William James and Buddhism: American Pragmatism and the Orient

DAVID SCOTT

William James pursued far ranging enquiries in America across the fields of psychology, philosophy and religious studies between 1890 and 1910. Historical and comparative overlaps emerge between James and Buddhism from these pursuits. This article first sets out James' own nineteenth-century American context. There follows James' own more explicit references to Buddhism, which particularly focused on the meaning of the term 'religion' and on specific elements of Buddhist teachings. In turn comes a substantive comparative look at certain themes in both James and Buddhism, namely, 'consciousness', 'integration' and 'criteria of truth claims'. The common functionalist tendencies in James and Buddhism are highlighted. Finally, the article attempts a wider look at the interaction between American thought and Buddhism during the twentieth century. This interaction is exemplified by John Dewey, Charles Hartshorne, Daisetz Suzuki, Kitaro Nishida and David Kalupahana, and also across the fields of psychology, pragmatism and process philosophy. In all of these areas James emerges as a model for studying American thought and Buddhism.   © 2000 Academic Press

Introduction

Asian traditions had an impact on America between 1890 and 1910. In turn, talk of the 'global village' and of the 'East–West' encounter has become well known in the twentieth century, at times perhaps as rather glib clichés but also at times as appropriate indications of profound change. Kenneth Inada and Nolan Jacobson hold that during the twentieth century 'Buddhism, the last of the great Asiatic schools of thought to reach American shores has been moving ever deeper into the very substratum of American philosophy' (Inada and Jacobson 1991, p. xvii). The role of the philosopher William James (1842–1910) in bringing elements of Buddhist thought to America deserves greater recognition.

James taught at Harvard in physiology from 1872 to 1880 but moved into the wider areas of psychology from 1880 onwards. He wrote his seminal *Principles of Psychology* in 1890. This work then led James to important explorations in comparative religion, culminating in *The Varieties of Religious Experience* (1902) (see Leuba 1904). James was also to become a major figure in American philosophy (see Ford 1982; Suckiel 1981), above all through his *Pragmatism: A New Name for Old Ways of Thinking* (1907), *A Pluralistic Universe* (1909), *The Meaning of Truth* (1909) and *Essays in Radical Empiricism* (1912). These works disseminated the philosophy of pragmatism into the American mainstream, leading George Cotkin to dub him the 'public philosopher' (see Otkin 1990). James' range gave him a cross-disciplinary significance.

For James, 'pragmatism' as a philosophy shapes one's attitude towards religion (see Levinson 1981; Ramsey 1993; Suckiel 1995). This was both in terms of what actually constitutes 'religion' and in considering religious pluralism. Amidst these wide ranging enquiries, aspects of Buddhism caught James' attention. To be sure, 'Buddhism' is an ambiguous term.[1] In Victorian Britain, Buddhism was often associated with Theravada Buddhism, an association fostered by British political control of Sri Lanka and Burma. By contrast, Mahāyana Buddhism was far more prominent in American circles, partly through the greater degree of American contact with Japan and partly through subsequent Chinese and Japanese immigration to America.

Perceptions of Buddhism were percolating into American thought through various channels by the end of the nineteenth century (see Tweed 1982). One channel was the Transcendentalist movement, which flourished between the 1840s and 1870s. That movement is often cited by James in *Varieties* and elsewhere. Among Transcendentalists, Ralph Waldo Emerson and, even more, Henry Thoreau and Walt Whitman evoked Buddhism in their philosophical and poetical writings (see Ando 1970; Fields 1992, pp. 55–69; Versluis 1993). Admittedly, this evocation remained at something of a distance, as they themselves never seem to have encountered any Buddhists. Nevertheless, as early as January 1844, Thoreau produced in *The Dial* the first English extracts of the seminal Mahayana text, the *Saddharma-puṇḍarīka Sūtra* or 'Lotus Sutra'. Here, colourful Mahāyana imagery of 'Pure Land' paradises and Bodhisattvas, are intertwined with practical considerations of *upaya kausalya*, 'skilful means'. Thoreau's friend John Weis was subsequently to say that Thoreau 'went about like a priest of Buddha who expects to arrive soon at the summit of a life of contemplation' (Christy 1932, p. 202). It was Bronson Alcott, another Transcendentalist, who arranged for Edwin Arnold's *The Light of Asia* to be printed in Boston in 1878. The story of the Buddha's life here combines lyrical Victorian poetry with Buddhist teachings. This book proved to be as popular in America as it had just been in Britain. A second subsequent overlapping channel for Buddhist images during the 1870s and 1880s in America were Helena Blavatsky's and Henry Olcott's exotic dramatic presentations in the *Theosophical Society* (see Prothero 1996). Here ancient Buddhist wisdom, disseminating from hidden Tibetan masters of the Himalayas, was mysteriously manifested through Blavatsky's 'lamasery' apartment in New York and expounded through books like Alfred Sinnetts *Esoteric Buddhism* (1884) and Blavatsky's own *Secret Doctrine* (1888). Rick Fields suggests that by the end of the nineteenth century 'the drawing rooms of Boston were awash with mysticism, occult fancies and Eastern religions' (1992, p. 157).

In this climate, the historian Henry Adams traveled from America to Japan in 1886, commissioned a 'Buddha grave' for his dead wife and wrote a poem *Buddha* and *Brahma* in 1895. Something of a Buddhist circle crystallised around Earnest Fenollosa, Curator in Far Eastern Art at Boston Museum, who had stayed in Japan from 1878 to 1890. There he had formally taken the Buddhist 'precepts'. He came back to Boston in 1890 with a mission, expounded in his poem *East & West*, to present Buddhism to America (see Chisholm 1963). The year 1893 had seen the Chicago *Parliament of World Religions* bring some prominence to Dharmapāla of the Theravāda Buddhist tradition of Sri Lanka and to Shaku Soen of the Zen Buddhist tradition of Japan. Lilian Whiting wrote of 'The American Buddhist: A Figure of Today' in the *Times Democrat* 'Boston Days' column of 19 December 1894. Dharmapāla and Shaku Soen were to return for lecture tours across America. Another figure active in disseminating knowledge of Buddhism into the American setting was the prolific publicist and writer Paul Carus (see Jackson 1968; Dumoulin 1992, pp. 133–45). Carus wrote *The Gospel of Buddha* in 1894 and *Buddhism and Its Christian Critics* in 1897. While in America for the *Parliament of Religions*, Shaku Soen had in turn recommended to Carus a young but subsequently very influential disciple, Daisetz Suzuki. According to Heinrich Dumoulin, 'Shaku Soen thus lit the match that brought about a conflagration of Zen in the West' (1992, p. 4). Suzuki was to stay in the U.S. from 1897 to 1909, collaborating at La Salle with Carus. Suzuki translated *The Awakening of Faith in the Mahayana* in 1900, a popular Far Eastern classic 'attributed' to Ashvaghosa. In 1907 he published his own *Outlines of Mahayana Buddhism*.

Meanwhile, at Harvard, James' fellow philosophers Josiah Royce, George Santayana and William Hocking showed some interest in Buddhism, albeit in a somewhat remoter or eclectic fashion than James (see Clarke 1997, pp. 116–8). Charles Lanman, a Sanskrit scholar on early Buddhist thought, was also a friend and neighbour of James'. Charles Peirce, the other main initial advocate, alongside James, of American pragmatist philosophy, seems to have become aware over the years of the potential convergence between emerging American pragmatist philosophy and Buddhism. Peirce coined the phrase 'Buddhisto-Christian religion' in his private posthumously published papers (see Hartshorne 1991, p. 3).

For James, the decades from 1890 to 1910 brought knowledge and interest in Oriental currents, not just in academic and philosophical settings but also in the wider 'general' American context. I will first pinpoint James' references to Buddhism and then provide thematic comparisons between James and Buddhism.

James' References to Buddhism

James readily 'acknowledged' materials related to Buddhism. In his *Varieties of Religious Experience* he cites books such as Carl Koeppen's Die *Religionen des Buddha* (1857) for an accurate rendering of Buddhism's *dhyāna* 'meditation' levels, Hermann Oldenberg's *Buddha* (1882) for the 'Middle Way' position of Buddhism, and Henry Warren's *Buddhism in Translation* (1898, the third volume of the emerging 'Harvard Oriental Series') for the popular *Jātaka Tales*. James also owned and annotated other books like Max Müller's *History of Ancient Sanskrit Literature*, and Paul Carus' widely read *Gospel of Buddha*. James helped set up the prestigious 'American Lectures on the History of Religions', the first series of, which were by Thomas Rhys-Davids in 1894 and 1895 on 'Buddhism: Its History and Literature'.

Vivekānanda, a famous Hindu spokesman from the 1893 Chicago *World Parliament of Religions*, received a letter from James when Vivekānda was back in India in 1897 (1942, p. 342). In his letter James criticises negative comments by Vivekananda on Buddhism, an indication of James' own positive feelings towards Buddhism. That James at Harvard felt concerned enough to have taken the trouble to send this letter to Vivekananda in faraway Calcutta to defend Buddhism is revealing.

The charismatic Buddhist spokesman Dharmapāla re-visited America in 1902–04 and attended a lecture of James' at Harvard. On recognising him, James is supposed to have said to him, 'Take my chair. You are better equipped to lecture on psychology than I'. At the end of Dharmapāla's exposition, James declared, 'This is the psychology everybody will be studying twenty five years from now' (quoted Fields 1992, pp. 134–5). The fact that it was the 'psychological' aspects of Dharmapāla's message that James focused onto rather than on abstract doctrine is no surprise. The specifics of Dharmapāla's talk is not known, but his Theravāda background meant a focus on states of mind and of related behaviour. Pali Canon materials were already appearing in English. The *Dhammasangami*, which was translated in 1900 by Caroline Rhys-Davids under the title *A Buddhist Manual of Psychological Ethics*, was readily available to James.

If we step back from these individual incidents, a more considered sense of James' images and usage of Buddhism come out in *The Varieties of Religious Experience*, his 'Gifford Lectures' delivered at the University of Edinburgh during 1901 and 1902. As he wrote to Josiah Royce, he felt that he had 'made the plunge' (1902, p. 541). In *Varieties* there is explicit recognition of religious diversity by James. Wide-ranging references are made to Christianity, Islam, Hinduism and Buddhism amongst living

traditions, as well as to extinct traditions. For James, all of these various traditions have 'saintliness'.

Unlike many European scholars, though like his American compatriot Paul Carus, James took a broad approach, not demoting Mahāyāna Buddhism to a later corruption of a supposedly purer Theravāda tradition. According to Philip Almond (1988; see also Katz 1982; Spearrit 1995, pp. 17–41; Lopez 1995), in late Victorian British scholars tended to present an overly textualised and Theravāda orientated 'construction' of Buddhism, as in the *Pali Text Society*. That view reflected their own scholastic and Protestant settings. Unlike European scholars as well, James was struck by the quest in Buddhism for the transformation of personality—a reflection of James' background in psychology.

Buddhism and the Term 'Religion'

The caes of Buddhism continues to be cited in clarifying the bounds of what the term 'religion' can mean or involve (see Herbrechsmeir 1993; Smart 1995). James was one of the earliest persons to bring Buddhism into this academic debate. As he put it, 'controversy comes up over the word divine, if we take our definition in too narrow a sense. There are systems of thought, which the world usually calls religious, and yet do not positively assume a God. Buddhism is in this case. Popularly, of course, the Buddha himself stands in place of a God; but in strictness the Buddhistic system is atheistic' (1902, p. 50). The case of 'Buddhism' led him to focus on the experiential consequences of religion:

> The sort of appeal that Emersonian optimism, on the one hand, and Buddhistic pessimism, on the other hand, make to the individual and the sort of response which he makes to them in his life are in fact indistinguishable from, and in many respects identical with, the best Christian appeal and response. We must therefore, from the experiential point of view, call these godless, or quasi-godless creeds 'religions' and accordingly when in our definition of religion we speak of the individual's relation to 'what he considers the divine' we must interpret the term 'divine' very broadly, as denoting any object that is godlike, whether it be a concrete deity or not. (1902, p. 52)

James' linking of Buddhism from the 'East' with the 'Transcendentalist' tradition of the 'West' is revealing, but then we have seen Emerson, Whitman and Thoreau reach out to Buddhism, albeit it at a distance. By James' own practical criterion of result, Buddhism was no more or less 'pessimistic' or 'optimistic' in the final count than 'Emersonianism'. He thus moved beyond the common pessimistic 'Western' perceptions of Buddhism (see Welbon 1968; Tuck 1990, pp. 33–6).

James' use of the term 'god-like' shows broadmindedness in making comparisons. James focuses on tangible aspects of religion manifesting themselves in Buddhism rather than on narrow doctrine. This approach was to be picked up by later academics, for example, in Ninian Smart's multi-dimensional approach to religion (see Smart 1996; see also Barnes 1987). Ellen Suckiel, in her treatment of James' philosophy of religion, overlook the degree to which James recognises the implications for Buddhism in his analysis of what should be considered as 'religion'.[2]

Buddhist teachings

James' view of Buddhism as religious tradition fits Buddhism's own traditional description of its *dharma* teachings as a practical path of *śīla*, *samādhi* and *prajñā*, which in turn can be roughly translatable as 'ethics', 'meditation' and 'wisdom'. James approves of

the Buddha as teaching a 'Middle Way' *madhyamā-pratipad* (1902, p. 351), the 'Middle Way' between severe ascetic mortification and wallowing materialism.

With regard to ethics (*śīla*), James writes that:

> One might therefore be tempted to explain both the humility as to one's self and the charity towards others which characterises spiritual excitement, as results of the all-levelling character of theistic beliefs. But these affections are certainly not mere derivatives of theism. We find them in Stoicism, in Hinduism, and in Buddhism in the highest possible degree . . . unifying states of mind. (1902, p. 276)

Elsewhere James identified Buddhist monks as 'idealizing poverty as the loftiest individual state' (1902, p. 313). He cites *Jātaka* tales of the Buddha as showing compassion. In the story of the Buddha earlier reborn as a hare, the Buddha jumps into a pot so that a beggar can cook him, having shaken himself three times to ensure that insects in his fur will not perish. This story, while 'legendary', generates 'a level of emotion so unifying, so obliterating of differences between man and man, that even enmity may come to be an irrelevant circumstance and fail to inhibit the friendlier interests aroused' (1902, p. 280).

That James is aware of the contemplative dimension of Buddhism is indicated by his precise rendition from Carl Koeppen's *Die Religionen des Buddha* of the classic four *dhyāna* 'meditation' stages used in Buddhism (1902, p. 387; see also King 1990). James does not though restrict himself to Theravada Buddhism. He notes how Horace Fletcher's book *Menticulture*, published in 1899, relates 'the self control attained by the Japanese through their practice of the Buddhist discipline' (1902, p. 186). Although James does not give many details of 'their practice of the Buddhist discipline', the book has all the air of a fruitful Zen jolt, which indeed brings to mind Daisetz Suzuki's contemporaneous presence in America at La Salle with Carus. Declares James of Fletcher's summary line:

> If it is possible to get rid of anger and worry, why is it necessary to have them at all?'. I felt the strength of the argument . . . from the instant I realized that these cancer spots of worry and anger were removable they left me . . . I no longer dread or guard against them, and I am amazed at my increased energy and vigour of mind; at my strength to meet situations of all kinds, and at my disposition to love and appreciate everything . . . Neither am I wasting any of this precious time formulating an idea of a future existence or a future Heaven. The Heaven that I have within myself is as attractive as any that has been promised or that I can imagine. (1902, pp. 186–8)

The comment 'neither am I wasting any of this precious time formulating an idea of a future existence or a future Heaven' has resonance with Buddhism's 'Unanswered Questions'.

With regard to Buddhist *prajñā* ''wisdom', James cautions that 'I am ignorant of Buddhism, and speak under correction, and merely in order to describe my general point of view, but as I understand the Buddhist doctrine of karma, I agree in principle with it' (1902, p. 497). He seems too modest. He continues:

> All supernaturalists admit that facts are under the judgment of higher law; but for Buddhism as I interpret it, and for religion generally so far as it remains unweakened by transcendentalistic metaphysics, the word ''judgment'' here means no such bare academic verdict or platonic appreciation as it means in Vedantic or modern absolutist systems; it carries on the contrary, *execution* with it, is *in rebus* as well as *post rem*, and operates causally as partial factors in the total factor . . . I state the matter thus bluntly, because the current of thought in academic circles runs against me, and I feel like a

> man who must set his back against an open door quickly if he does not want to see it closed and locked. (1902, p. 497)

James clearly sees and approves of a functionalist, instrumentalist orientation in Buddhism. He sees Buddhism as different from Hindu Vedānta. He rejects Vedānta monism, with its conceptualisation of an Absolute 'Brahman' and of a permanent enduring soul or *ātman* (1908, pp. 151–4, 262, 274).

James maintains that 'the completest religions would therefore seem to be those in which the pessimistic elements are best developed. Buddhism, of course, and Christianity are the best known to us of those. They are essentially religions of deliverance: the man must die to an unreal life before he can be born into the real world' (1902, p. 171). His use of the term 'pessimism' might seem surprising but it has been noted that on pragmatic grounds James was willing to recognise a convergence between supposedly 'optimistic' Emersonianism and supposedly 'pessimistic' Buddhism. Moreover, James was ready to admit the existence of suffering, as in his preceding sentence, he states that 'since the evil facts are as genuine parts of nature as the good ones, the philosophic presumption should be that they have some rational significance . . . to accord to sorrow, pain, and death [some] positive and active attention' (1902, pp. 170–1). At the literary level James' words echo the archetypal Buddhist paradigm of the Buddha's first encounters as a young prince with scenes of old age, disease and death, the spur to his own awakening. This paradigm was highlighted in Arnold's *The Light of Asia* and in Carus' *The Gospel of Buddha*, which were familiar enough to James in the 1890s. From understanding of the significance of 'sorrow, pain, death' come subsequent actions. Elsewhere James asks, 'Doesn't the very seriousness we attribute to life means that ineluctable noes form part of it, that there are genuine sacrifices, and that something permanently drastic and bitter always remains at the bottom of the cup' (1908, p. 295). There is resonance with the 'Four Noble Truths', namely, the existence of *duḥkha*, 'suffering, frustration'; its root cause as *tṛṣṇa*, 'clinging, craving, attachment'; the alternative of Nirvāṇa; and the road to Nirvāṇa as the 'Eight Fold Path'.

James' Thematic Overlaps with Buddhism

If we turn away from James' explicit evaluation of Buddhism, how close is his general philosophical framework to that of Buddhism? Again, we need to be careful about simplistic generalisations about 'Buddhism' per se. Most academic commentators on James, such as Ellen Suckiel (1981, 1995), have tended to ignore thematic comparisons between James and Buddhism. Thematic comparisons are admittedly 'suggestive' rather than 'conclusive', but they deserve to be brought out, the more so in light of some of the actual historical linkage that we have shown.

One broad overlap between James and Buddhism is a general sensitivity towards inner depths and wider potentialities. Writes James: 'the further limits of our being plunge, it seems to me, into an altogether other dimension of existence from the sensible and merely "understandable" world' (1902, p. 490; see also Taylor 1996; Taves 1999, pp. 269–91). These other 'dimensions', involve the issues of 'consciousness', 'integration' and 'criteria over truth claims'.

Consciousness

One sign of James' wider horizons is his comment that 'I have no doubt whatsoever that most people live, whether physically, intellectually or morally, in a very restricted

portion of their potential being. They make use of a very small portion of their possible consciousness' (1908, p. 295):

> Our normal waking consciousness, rational consciousness as we call it, is but one special type of consciousness, whilst all about it, parted from it by the flimsiest of screens, there lie potential forms of consciousness entirely different. We may go through life without suspecting their existence; but apply the requisite stimulus, and at a touch they are there in all their completeness . . . No account of the universe in its totality can be final which leaves these other forms of consciousness quite disregarded. (1902, p. 374)

Buddhism is ultimately a 'path' (*pratipad*) similarly to uncover and integrate and direct the range of potential consciousness. Hence the term used in Theravada Buddhism to describe the path is that of *bhāvanā*, or 'producing, calling into existence', which Mahāthera Nyanatiloka explains as ' "mental development" . . . what in English is generally, but vaguely called "meditation" ' (1980, p. 36). Meditation is, the training and unfolding of the 'mind' or 'consciousness' (*citta*), as in *citta-bhāvanā*, or 'mental cultivation'. After all, Buddhism takes its name from Gautama's breakthrough the Bodhi tree into Enlightenment, or Awakening. The very term 'Buddha' means 'Enlightened One', or 'Awakened One'. Buddhist and schools can be seen as various ways to re-create this exploration and transformation of consciousness.

Consciousness for James is wrapped up with movement, for 'within each personal consciousness, thought is sensibly continuous. . . . The changes from one moment to another in the quality of consciousness are never absolutely abrupt . . . when there is a time gap the consciousness after it feels as if it belonged together with the consciousness before it, as another part of the same self' (1890, p. 237). James' view is analogous to the basic Buddhist assumption of *an-ātman* (*anatta*), or 'not-Self', itself derived from *an-ityatā* (*aniccata*), or 'impermanency, change', respectively, the third and first of the *tri-lakṣaṇa* or the 'three universal characteristics' of existence. For James, 'no state of consciousness once gone can ever recur or be identical with what it was before' (1890, p. 230). Therfore 'experience is remoulding us every moment, and our mental reaction on every given thing is really a resultant of our experience of the whole world up to that date' (1890, p. 234). Elsewhere James uses the metaphor of the stream, for 'every definite image in the mind is steeped and dyed in the free water that flows round it' (1892, p. 157):

> Consciousness, then, does not appear to itself chopped up in bits. Such words as 'chain' or 'train' do not describe it fitly as it presents itself in the first sentence. It is nothing jointed; it flows. A 'river' or a 'stream' are the metaphors by which it is most naturally described. In talking of it hereafter, let us call it the stream of thought, of consciousness. (1892, p. 152)

Thisc concept of 'stream of consciousness' has unmistakable similarities to the concept of *viññāna-sota*, or 'stream of consciousness', which does not constitute an abiding static mind substance. This notion goes back to inherent 'change' (*an-itya*), the first of the 'three universal characteristics' of existence in Buddhism.

James looks inwards and outwards from the narrow ego-driven consciousness. He makes frequent references to the subliminal 'transmarginal' forces of the subconscious, which have religious significance:

> The larger part of each of us, for it is the abode of everything that is latent and the reservoir of everything that passes unrecorded or unobserved . . . In general all our

> non-rational operations come from it. It is the source of our dreams, and apparently
> they may return to it. In it arise whatever mystical experiences we may have . . . our
> supra-normal cognitions, if such there be . . . it is the fountainhead of much that feeds
> our religion. (1902, pp. 462–3)

James' identification of 'mystical experience' as the 'fountainhead' for religion gives a
further bridge into Buddhism, given the centrality there of its contemplative explo-
rations, which according to Smart, 'lies at the heart of Buddhism' and is its 'ultimate
practical aim' (1970, p. 16). This bridge has also been the focus for modern Catholic
contemplatives like Thomas Merton (1961) and William Johnston (1970) in their own
spiritual dialogue with Buddhism.

   Elsewhere James' writes that 'my present field of consciousness is a centre surrounded
by a fringe that shades insensibly into a subconscious . . . with all of those radiating
subconscious possibilities of increase that we can only feel without conceiving, and can
hardly begin to analyze' (1909, p. 288). This view is like that of the *vijñāna-vāda*
'consciousness-teaching' school in Mahayana Buddhism, with its framework of a
subliminal pre-conceptualisation *ālaya-vijñana*, or 'storehouse consciousness', a reposi-
tory of seeds of tendencies from which selective discriminatory conscious choices could
then be made by the *manas* 'mind' (see Shaw 1987).

   For James, selection and discrimination by the senses applies to concepts and language
itself, with the result that:

> Intellectualism's edge is broken; it can only approximate to reality, and its logic is
> inapplicable to our inner life . . . May you and I be confluent in a higher consciousness,
> and confluently active there, tho we know it not? I am tiring myself and you, I know,
> by vainly seeking to describe by words what I say at the same time exceed either
> conceptualization or verbalization. As long as one remains talking, intellectualism
> remained in undisturbed possession of the field. The return to life can't come about by
> talking. It is an act. (1909, pp. 288–9)

Zen Buddhism matches this distrust of language and of intellectual formulations. From
its meditation come a whole range of Zen *dos*, or 'ways'. These applied techniques
include sounds, physical jolts, humour, ridicule, *kōan* verbal paradox, aesthetic
expressions like calligraphy and the tea ceremony, martial 'arts' like archery and sword
play. All of these techniques are intended to undermine what James calls the tyranny of
'intellectualism', 'conceptualization' and 'verbalization'.

   Yet where did language come from? James considers that 'when the reflective
intellect . . . in the flowing process . . . distinguishing its elements and parts, it gives
them separate names . . . The flux of it no sooner comes than it tends to fill itself with
emphases, and these salient parts become identified and fixed and abstracted; so that
experience now flows as if shot through with adjectives and nouns and prepositions and
conjunctions' (1912, pp. 292, 294). Or again, 'the essence of life is its continuously
changing character; but our concepts are all discontinuous and fixed, and the only mode
of making them coincide with life is arbitrarily supposing positions of arrest therein.
With such arrests our concepts may be made congruent'. These categories are still
arbitrary or secondary since they 'are not parts of reality, not real positions taken by it,
but suppositions rather, notes taken by ourselves, and you can no more dig up the
substance of reality with them than you can dip up water with a net, however finely
meshed' (1909, p. 253). There are parallels here to the Buddhist sense of inherent *anitya*,
or 'change'. Both the Mādhyamika and Vijñānavāda view language and concepts, as a
secondary *vikalpyate*, or 'construct' used by an individual's 'mind' (*manas*).

Before or underneath this secondary conceptualisation and discrimination comes what James dubs primary, or 'pure', experience (see Bird 1986, pp. 93–120. As James explains, 'pure experience is the name I give to the immediate flux of life which furnishes the material to our later reflection with its conceptual categories' (1912, p. 93). What is pure experience? In a sense for James it is not the right question to ask, for it is 'an experience pure in the literal sense of a *that* which is not yet any definite *what*, though ready to be all sorts of whats' (1912, p. 93). Being pre-conceptual and pre-categorising, 'experience' in its original immediacy is not aware of itself. It simply is. It is a 'that' rather than a 'what' object. Compare the classical Mahāyāna Buddhist focus on the *tathatā* 'thusness, suchness' of things, amidst a Buddhist 'rejection', particularly in the Madhyamika foundations of Mahāyāna, of 'holding' onto of any Absolutist positive or negative 'thing-ness' or 'what-ness'. James' 'pure experience' is like the Zen Buddhist sense of a natural pre-conceptualising, pre-discriminatory setting, which Zen traditionally calls one's 'original face' and which Suzuki calls 'no-mind'. The sacredness of the mundane in Zen also compares with James' view that 'pure experience' is nothing 'but another name for feeling or sensation' (1912, p. 94).

James was at the time concerned that his term 'consciousness' would be misunderstood. For 'to deny that [individual] "consciousness" exists seems so absurd on the face of it—for undeniably "thoughts" do exist—that I fear some readers would follow me no further. Let me then immediately explain that I mean only to deny that the word stands for an entity, but to insist that it does stand for a function' (1912, p. 3). In turn, 'function' also echoes the Buddhist core functionalist orientation.

James acknowledges that:

> Although for fluency's sake I myself spoke earlier in this article of a stuff of pure experience, I have now to say that there is no *general* stuff of which experience at large is made, there are as many stuffs as there are 'natures' in the thing experienced. If you ask what any one bit of pure experience is made of, the answer is always the same. 'It is made of that, of just what appears, of space, of intensity, of flatness, brownness, heaviness or what not.' Experience is only a collective name for all these sensible natures and save for time and space (and if you like for 'being') there appears no universal element of which all things are made. (1912, p. 26)

It is this dynamic, flowing, relational character of 'consciousness' that seems closer philosophically to Buddhism than to Hume (see Mathur 1978). James himself distinguishes this Buddhist-like 'shifting of consciousness' from what he sees as the blanket, perhaps static, 'super consciousness' of monistic Hindu Vedānta (1902, p. 491 n. 1). On this point James and Paul Carus enjoyed courteous but ongoing disagreement. Carus veered towards the Vedānta monistic framework expounded by Vivekānanda during the 1890s in America, despite Carus' and James' otherwise common convergence and overlaps with Buddhism's approach to ethics and on the changing fluctuating nature of the 'soul' or 'self' (see Bishop 1974).

Integration

Amidst the flow, how can a 'shifting of consciousness' be recognised? James' triple formulation for recognising the 'shifting of consciousness' is comparable with the traditional triple summation in Buddhism about its own path:

James	Buddhism
luminousness	*samādhi* [meditation]
philosophical reasonableness	*prajñā* [wisdom]
moral helpfulness	*śīla* [ethics]

There are Buddhist parallels to James' general description of 'the transition from tenseness, self-responsibility and worry, to equanimity, receptivity, and peace, is the most wonderful of all those shiftings of inner equilibrium, those changes of the personal centres of energy', with 'this concentration of the consciousness upon the moment of the day' (1902, pp. 285–6). In Buddhism, meditation generates an inner dynamic equilibrium 'equanimity' (*upeksā*). In certain Theravāda, Tibetan and Zen meditation techniques the Buddhist focus becomes the moment as it arises, treated with 'mindfulness' yet not clung to or over-speculated about in advance or in retrospect. In recent times, the Jesuit scholar Heinrich Dumoulin has found James' term 'cosmic consciousness' useful for understanding accounts of Zen Buddhist integration following meditation (see Dumoulin 1974, p. 184).

James distinguishes 'saintliness', with its degree of moderation, from outright asceticism. This moderate position is like the Buddhist rejection of world-wallowing materialism at one extreme and severe asceticism at another extreme. Buddhism seeks a 'Middle Way' (*madhyamā-pratipad*). James' 'Mean' also expresses itself in his blast against the extremes of dogmatism and 'systematic scepticism'. Similarly, the Buddhist 'Middle Way' stands between credal Absolutism and destructive sceptical annihilationism. James decries the extremes of pessimism and optimism, advocating meliorism as a 'midway' position (1908, pp. 285–6).

For James, this distrust of dogmatism generates a process of moderation and intellectual humility:

> He who acknowledges the imperfections of his instrument, and makes allowances for it in the discussing of his observations, is in a much better position for gaining truth than if he claimed his instrument to be infallible . . . Nevertheless dogmatism will doubtless continue to condemn us for this confession. The mere outward form of inalterable certainty is so precious to some minds that to renounce it explicitly is for them out of the question but the safe thing is surely to recognise that all the insights of creatures of a day like ourselves must be provisional. The wisest of critics is an altering being, subject to the better insight of the morrow, and right at any moment, only 'up to date' and 'on the whole'. When larger ranges of truth open, it is surely best to be able to open ourselves to their reception. (1902, p. 326)

This reluctance to be certain is all the more striking in light of fundamentalist attitudes current in nineteenth-century America. James' view, in contrast, presents a 'process', developmental view of religion rather than a static fixed one, an aspect that will be returned to in the concluding section here.

The basic sense in Buddhism of the inherent *anitya* 'change' of all things (physical, mental and conceptual) also come to mind, as indeed does the robust caution against linguistic rigidity and dogmatism in Mādhyamika giants like Nāgārjuna and in Tibetan and Zen Buddhism. This caution parallels James' own cautions over language: 'philosophy lives in words, but truth and fact well up into our lives in ways that exceed verbal formulation. There is in the living act of perception always something that glimmers and twinkles and will not be caught, and for which reflection comes too late . . . in the religious sphere, in particular, belief that formulas are true can never wholly take the place of personal experience' (1902, pp. 437–8). In 1901, as he was preparing his Gifford Lectures on The Varieties of Religious Experience, James could write to a friend that his role was actually and perhaps ironically 'to defend "experience" against "philosophy" ' (quoted in Suckiel 1996, p. 7). This is what Ellen Suckiel notes as James' holding to 'the epistemic primacy of experience' (Suckiel 1996, p. 39). Systematic formulas may be useful, but they are not in themselves absolutes, since for James

'philosophic and theological formulas are secondary products' (1902, p. 326). To bicker over 'secondary' doctrine at the expense of 'primary' exterior and interior actions is wasteful diversion. James' view that, as a philosophy, pragmatism 'unstiffens our theories' (1902, p. 415) is a kin to Mādhyamika Buddhist deconstructionist talk of using *śunyata*, 'emptiness', as 'the antidote for all dogmatic views' (Candrakirti 1979, pp. 150–1; see also Williams 1990, p. 70).

James compares the Absolutist Idealism of Continental Europe, exemplified by Descartes and Kant, with the more empirical British tradition exemplified by Locke and Hume:

> The Continental schools of philosophy have too often overlooked the fact that man's thinking is organically connected with his conduct. It seems to me that the chief glory of the English and Scottish thinkers is to have kept the organic connection in mind. The guiding principle of British philosophy has in fact been to have kept the organic connection in view. The guiding principle of British philosophy has in fact been that every difference must *make* a difference, every theoretical difference somewhere issue in a practical difference, and that the best method of discussing points of theory is to begin by ascertaining what practical difference would result from one alternative or the other being true . . . the principle of *pragmatism*. (1902, pp. 425, 427)

While at first sight this position points to Hume, there are also Buddhist parallels. James' point that 'man's thinking is organically connected with his conduct' parallels the Buddhist idea that practical reasons need to be grounded in inner meditation (*samādhi*). Of the *Dhammapada*'s opening words that 'mind precedes all things; all things have mind foremost, are mind-made', Hammalawa Saddhatissa writes that 'here we have the key to Buddhist ethics, and in fact to the whole teaching, for Buddhism is essentially a "mind culture". Any improvement or retrograde step must occur initially in the mind of the person concerned, whether it proceeds to external manifestations immediately or at a later date, so that the importance of being aware of [i.e. mindfulness of] and of controlling, one's thoughts is continually stressed' (1970, p. 28). James' characterisation of 'menticulture' comes to mind: being that 'self-control attained by the Japanese through their practice of the Buddhist discipline', thereby undercutting 'the divided self'.

James' holistic vision is not of a static Absolute but of a dynamic pluralistic universe. He denies that the world can be explained in terms of any absolute force or scheme mechanistically determining the interrelations of things or events. Instead, he holds that the interrelations are just as real as the things themselves:

> Without being one throughout, such a universe is continuous. Its members inter-digitate with their next neighbours in manifold directions and there are no clean cuts between them anywhere . . . Our 'multiverse' still makes a 'universe'; for every part, tho' it may not be in actual or immediate connection, is nevertheless in some mediated connection with every other part however remote, through the fact that each part hangs together with its very next neighbour in inextricable interfusion. (1909, p. 254)

Opposing categories like approach-contact, presence-absence, unity-plurality, independence-relativity, mine-yours and this connection-that connection are for James flawed since 'in the real concrete sensible flux of life experiences compenetrate each other'. Consequently, 'past and future, for example, conceptually separated by the cut to which we give the name of present, and defined as being the opposite side of the cut, are to some extent, however brief, co-present with each other throughout experience' (1909, p. 254).

Similarly, in Buddhism the 'Middle Way' rejects both uniform monism and fragmented unconnected atomism. For example, the *Saṃyutta Nikāya* (II.77) rejects the extremes of 'everything is a unity' and of 'everything is a plurality'. If we turn from Theravāda to Mahayana Buddhism, then we find Nagarjuna's Madhyamika school emphasising how conceptual opposites are in reality dependent upon each other. James' interrelations also parallels the general 'systems' framework of Buddhism. The idea of *pratitya-samutpāda*, 'dependent origination', is developed in the Hua-Yen school's concept of interpenetration and in the metaphor of *Indra's Web*. But in the light of these limitations of conceptual systems, how is 'truth' to actually be established? This problem concerns both James and Buddhism.

Criteria of Truth Claims

In James' day, truth claims about religions were regularly made. One example was the influential book by the Congregationalist minister Josiah Strong, who in his 1885 book *Our Country: Its Future and Present Crisis* dismissed Buddhism and other religions as fossil faiths, weaklings to be supplanted by Christianity under the plan of God. While the Parliament of Religions at Chicago in 1893 included Buddhist representatives from Asia like Dharmapāla and Shaku Soen, it also generated exclusivist comments from Christians.[3]

In contrast to evangelical Christian certainties, James is much more cautious. 'Pragmatism has to postpone dogmatic answer, for we do not know certainly which type of religion is going to work best in the long run. The various overbeliefs of men, their several faith-ventures, are in fact what are needed to bring the evidence in' (1908, pp. 300–1). His term 'work best' is revealing. Faced with religious diversity, what religion is one to choose?

> The fact of diverse judgments about religious phenomena is therefore entirely inescapable. A more fundamental question awaits us, the question whether men's opinion ought to be expected to be absolutely uniform in this field. Ought men to have the same religion? . . . Or are different functions in the organism of humanity allotted to different types of men? . . . It might conceivably be so; and we shall, I think, more and more suspect it to be so. I am well aware of how anarchic much of what I say may sound. Expressing myself thus abstractly and briefly, I may seem to despair of the very notion of truth. Do not, I pray you, harden your minds irrevocably against the empiricism which I profess. (1902, p. 327)

James' view of 'different functions allocated to different types of men' echoes the Mahāyāna notion of *upāya kauśalya*, or 'skilful means', where by different teachings and techniques are pitched at and are appropriate at different levels for different types of persons (see Pye 1978; see also Hick 1991).

For James, not the origin of religion 'but *the way in which it works on the whole*, is our empiricist criterion: By their fruits ye shall know them, not by their roots . . . results are to be the grounds of our final spiritual estimate of a religious phenomenon' (1902, pp. 40–2). James cites, *Matthew* 'by their fruits you shall know them' (7.16) to argue for results as the criterion of truth:

> You must bring out of each word its practical value, set it at work within the stream of your experience. It appears less as a solution, then, than as a program for more work, and more particularly as an indication of the ways in which existing realities may be changed. Theories thus become instruments . . . Pragmatism unstiffens all our theories . . . It agrees with nominalism for instance, in always appealing to particulars;

> with utilitarianism in emphasizing practical aspects; with positivism in its disdain for verbal solutions, useless questions and metaphysical abstractions. (1908, pp. 53–4)

'If theological ideas prove to have value for concrete life, they will be true, for pragmatism, in the sense of being good for so much' (1908, p. 73). James writes of 'truth's cash-value in experiental terms' (1908, p. 200). In this 'pragmatic' frame of reference, James judges that 'God is real since he produces real effects' in person's lives (1902, p. 491).

The idea of theories as instruments of change is suggestive of the functionalist disposition in Buddhism (see Scott 1995, pp. 127–49). In the Pali Canon, the Buddha is asked 'what is the *Dhamma*?' *Dhamma* loosely translated means 'teachings'.[4] Instead of replying with specific formulations, Buddha replies, 'of whatsoever teachings you can assure thyself thus: "Those doctrines conduce to dispassions, to detachment, to frugality, content, energy, delight in good"—of such teachings you may with certainty affirm "This is the Dhamma" ' (Woodward 1973, p. 186).

This text gives an explicit functionalist listing of traits of character, through which one can recognise the worth of teachings. Wisdom thus involves tangible transformations of personality rather than abstract definitions. A modern Buddhist application of this type of paradigm has come from the Thai monk Buddhadasa (1967) who from his Theravāda perspective argues that if belief in God helps members of other religions achieve non-attachment and compassionate action, then God as world saviour may be judged as 'equivalent' to *dharma* as world saviour. Buddhadasa while himself a non-theist, still gives God a serious spiritual role on pragmatic grounds, when belief in God generates positive transformation of attitudes. Like James, 'results' are what count.

James also counsels against

> metaphysical disputes that otherwise might be interminable. Is the world one or many?—fated or free?—material or spiritual?—here are notions either of which may or may not hold good of the world; and disputes over such notions are unending. The pragmatic method in such cases is to try and interpret each notion by tracing its respective consequences. What differences would it practically make to any one if this notion rather than that notion were true? If no practical difference whatsoever can be traced, then the alternatives mean practically the same thing, and all dispute is idle . . . it is astonishing to see how many philosophical disputes collapse into insignificance the moment you subject them to this simple test of tracing a concrete consequence. (1908, pp. 45, 48)

The Buddha reportedly says to his followers that 'of what I have known I have only told you a little'. The Pali Canon contains the famous 'Unanswered Questions', which the Buddha refuses to answer.[5] These 'abstract', metaphysical questions are ultimately distractions. One should instead do something about the here and now, where change can be brought about. As the Buddha says of those 'Unanswered Questions' in the *Cūḷa-Māluṇkyā sutta*:

> Why, Malunkyaputta, has this not been explained by me? It is because it is not connected with the goal, is not fundamental to the *brahma-cariya* ('holy life'), and does not conduce to turning away from, nor to dispassion, stopping, calming, superknowl–edge, awakening, nor to Nibbana. Therefore it has not been explained. (1975, p. 101)

'Conduce' has a practical, functionalist ring to it means than an end. Traditional speculation about the past and future is not effective. In Buddhism, the Fourth of the 'Four Noble Truths' is supposed to be effective for bringing about Enlightenment and

with it change. Kulatissa Jayatilleke even maintains that this particular episode from the *Cūḷa-Māluṇkyā sutta* identifies the Buddha as 'a Pragmatist' (1963, pp. 470–1). Elsewhere in the Pali Canon, the *Abhayarājakumāra sutta* characters *dhamma* sometimes as pleasant or unpleasant, depending on the situation; as factually truthful, and above all as 'useful' (*atthasamhitam*). In Theravāda Buddhism is pragmatic in a sense through some 'truths' being in turn 'useful' and so worth teaching in terms of actual human liberation and transformation (see Harvey 1995). Here Theravāda Buddhism converges with the Mahāyāna sense of *upāya kauśalya*, or 'skilful means'. In other words, the Buddha's teachings are intended to bring about actual change in the individual, whether the teachings are or are not pleasant to hear. The method of judging truth is the pragmatic one of usefulness.

Consider the role played by knowledge. In this vein consider these evocative words:

> Theoretic knowledge which is knowledge about things, as distinguished from living contemplation or sympathetic acquaintance with them . . . If, as metaphysicians, we are more curious about the inner nature of reality or about what really makes it go, we must turn our backs upon our winged concepts altogether . . . Dive back into the flux . . . if you wish to know reality.

These ringing words could come from many Buddhist texts but in fact are from James (1912, pp. 249, 252).

The Interaction of Buddhism with American Thought, 1910–2000

If we stand back from James' period and look forward through the twentieth century, then some initial and continuing effects of James' explorations can be traced through American figures like John Dewey and Charles Hartshorne and through Buddhist figures like Daisetz Suzuki, Nishida Kitaro and David Kalupahana.

John Dewey (1859–1952) was the third leading figure in American pragmatism, following Pierce and James. Dewey spent two years in China and Japan, after which, according to his daughter, 'nothing was ever the same again' (Jacobson 1985, p. 5). In his 1920 lectures in the Imperial University at Tokyo, Dewey called for an experiential pragmatic *Reconstruction in Philosophy* those lectures were published that same year under the same title. Links with Suzuki and Zen then and later have been noted (see McCarthy 1956; Ames 1982, pp. 214–35). Elsewhere from Dewey, we hear that 'where egotism is not made the measure of reality and value, we are citizens of a vast world beyond ourselves with which a sufficiently experiential probing may give us a sense of unity' (1934, p. 195). Such talk of 'experiential probing' echoes both James and Buddhism.

In going to Japan, Dewy encountered Daisetz Suzuki, the prominent Buddhist figure who had already been in the U.S. from 1897 to 1909 and who was to return to America in 1949. Suzuki was known to James, leading Copleston to wonder whether Suzuki's talk of satori as 'an insight into the Unconscious' was influenced by James (Copleston 1982, p. 63). Suzuki himself was in turn to note links between American pragmatism and Zen Buddhism (see Suzuki 1954). David Kalupahana, during his ongoing academic career at Hawaii, has reinforced this linkage, mediated explicitly in part through James. In his *A History of Buddhist Philosophy* the Buddha is termed 'a radical empiricist and a pragmatist' (1992, p. 87). There follows a long extract from James' *Will to Believe*. In turn, Kalupahana has translated Buddhist texts that he labels as 'empirical' (see Kalupahana 1969).

Something of a double spiral seems apparent between Buddhism and American pragmatism. As Inada puts it, 'the whole American pragmatic movement was one in which the holistic experiential nature of things remained constantly at the forefront from C. Peirce, W. James, J. Dewey, G. H. Mead and others . . . The Buddhist presence in America made way for new contact with the pragmatic nature. In fact the mere exposure of Americans to Buddhism in all its forms is already a clear indication that this pragmatic nature is being stirred or aroused' (1991, p. 76). Robert Neville has suggested that 'as a general historical comment, it might be noted that Buddhism prior to the encounter with the West has a certain ranking or set of rankings of what is important in the Buddhist heritage. Responding to Western thought, different things might emerge as important and what was previously thought to be important may sink towards triviality. This is one of the ways Buddhism changes through encounter' (1991, p. 125 n.4).

Pragmatism has not been the only fertile area for philosophical convergence between James and Buddhism. James' stance is developed by Alfred North Whitehead into process philosophy stance then (see Eisendrath 1971). The subsequent interaction between American process philosophy and Buddhism has continued through the explorations of Charles Hartshorne, like David Hall, Nolan Jacobson, Jay McDaniel, David Miller and Robert Neville (see Inada and Jacobson 1991). Steve Odin discusses James alongside Kitaro Nishida, including James' 'focus field' model (see Odin 1996, pp. 79–93, 153–60). Here we come full circle. James' views on consciousness, 'pure experience' and anti-dogmatism had already been picked up and acknowledged in Nishida's 1921 *A Study of Good* at the Kyoto school of 'philosophy', an important school of thought strongly influenced by Zen Buddhism (see Nishida 1990, pp. 10, 13, 13 n. 2; see also Dilworth 1969). Indeed, Thomas Kasulis sees Nishida's ideas on 'pure experience' as 'derived from his reading of William James and from his own [Nishido's] experiences in a Zen monastery' (Kasvlis 1981, pp. 62–4). In turn, the contemporary process theologian John Cobb (1987) has engaged in dialogue with the Kyoto figure Masao Abe, whose eminent career has seen him coming from Japan to Chicago, Claremont and Hawaii.

Current East-West discussions involve some of James' explorations of physiology and psychology. Writing of Buddhism, Steven Laycock declares that 'we must nonetheless pause to saviour James' extraordinary observation that what we call the stream of consciousness is a process that "when scrutinized reveals itself to consist chiefly of the stream of [one's] breathing", i.e. mindfulness of breathing' (1994, p. 260 n. 185). In this there is some return to the concerns of the 'Emmanuel Movement' founded by Elwood Worcester in 1907, a movement that was strong in James' pre-World War I Bostonian circles. Worcester had invoked both James and the Buddha in his own synthesis of religion and exploration of the psyche (see Taves 1999, pp. 314–25). Something of a double helix effect can be seen in James' psychology being picked up by Suzuki and in turn feeding back into American circles (see Suzuki et al. 1960; see also Clarke 1997, pp. 148–64 for these 'East-West' psychology explorations). In *The Principles of Buddhist Psychology* David Kalupahana puts forward 'the thought that the parallels between the Buddha's non-substantialist philosophy and that of William James are so many that one begins to wonder about the extent to which the latter may have been influenced by the former' (1987, p. 10).

James concludes *A Pluralistic Universe* by suggesting 'that it is high time for the basis of discussion in these questions to be broadened. It is for this that I have brought in . . . descriptive psychology and religious experiences, and have ventured even to hint at

psychical research' (1909, p. 330). The present article has been conducted in such a 'broadened' spirit. Religious pluralism has been a key feature of American culture in the twentieth century. As Kenneth Inada put it, 'the influx of emigrants from all over the world is unprecedented. It is constantly contributing positively and uniquely to the experiential enrichment of America' (1991, pp. 87–8). Amidst a pluralistic, multi-faith American culture, the insights offered Buddhism may be relevant, in particular meditation technique and deconstructionist thrusts against absolutist language. In turn, the encounter of Buddhism with American thought also has potential major significance for Buddhism. As Robert Neville puts the point:

> The encounter of Buddhism with process philosophy is of vital interest as well to the expanding culture of Buddhism. There are many signs that Buddhism's vitality in the West may rescue it from overcommitments to premodern cultures in Asia, just as in ancient times its flowering in East Asia offset its eventual subordination in India. Han China's civilisation must have seemed as alien to the early Indian Buddhist missionaries as Western society seems to contemporary east Asians. The missionaries to the Han found a congenial resonance in indigenous Chinese Taoism however, and Buddhism transformed itself in China to take on the naturalistic cosmic orientation of that perspective. It is natural therefore, for Buddhism to take interest in indigenous western philosophies that might provide similar resonance. (1991, p. 121)

'America' and 'Buddhism' remain distinct phenomena. Yet James provides a bridge between them, or maybe a raft, to use a Buddhist metaphor. The bridge is both thematic, through general approaches like pragmatism and process philosophy, and also historical, through specific appropriations by figures like Kitaro Nishida, Charles Hartshorne and David Kalupahana. *East* 'met', 'meets' and 'will meet' the *West*.

Notes

1 In part this is because of the spread and diversity of schools of Buddhism, so that Christianity's problematic 'quest for the historical [i.e. original] Jesus' becomes echoed by an equally problematic [Western-driven?] 'Quest for the historical Buddhism'. In part it is because of the subtler issues raised by the approach, representation, and filtration towards the 'Other', represented here by Buddhism. Comparison with 'Buddhism' also brings the challenge of simultaneously dealing with the unity within Buddhism without losing sight of the diversity. What is done here is to focus on how James uses 'Buddhism', together with both the consensual aspects shared across Buddhist schools, such as the 'Three Universal Marks' and 'Four Noble Truths' and aspects of particular Buddhists and schools.
2 Suckiel discusses how James, while rejecting secondary formulations, still holds to an 'underlying sense of divine reality (however broadly understood) which all (or most all) of them share' (1996, p. 19). She also notes that 'I qualify my remarks here to "most religious belief", since it may be argued that some forms of Buddhism may be excluded from this description'. Yet James's use of the term 'God-like' already explicitly encompasses Buddhism.
3 The General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in 1892 passed a resolution in Portland strongly disapproving of the forthcoming multi-faith aspects of the Parliament. The Episcopalian Church in America refused even to attend the Parliament, on the grounds that the inter-faith format implied equality of religions. Herrick Johnson from the Catholic McCormick Seminary forcefully suggested that 'inviting all the false faiths of the world to exhibit their false gods' to scatter 'their detestable and pernicious doctrines' was for American Christian audiences 'a monstrous absurdity' (voted in Jackson 1981, p. 245). Even Barrows, the Parliament chairman, boasted that 'the Parliament has shown that Christianity is still the great quickener of humanity, and thus it is now educating those who do not accept its doctrines, that there is no teacher to be compared with Christ, and no Saviour excepting Christ . . . I doubt if any Orientals who were present misinterpreted the courtesy with which they were received into a readiness on the part of the American people to accept Oriental faiths in place of their own . . . The non-Christian

world . . . has nothing to add to the Christian creed. It is with this belief, expressed by many a Christian missionary, that the Parliament marks a new era of Christian triumph that the editor closes these volumes' (1893, vol. 1, p. 1580). In 1899 he wrote *The Christian Conquest of Asia*.

4 *Dhamma* involves the teachings and practices taught by the Buddha across 'ethics', 'meditation' and formal 'wisdom', in other words, the traditional Buddhist trilogy of *śīla*, *samādhi* and *panna*. These teachings derived from his insight into Reality. A rough translation for *Dhamma* is the Basic Pattern of reality, and the pattern of practice, leading to liberation. Mahāthera Nyanatiloka has, as his entry for *Dhamma*, 'lit: the ''bearer'', constitution (or nature of a thing), norm, law, doctrine; justice, righteousness; quality; thing, object of mind 'phenomenon' . . . The Dhamma, as the liberating law discovered and proclaimed by the Buddha, is summed up in the 4 Noble Truths . . . Dhamma, as object of mind may be anything past, present or future, corporeal or mental, conditioned or not, real or imaginary' (1980, pp. 55–6).

5 These examples involve the Buddha being asked, Is the world spatially finite or infinite, is the world eternal, is the 'soul' (life-principle) the same as the mortal body, is the destiny of an enlightened person after death one of existing or not existing. The examples indicate the potential in Buddhism for deconstructionist assault on such 'types' of questions. Buddhism does have teachings on the afterlife, such as the operation of karma and rebirth. Still, these theoretical 'Unanswered Questions' are seen as ultimately a distraction from practising the 'Eight-fold Path' which develops tangible insights into the 'Four Noble Truths' and thereby, tangible change. The 'Four Noble Truths' are seen across Buddhism as 'true' but also requiring 'experimental' exploration as to see their truth.

Bibliography

Abhayarājakumāra sutta. 1975	Trans. Horner: II.60–4.
Almond, Philip 1988	*The British Discovery of Buddhism*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
Ames, Van Meter 1982	*Zen and American Thought*. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press.
Ando, Shoei 1970	*Zen and American Transcendentalism*. Tokyo: Hokuseido Press.
Arai, Tosh and Ariarajah, Wesley 1989	*Spirituality in Interfaith Dialogue*. Geneva: World Council of Churches.
Barrows, John (Ed.) 1893	*The World Parliament of Religions*. Chicago: Parliament Publishing Press. 2 vols.
Barnes, L. Philip 1987	'Light from the East? Ninian Smart and the Christian-Buddhist Encounter', *Scottish Journal of Theology* 40:67–83.
Bird, Graham 1986	*William James*. London: RKP.
Bishop, Donald 1974	'The James-Carus Controversy', *Journal of the History of Ideas* 35:509–20.
Buddhadasa, Bhikkhu 1967	*Christianity and God*. Bangkok: Sinclair Thompson Memorial Lecture.
Candrakirti 1979	*Prasannapada*. Trans. by Mervyn Sprung. Boulder: Prajna Press.
Christy, Arthur 1932	*The Orient in American Transcendentalism*. New York: Columbia University Press.
Chisholm, Lawrence 1963	*Fenollosa: The Far East and American Culture*. New Haven: Yale University Press.
Clarke, John 1997	*Oriental Enlightenment: The Encounter Between Asian and Western Thought*. London: Routledge.

Cobb, John   *Beyond Dialogue. Towards a Mutual Transformation of Christianity and Buddhism.*
    1987   Philadelphia: Fortress Press.
Copleston,   *Religion and the One. Philosophies East & West.* London: Search Press.
Frederick
    1982
Cotkin, George   *William James: Public Philosopher.* Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press.
    1990
    1975   *Cula-Malunkya sutta.* Trans. Horner: II:97–101.
Dewey, John   *Art as Experience.* New York: Putnam's.
    1934
Dilworth, David   'The Initial Formations of ''Pure Experience'' in Nishida Kitaro and William
    1969   James', *Monumenta Nipponica* 24:262–70.
Dumoulin,   *Christianity Meets Buddhism.* La Salle, IL, Open Court.
Heinrich
    1974
Dumoulin,   *Zen Buddhism in the Twentieth Century.* New York: Weatherhill.
Heinrich
    1992
Eisendrath, Craig   *The Unifying Moment: The Psychological Philosophy of William James and Alfred*
    1971   *North Whitehead.* London: Oxford.
Fields, Rick   *How the Swans Came to the Lake: A Narrative History of Buddhism in America.*
    1992   3rd ed. Boston: Shambala.
Ford, Marcus   *William James' Philosophy.* Amhe: University of Massachusetts Press.
    1982
Halbfass, Wilhelm   *India and Europe: An Essay in Understanding.* Albany: State University of New
    1988   York Press.
Hartshorne, Charles 'Toward a Buddhisto-Christian Religion', in Inada and Jacobson, 2–13.
    1991
Harvey, Peter   'Contemporary Characteristics of the ''Philosophy'' of Nikayan Buddhism',
    1995   *Buddhist Studies Review* 12:109–33.
Herbrechsmeir,   'Buddhism and the Definition of Religion: One More Time', *Journal for the*
William   *Scientific Study of Religion* 32:1–18.
    1993
Hick, John   'Religion as ''Skilful Means'': a Hint from Buddhism', *Philosophy of Religions*
    1991   30:141–58.
Horner, Isaline   *The Collection of the Middle Length Sayings (Majjhima-Nikaya).* trans. London:
    1975   Pali Text Society.
Inada, Kenneth   'The American Involvement with Sunyata', in Inada and Jacobson, 71–88.
    1991
Inada, Kenneth and *Buddhism and North American Thinkers.* Delhi: Sri Satguru Publications.
Jacobson, Nolan
(Ed.)
    1991
Inden, Ronald   *Imagining India.* Oxford: Blackwell.
    1990
Jackson, Carl   'Meeting of East and West: The case of Paul Carus', *Journal of the History of Ideas*
    1968   29:73–92.
    1981   *The Oriental Religions and Western Thought: Nineteenth Century Explorations.*
                    Westport: Greenwood Press.
Jacobson, Nolan   *The Heart of Buddhist Philosophy.* Carbondale: Southern Illinois University
    1985   Press.
James, William   *Principles of Psychology.* London: Macmilllan, 2 vols.
    1890
    1892   *Psychology.* New York: Faucet.
    1902   *Varieties of Religious Experience.* Repr. 1963. London: Fontana.
    1908   *Pragmatism: A New Way for Old Ways of Thinking.* London: Longman, Green.
    1909   *A Pluralistic Universe.* London: Longman, Green.
    1912   *Essays in Radical Empiricism.* London: Longman, Green.

Jayatilleke, Kulatissa   *Early Buddhist Theory of Knowledge*. London: Allen & Unwin.
1963

Johnston, William   *The Still Point: Reflections on Zen and Christian Mysticism*. New York:
1970   Fordham University Press.

Kalupahana, David   'A Buddhist Tract on Empiricism', *Philosophy East & West* 19:65–7.
1969

1987   *The Principles of Buddhist Psychology*. New York: State University of New
York Press.

1992   *A History of Buddhist Philosophy*. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press.

Kasulis, Thomas   *Zen Action, Zen Person*. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press.
1981

Katz, Nathan   'Scholarly Approaches to Buddhism: a Political Analysis', *The Eastern
1982   Buddhist* 15:116–21.

King, Richard   *Orientalism and Religion: Postcolonal Theory and the 'Mystic East'*. London:
1999   Routledge.

King, Winston   *Theravada Meditation*. University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press.
1990

Laycock, Steven   *Mind as Mirror and the Mirroring of Mind: Buddhist Reflections on Western
1994   Phenomenology*. New York: State University of New York Press.

Leuba, James   'Professor William James' Interpretation of Religious Experience', *Inter-
1904   national Journal of Ethics* 14:322–39.

Levinson, Henry   *The Religious Investigations of William James*. Chapel Hill: University of North
1981   Carolina Press.

Lopez, Donald   *Curators of the Buddha: The Study of Buddhism Under Colonialism*. Chicago:
(Ed.)   University of Chicago Press.
1995

Mathur, Dinesh   'The Historical Buddha (Gotama), Hume, and James on the Self', *Philosophy
1978   East & West* 28:253–70.

Merton, Thomas   *Mystics and Zen Masters*. New York: Dell.
1961

McCarthy, Harold   'Dewey, Suzuki and the Elimination of Dichotomies', *Philosophy East & West*
1956   6:35–48.

Neville, Robert   'Buddhism and Process Philosophy', in Inada and Jacobson, 121–42.
1991

Nishida, Kitaro   *An Inquiry into the Good*. New Haven, CI, Yale University Press.
1990

Nyanatiloka,   *Buddhist Dictionary*. 4th ed. Kandy: Buddhist Publication Mahathera Society.
Mahāthera
1980

Odin, Steve   *The Social Self in Zen and American Pragmatism*. New York: State University of
1996   New York Press.

Prothero, Stephen   *The White Buddhist: The Asian Odyssey of Henry Steel Olcott*. Bloomington:
1996   Indiana University Press.

Pye, Michael   *Skilful Means: A Concept in Mahayana Buddhism*. London: Duckworth.
1978

Ramsey, Bennett   *Submitting to Freedom: The Religious Vision of William James*. Oxford: Oxford
1993   University Press.

Saddhatissa,   *Buddhist Ethics*. London: Allen & Unwin.
Hammalawa
1970

Said, Edward   *Orientalism: Western Concepts of the Orient*. London: Penguin.
1985

Scott, David   'Buddhist Functionalism—Instrumentality Reaffirmed', *Asian Philosophy*
1995   5:127–49.

Shaw, Miranda   'W. James and Yogachara Philosophy', *Philosophy East & West* 37:223–44.
1987

Smart, Ninian   *Doctrine and Argument in Indian Philosophy*. London: Allen & Unwin.
1964

1969	*Buddhism and the Death of God*. Southampton: University of Southampton. The Eighth Montefiore Memorial Lecture.
1981	*Beyond Ideology*. San Francisco: Harper & Row.
1995	'Theravada Buddhism and the Definition of Religion', *Sophia* 34:161–6.
1996	*Dimensions of the Sacred*. London: Harper Collins.
Spearritt, Gregory 1995	'*Buddhism in British and American Pluralist Theology*. M.A. thesis, University of Queensland.
Suckiel, Ellen 1981	*The Pragmatic Philosophy of William James*. Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press.
1995	*Heaven's Champion: William James's Philosophy of Religion*. Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press.
Suzuki, Daisetz 1954	'Zen and Pragmatism', *Philosophy East & West* 4:19–34.
1957	*Mysticism Christian and Buddhist*. Rep. 1979. London: Unwin.
Suzuki, Daisetz, *et al.* 1960	*Zen Buddhism and Psychoanalysis*. New York: Harper & Row.
Taves, Ann 1999	*Fits, Trances, and Visions: Experiencing Religion and Explaining Experience from Wesley to James*. Princeton, NJ, Princeton University Press.
Taylor, Eugene 1996	*William James on Consciousness: Beyond the Margin*. Princeton, NJ, Princeton University Press.
Tuck, Andrew 1990	*Comparative Philosophy and the Philosophy of Comparative Scholarship: On the Western Interpretation of Nagarjuna*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
Tweed, Thomas 1982	*The American Encounter with Buddhism, 1844–1912*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
Versluis, Arthur 1993	*American Transcendentalism and Asian Religions*. New York: Oxford University Press.
Vivekānanda, Swami 1942	*Letters of Swami Vivekananda*. 2nd ed. Ed. by S. Pavitrananda. Almora, Advaita Ashram.
Welbon, Guy 1968	*The Buddhist Nirvana and its Western Interpreters*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
Williams, Paul 1990	*Mahayana Buddhism*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.
Woodward, Frank 1973	*Some Sayings of the Buddha According to the Pali Canon*. London: Oxford University Press.

DAVID SCOTT is a lecturer teaching within the current Religious Studies and History programmes of the Department of American Studies and History, Brunel University. He is the author of articles *Asian Philosophy*, *Buddhist Studies Review*, *Discernment*, *East and West*, *History of Religions*, *Journal of Religious History*, *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*, *Numen*, *Religion*, *Religious Studies*, *Scottish Journal of Religious Studies*, *Studies in Religion* and *Temenos*. His current research is on the historical and modern impact in the 'West' of traditions from the 'East' in particular Buddhism and Hinduism (Vivekananda), together with other inter-faith issues.

Department of American Studies and History, Brunel University, Uxbridge, Middlesex UB8 3PH, U.K. E-mail david.scott@brunel.ac.uk