian urn, that "still unravish'd bride of quietness."²⁸

When they arrive at the isolated Poe-esque "pool or tarn" where will occur the death of a beautiful woman,²⁹ Clyde feels himself "drifting, drifting" in the absolute, "in endless space" (560). The pool "seemed bottomless as he gazed into it," feeling a suggestion of

Death! Death! [...] a still, quiet, unprotesting type of death into which one, by reason of choice or hypnosis or unutterable weariness, might joyfully and gratefully sink. [...] And he now felt for the time the grip of some seemingly strong, and yet friendly sympathetic hands laid firmly on his shoulders. The comfort of them! The warmth! The strength! (560)

Compare that passage with James's description of the sentiment of rationality on a cosmic level:

Probably the weightiest contribution to our feeling of the rationality of the universe which the notion of the absolute brings is the assurance that however disturbed the surface may be, at bottom all is well with the cosmos – central peace abiding at the heart of endless agitation. This conception is rational in many ways, beautiful aesthetically, beautiful intellectually [...] and beautiful morally. Practically, it is less beautiful; [...]; for [...] it loosens the world's hold upon our sympathies and leaves the soul of it foreign. Nevertheless it does give *peace*, and that kind of rationality is so paramountly demanded by men that to the end of time there will be absolutists, men who choose belief in a static eternal, rather than admit that the finite world of change and striving, even with a God as one of the strivers, is itself eternal.³⁰

²⁷ Donald Pizer, "Crime and Punishment in Dreiser's *An American Tragedy*: The Legal Debate," *Studies in the Novel* 41.4 (2009): 448-49.

²⁸ John Keats, "Ode on a Grecian Urn," *John Keats: Selected Poetry and Letters*, edited by Richard Harter Fogle (New York: Rinehart, 1951) 247, line 1.

²⁹ For the many parallels between Dreiser's novel and the stories and poems of Edgar Allan Poe, see Thomas P. Riggio, "American Gothic: Poe and *An American Tragedy*," *American Literature* 49.4 (1978): 515-32.

³⁰ James, *Pluralistic* 681.

As with his frequently noted inversion of the Alger myth, Dreiser turns this Jamesian image on its head. While James's absolutists find "central peace abiding at the heart of endless agitation," Clyde finds agitation at the heart of what he takes to be abiding peace. Gazing "into the fascinating and yet treacherous depths," he sees rising "A form! [...] he recognized Roberta struggling and waving her thin white arms out of the water and reaching toward him! God! How terrible!" (561). For James, the absolute "loosens the world's hold upon our sympathies"; for Clyde, the absolute brings the delusion of the grip of "sympathetic" hands, but instead of finding peace in the absolute he is confronted with an image of entanglement and death.

The "finite world of change and striving" demands choosing and acting, yet at "this cataclysmic moment" Clyde is frozen in the image of the absolute's "static eternal" – "a static between a powerful compulsion to do and yet not to do" (563). Roberta's reaching out to him triggers a spasmodic "flinging out at her" (564), but reflex action is not a choice. The same is not true, however, of Clyde's failure to rescue Roberta after they are plunged into the water. James explains why in *The Will to Believe*:

Our passional nature not only lawfully may, but must, decide an option between propositions, whenever it is a genuine option that cannot by its nature be decided on intellectual grounds; for to say under such circumstances, "Do not decide, but leave the question open," is itself a passional decision – just like deciding yes or no, – and is attended with the same risk of losing the truth.³¹

The Efrat offers a purely pragmatic argument for leaving open an option that Clyde has certainly not been able to decide on intellectual, or any other, grounds:

You might save her. But again you might not! For see how she strikes about [...] if you draw near her now, [she] may bring about your own death also. But you desire to live! And her living will make your life not worthwhile from now on. Rest but a moment – a fraction of a minute! Wait – wait – ignore the pity of that appeal. And then – then – But there! Behold. It is over. (514)

The Efrat's voice, however, has from the beginning been "the very substance of some leering and diabolic wish or wisdom concealed in his own nature" (532). And so inaction turns out to be "a passional decision" after all, with "the peace and solemnity of this wondrous scene" (565) suggesting the sentiment of rationality. Then the voice of that "weird, contemptuous, mocking" wier-wier bird announces the eruption of the irrational real out of the heart of the absolute: "Kit, kit, kit, Ca-a-a-ah!" (565)

As the rest of the novel verifies, Clyde's decision not to decide is at the "risk of losing the truth." Swimming to shore with "Roberta's cries still in his ears," he consoles himself with the thought that "after all, he had not really killed her. No, no. Thank God for that. He had not. And yet [...] had he? Or, had he not? For had he not refused to go to her rescue [...] when the fault for casting her in the water, however accidentally, was so *truly* his? And yet – and yet –" (565; my emphasis).

³¹ William James, "The Will to Believe," *The Will to Believe and Other Essays in Popular Philosophy*, edited by Gerald E. Myers (New York: Library of American, 1992) 464.

Is Life Worth Living?

The Efrat's claim that saving Roberta would make Clyde's life "not worth while from now on" is a possible allusion to James's essay "Is Life Worth Living?" in *The Will to Believe*. In trying to dissuade a despairing person from suicide, James offers a choice between "two possible universes."³² The choice of pessimism makes "the nightmare view" "true beyond a doubt";³³ the choice of "faith in the unseen world" remains "a case of *maybe*," though it makes possible our sympathetic relationship with a finite God who needs our help: "God himself, in short, may draw vital strength and increase of very being from our fidelity."³⁴ In "A Counsel to Perfection," Dreiser echoes James's essay by asking, "Is life worth living?"³⁵ And like James he offers two choices:

[believing we are] in the grip of a blind force or process [or believing] we are part and parcel (leaf and vine) of some hard-pressed Creator, [...] not a Supreme God, by any means, but a [...] well-meaning Prometheus who is trying to make something out of man and Himself at the same time, being in or of man, or man in Him ("I am in the Father – the Father is in me").³⁶

On death row, Clyde faces a similar existential choice, one between that "old contempt [...] of his for religion and its fruits" and the "charm[ing]" Christianity, though he does not want to follow other death-row inmates by turning religious out of fear (898). "Tortured by the need of some mental if not material support in the face of his great danger," he begins to "veer – however slightly or unconsciously as yet, – toward the personalization and humanization of forces" (901). Judging by his hallucinations of sympathetic hands on Big Bittern, he might, like James and Dreiser, have eventually intuited a "well-meaning Prometheus" with whom to unite in "making something" of them both, but he has no "faintest conception" of personalized force "except in the guise of religion" (901). Clyde will eventually convert to Christianity out of fear. Before he does, however, he reveals an unexpected resistance against the "blind force or process" that is destroying him and has a moment of clarity in which he understands why life without belief in a supernatural realm is worthwhile.

The possibility of "making something" of himself raises the question of whether the name Clyde Griffiths indicates a "self" to begin with. The trend in recent criticism is to answer negatively. A seminal work in this trend is Philip Fisher's *Hard Facts*: "Bluntly put, within Dreiser's novel the question of authenticity never exists. Clyde has no self to which he might be 'true.' Literally, he is not yet anyone at all."³⁷ There is a counter tradition, however, with a *locus classicus* in Richard Lehan's 1969 *Theodore Dreiser: His World and His Novels*, which describes a

³² William James, "Is Life Worth Living?" *The Will to Believe and Other Essays in Popular Philosophy*, edited by Gerald E. Myers (New York: Library of American, 1992) 500.

³³ James, "Is Life," *Will* 501.

³⁴ James, "Is Life," *Will* 502.

³⁵ Dreiser, "A Counsel to Perfection," *Hey Rub-A-Dub-Dub: A Book of the Mystery and Wonder and Terror of Life* (New York: Boni and Liveright, 1920) 123.

³⁶ Dreiser, "Counsel," *Hey Rub* 123.

³⁷ Philip Fisher, *Hard Facts: Setting and Form in the American Novel* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987) 140. See also Lee Clark Mitchell, *Determined Fictions: American Literary Naturalism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1989) 71 and Karaganis 157, 159, 171.

recurring “romantic dilemma”³⁸ in Dreiser’s work of an “essential self” in conflict with the environment.³⁹ Pizer does not directly address the issue of whether Clyde has what Paul A. Orlov calls a “true selfhood,”⁴⁰ but when he describes our movement “from contempt toward compassion” as we experience with Clyde the “tightening of the noose,”⁴¹ he certainly implies that Clyde is more than “an interior blankness over which many colorations can pass.”⁴² A primary means for creating this empathy, Pizer believes, is Dreiser’s extensive use of indirect discourse, which “suggests that we are bypassing the narrator for direct involvement in the character.”⁴³ At least as far back as Aristotle, critics have realized that the tragic emotions of pity and fear depend on our ability to identify with the tragic hero – pity for “someone who undeservedly falls into misfortune” and fear for “someone like ourselves who encounters this misfortune.”⁴⁴ What Dreiser accomplishes in Book Three is a gradual revelation of Clyde as one like ourselves who is worthy of our compassion and identification.

Dreiser indicates part of what makes Clyde a unique individual early in the novel when he declares that he possesses more “force” and “resistance” than Esta (18). Resistance is an important aspect of James’s conception of heroism. In his popular *Psychology: Briefer Course*, James contends that “in all hard cases of volition,” that is, cases in which “more ideal motives prevail,” the hero takes “the line of greater resistance.”⁴⁵ For James overcoming resistance requires “effort,” and, as opposed to other “standards” for evaluating ourselves – “our strength and our intelligence, our wealth and even our good luck” – effort “seems to belong to an altogether different realm, as if it were the substantial thing which we *are*, and those were but externals which we *carry*. [...] He who can make none is but a shadow; he who can make much more is a hero.”⁴⁶

James’s theory that “effort” is virtually identical with selfhood closely resembles the theme of Dreiser’s Expressionistic play “Laughing Gas,” which is one of the strongest direct links between Dreiser and James.⁴⁷ Written in July 1914 and published as part of *Plays of the*

³⁸ Richard Lehan, *Theodore Dreiser: His World and His Novels* (Carbondale, USA: Southern Illinois University Press, 1969) 47.

³⁹ Lehan 171.

⁴⁰ Paul A. Orlov pushes Lehan’s argument to its logical extreme, asserting that Dreiser’s novel is “non- and even anti-naturalistic” in its depiction of characters with “a genuine individuality – a true selfhood,” the distortion of which by society is “the source of the tragic import of their lives and deaths.” See Orlov, *An American Tragedy: Perils of the Self Seeking “Success”* (Lewisburg, USA: Bucknell University Press, 1998) 100.

⁴¹ Pizer, *Novels* 285.

⁴² Fisher 145.

⁴³ Pizer, *Novels* 285. Orlov sees indirect discourse as “an emblem of empathy that expresses, by contrast, the dire disregard of the world confronting Clyde” (212).

⁴⁴ Aristotle, *Aristotle’s Poetics*, trans. Leon Golden and com. O. B. Hardison, Jr. (Englewood Cliffs, USA: Prentice-Hall, 1968) 22.

⁴⁵ William James, *Psychology: Briefer Course, Writings 1878-1899*, edited by Gerald E. Myers (New York: Library of America, 1984) 411.

⁴⁶ James, *Psychology* 4, 24-25. James writes elsewhere that goal-directed activity “comes complicated with resistances which it overcomes or succumbs to, and with the efforts which the feelings of resistance so often provokes; and it is in complex experiences like these that the notions of distinct agents, and of passivity as opposed to activity arrives. Here also the notion of causal efficacy comes to birth.” James, *Pluralistic* 799.

⁴⁷ Dreiser inserted a gathering into the second issue of the first impression of *Plays of the Natural and Supernatural* in what was probably an effort to head off charges of plagiarism of James’s *The Will to Believe and Other Essays in Popular Philosophy*. Entitled “The Anæsthetic Revelation,” the gathering follows “Laughing Gas” and consists of an extended quotation from Benjamin Paul Blood’s pamphlet *The Anaesthetic Revelation and the Gist of Philosophy*, in which Blood reports his many experiments with the effects of anesthesia; a much longer excerpt from *The Will to Believe* in which James tells how Blood inspired him to experiment on himself with nitrous oxide; and brief introductory and closing remarks by Dreiser, who claims that he did not learn of James’s book until after “Laughing

Natural and Supernatural in 1916, the play is based upon Dreiser's own operation in March 1914 to remove a carbuncle from his neck. It dramatizes the near-death experience of a celebrated physician, Jason James Vatabeel, who under anesthesia during surgery hurtles through vast reaches of time and space, encountering various allegorical representations of force and cutting through a number of astral planes. The central conflict of the play involves the efforts of Demyaphon, the embodiment of laughing gas, to overcome Vatabeel's "resistance" to the idea that he is merely "a servant of higher forces."⁴⁸ A crisis emerges when the surgeons begin to run out of oxygen, and Demyaphon tells Vatabeel that the previous "standards" his professional achievements have set for valuing his life no longer apply and he must establish a new one: "Now if you live you must make an effort or die."⁴⁹ Despite Demyaphon's insistence that life is a meaningless repetition, Vatabeel affirms his own humanity and the value of life:

Am I really to die! My God! What if I do go round and round! I am a man! Life is sweet, intense, perfect! [...] *The vital spark is rekindled within the inert frame. With a gigantic effort, it re-establishes itself and resumes control and respiration. The effort to inhale, feeble at the surface of materiality, is immense.*⁵⁰

As Vatabeel awakens, he falls under the control of Demyaphon and roars with laughter at the absurdity of life. Yet we are left with the sense that Vatabeel's "immense" – and heroic – effort to reconnect his spirit with material existence has created a new "standard" whereby to judge his worth as a man.

Clyde in part represents a reworking of this Jamesian material from the previous decade. His resistance is most apparent during the trial. When Mason touches on what Freudians would call Clyde's poverty complex, his sensitivity about accepting Sondra's money to support his dalliance in the leisure class, Clyde starts "to show a disposition to balk" (833); whenever commanded by Mason

to speak up and turn around so the jury could see his face, he had done so, only feeling more and more resentful toward this man who was thus trying to drag out of him every secret he possessed. He had touched on Sondra, and she was still too near his heart to reveal anything that would reflect on her. So now he sat staring down at the jurors somewhat defiantly [...]. (833)

Clyde's relationship with Sondra is sequestered away in his heart's "golden chamber"⁵¹; any effort to drag it out into the open triggers the strongest resistance.

Gas" was published. See Theodore Dreiser, *The Collected Plays of Theodore Dreiser*, edited by Keith Newlin and Frederick E. Rusch (Albany, USA: Whitston, 2000) 317-23. For a discussion of this incident and its implications for the James-Dreiser connection, see Linda S. Boren, "William James, Theodore Dreiser and the 'Anesthetic Revelation,'" *American Studies* 24 (1983): 5-18.

⁴⁸Dreiser, "Laughing Gas," *Collected Plays* 49.

⁴⁹ Dreiser, "Laughing Gas" 48.

⁵⁰ Dreiser, "Laughing Gas" 51.

⁵¹The phrase is from James's "On a Certain Blindness in Human Beings," *Writings 1878-1899* 845. The essay was originally part of James's *Talks to Students*; Dreiser would have known it from his copy of *On Some of Life's Ideals*. Quoting Robert Louis Stevenson's essay "The Lantern-Bearers," James writes, "Justice is not done to the versatility and the unplumbed childishness of man's imagination. His life from without may seem but a rude mound of mud; there will be *some golden chamber* at the heart of it, in which he dwells delighted [...]" (845; emphasis added).

Clyde's resistance shows up most often in his refusal to accept any absolute interpretation of his actions or character. When he is mouthing testimony that "Jephson had written out for him," he can't help qualifying the memorized text: "I knew I wasn't doing right – *exactly*..."; "Yes, sir, I suffered," he tells Mason while thinking to himself that "[h]e had suffered *some*" (784; my emphasis). His own philosophy of pluralism, James writes, "stand[s] out for the legitimacy of the notion of *some*," while absolutism, seems to hold that "some" is a category ruinously infected with self-contradictions, and that the only categories inwardly consistent and therefore pertinent to reality are "all" and "none."⁵²

Clyde is "enormously troubled by the shabby picture of his character which these disclosures seem to conjure, yet somehow feeling that he was *not as bad*, or at least had not intended to be, as all this made him appear" (828; emphasis mine). His mother wants him to be "*wholly* repentant," but "he [can]not feel so – *not wholly* so" (926; emphasis added).

Despite his relative certainty that the world becomes our home only when we find faith in a supernatural world beyond or behind our own, in a brief digression in "Is Life Worth Living?" James makes the surprising assertion that atheists need not despair, for "instinctive curiosity, pugnacity, and honor may make life on a purely naturalistic basis seem worth living from day to day to men who have cast away all metaphysics."⁵³ As a boy, Clyde is "intensely curious about life" (23) and pugnacious in upholding his family's honor, starting several fistfights with boys who "looked down upon him and his brothers and sisters for being the children of such parents" (11). And of course he has already cast away the metaphysics of his parents' "fruitless" religion. Life's "sweat and blood and tragedy" may be "no better than a game of private theatricals," James writes, "but it *feels* like a real fight, – as if there were something really wild in the universe which we [...] are needed to redeem; and first of all to redeem our own hearts from atheisms and fears. For such a half-wild, half-saved universe our nature is adapted."⁵⁴ For the adolescent Clyde, life certainly "*feels* like a real fight," and had "his sense of curiosity and awe" not been so taken by the "noiseless vigor and reserve that characterizes the ultra successful" (192) at Chicago's Union League,⁵⁵ he might have been better adapted for James's "half-wild, half-saved universe."

As the day of his execution approaches, Clyde's struggle with "atheisms and fears" becomes increasingly intense. Having lost his faith in his parents' religion, he converts to the religion of Sondra. In Sondra's arms Clyde feels "as though he were slowly but surely being transported to paradise" (371). Even as he sets out towards Big Bittern he thinks of her as a *deus ex machina* who might rescue him from the "torture" of Roberta's demands: "Oh, Sondra, Sondra, if but now from your high estate, you might bend down and aid me. No more lies! No more suffering! No more misery of any kind!" (551)

Clyde, however, loses all hope of paradise from the moment he receives the farewell note from Sondra in his cell on death row. "His last hope – the last trace of his dream vanished. Forever! It was at that moment, as when night at last falls upon the faintest remaining gleam of dusk in the west. A dim, weakening tinge of pink – and then the dark" (906). The description of a "moment" of perception as a gradual loss of clarity, as a "weakening tinge of pink" fading to

⁵² James, *Pluralistic* 666.

⁵³ James, "Is Life," *Will* 494.

⁵⁴ James, "Is Life," *Will* 502.

⁵⁵ Susan L. Mizruchi considers this quotation to be part of "the single most important passage in the novel. [...] This sense of difference from what he feels himself to be [...] sets him on a course that leads directly to his 'tragedy.'" See *The Power of Historical Knowledge: Narrating the Past in Hawthorne, James, and Dreiser* (Princeton, USA: Princeton University Press, 1988) 253.

black, contrasts with James's description of each present moment of consciousness with its "fringe" on either end, a fuzzy boundary between now and the moment that was, now and the moment to come. "The rush of our thought forward through its fringes is the everlasting peculiarity of its life. We realize this life as [...] something that shoots out of darkness through a dawn into a brightness that we feel to be the dawn fulfilled."⁵⁶ Having largely experienced life as a struggle between extremes – all and nothing, never and forever – Clyde must call upon whatever of his spiritual energy that remains if he is to experience anything like the eternal recurrence of rebirth in the present moment.

Something unexpected happens as Clyde awaits the ruling on his appeal. Like Vatabeel in "Laughing Gas," who resists death in a meaningless universe by affirming his manhood, Clyde begins to feel that his unique history mitigates his guilt, a feeling that releases profound resistance to the mythic, murderous Clyde created by prosecutors and popularized in the press:

How could they judge him, these people, all or any one of them, even his own mother, when they did not know what his own mental, physical and spiritual suffering had been? [...] Even in the face of all the facts and as much as everyone felt him to be guilty, there was something so deep within him that seem to cry out against it that, even now, at times, it startled him. (916)

When the appellate court finds that no "justifiable process of reasoning" can overturn the prosecution's interpretation of the facts, Reverend McMillan tries to offset this bad news with the good news of another absolutist text, "quot[ing] Matthew, Paul and John as to the unimportance of this world – [and] the true reality of the next" (917). Clyde, however, oblivious to the droning minister, remains "standing before him with more courage and character showing in his face and eyes than at any time previously in his brief and eager career" (918). By "character" Dreiser seems to mean the courage to confront immanent death while resisting fantasies of a timeless paradise where nothing happens.

And when the Governor denies his final appeal, Clyde experiences a potentially life-changing epiphany that warrants quoting at some length:

[H]e felt the need, even now of retracing his unhappy life. His youth. Kansas City. Chicago. Lycurgus. Roberta and Sondra. How swiftly they and all that was connected with them passed in review. The few, brief, bright intense moments. His desire for more – more – that intense desire he had felt there in Lycurgus after Sondra came and now this, this! And now even this was ending – this – this – Why he had scarcely lived at all as yet [...]. And of this life but fourteen, thirteen, twelve, eleven, ten, nine, eight of the filtering and now feverish days left. They were going – going. But life – life – how was one to do without that – the beauty of the days – of the sun and rain – of work, love, energy, desire. Oh, he really did not want to die. He did not. Why say to him so constantly as his mother and the Reverend McMillan now did to resolve all his care in divine mercy and think only of God, when now, now was all? (923-24)

Compare this passage with James's description of sensation: "All our sensible experiences, as we get them immediately, [...] change by discrete pulses of perception, each of which keeps us saying 'more, more, more,' or 'less, less, less,' as the definite increments or diminutions make

⁵⁶ James, *Pluralistic* 759.

themselves felt. [...] They come to us in drops. Time itself comes in drops.”⁵⁷ Clyde’s memories of the important places in his life appear to come in “discrete pulses of perception,” and the repetitions of “more” and “going,” as well as the counting down of the days suggests that time indeed comes and goes “in drops.”

For James, however, these pulses, or drops, somehow do not contradict the fact that “In the real concrete sensible flux of life, experiences compenetrates each other so that it is not easy to know just what is excluded and what not.”⁵⁸ Probably drawing upon Bergson’s concept of “duration,”⁵⁹ James writes:

Past and future, for example, conceptually separated [...] are to some extent, however brief, co-present with each other throughout experience. The literally present moment is a purely verbal supposition, not a position; the only present ever realized concretely being the “passing moment” in which the dying rearward of time and its dawning future forever mix their lights. Say “now” and it *was* even while you say it.⁶⁰

The “now” that is “all” in Clyde’s epiphany seems to be an effort to represent how past and future “compenetrate” as the one “now” dies away and the “next” is born. And no one else could have precisely this same history. It belongs uniquely to the “everlasting peculiarity” of the self designated by the name Clyde Griffiths.

In the constantly moving “now,” beauty is not the equivalent of eternal truth but rather a process of change – “sun and rain” – and of purposeful human activity – “work” and “energy.” And there is “desire,” not the frustrated desire for a sadistic Hortense Briggs but a general yearning for what comes with the dawn of a new day. And what is this “life” that Clyde cannot imagine doing without? Consider James’s closing remarks in *A Pluralistic Universe*: “Life, says our colleague [Josiah Royce], is full of significance, of meaning, of success and of defeat, of hoping and of striving, of longing, of desire, and of inner value. It is a total presence that embodies worth.”⁶¹ In this recognition that life is the embodiment of “worth,” Clyde attains to something like the wisdom that suffering often brings to tragic heroes, in this case the deeply emotional understanding that – even without Sondra – life is worth living. Moreover, it is in these few moments when Clyde reveals the possibility of developing into an admirable man of “character” that we feel “the waste of individual potential” that Pizer identifies as a recurring theme in naturalist tragedy.⁶²

Sadly, Clyde, lacking Vatabeel’s “vital spark” and capacity for heroic spiritual effort, finally takes the line of least resistance, McMillan’s repeated insistence on how “easy it was” to find the “Peace of God” (900) eventually wearing down his resolve. He is hounded by his mother

⁵⁷ James, *Pluralistic* 734.

⁵⁸ James, *Pluralistic* 746.

⁵⁹ Henri Bergson, *Time and Free Will: An Essay on the Immediate Data of Consciousness* (London: Swan, Sonnenschein & Co., 1910). Bergson explains that “Pure duration is the form which the succession of our conscious states assumes when our ego lets itself *live*, when it refrains from separating its present state from its former states [...] [It] forms both the past and the present states into an organic whole, as happens when we recall the notes of the tune, melting, so to speak, into one another” (100).

⁶⁰ James, *Pluralistic* 746.

⁶¹ James, *Pluralistic* 811.

⁶² Donald Pizer, *Twentieth-Century American Literary Naturalism: An Interpretation* (Carbondale, USA: Southern Illinois University Press, 1982) 6. “The naturalistic tragic hero,” Pizer writes, “is a figure whose potential for growth is evident but who fails to develop because of the circumstances of his life” (6).

and McMillan to repent until, “in a kind of psychic terror, evoked by his uncertainty as to the meaning of the hereafter” (927), he flees into the comforting embrace of the absolute, “coming at last to believe, not only must he have faith but that he had it – and peace – complete and secure” (927). “My task is done, the victory won” (928), Clyde writes at the end of that saccharine, inauthentic letter “to young men of his own years” partly dictated by McMillan. Given Clyde’s questioning of his conversion up to the moment of his execution, this letter is a betrayal of the man of character he briefly promised to become. For, as James asserts, “Need and struggle are what excite and inspire us; our hour of triumph is what brings the void.”⁶³

⁶³ James, “Is Life,” *Will* 491.