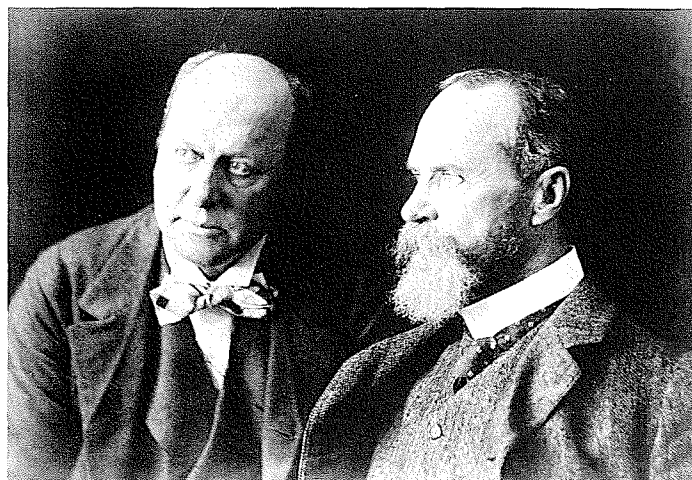


1860s, he suffered a prolonged bout of "neurasthenia," as depression was then known. He emerged only after latching on to the principle of "free will" and the importance of action over thought. "I will abstain from the mere speculation . . . in which my nature takes most delight," he wrote in 1870. He declared that "there is something diseased and contemptible, yea vile, in theoretic grubbing and brooding."

Strange thoughts for a philosopher. Yet, they were characteristic of William and of Pragmatism. What he really tried to do, argues Posnock, was to build a body of thought to *confine* rather than free his will—his will to speculate.

Pragmatism was, in effect, William's attempt to clear what he regarded as the paralyzing underbrush of metaphysics from philosophy, opening a path for the autonomous, energetic individual. Yet, even as he came to be celebrated (wrongly) as a prophet of hard-nosed efficiency, he defined the radical pragmatist as "a happy-go-lucky anarchistic sort of creature." And he retained a certain sympathy for those who indulged in the idle curiosity that he so sternly repressed in himself, though he relegated them to the margins of life as mystics, saints, or primitive peoples.

Henry, by contrast, had thrived in his father's house. The boundless curiosity that his brother found so enervating, he found energizing. He soaked up experience, says Posnock, and converted it into fictions. Yet, the two were in fact not so very different. Henry, though younger, was in many ways the more mature of the two brothers. At least he grasped more rapidly the truth that thinking *was* doing. After reading *Pragmatism* (1907), he wrote to William, "I was lost in wonder of the extent to which all my life I have . . . unconsciously pragmatized." And an interest in the turbulent flow of human consciousness was as much a hallmark of Henry's novels as it was of William's philosophical writings.



Henry James and his brother William at the turn of the century. Henry once wrote that he was grateful to live on the "crumbs" of his elder brother's "feast" and "the echoes of his life."

God and Country

It is one of the great might-have-beens of history. In July 1938, two Jesuit priests drafted a papal encyclical condemning racism and anti-Semitism in Nazi Germany at the request of Pope Pius XI. But the head of their order, Wladimir Ledochowski, who feared communism more than fascism, delayed the transmission of

the document to the Pope. Pius XI died in 1939, probably never having seen it. His successor, Pope Pius XII, was not inclined to challenge Hitler.

Could the encyclical have prevented the Holocaust? O'Brien, a visiting professor of history at the University of Pennsylvania, thinks that it might have. Earlier, in 1937,

"A Lost Chance to Save the Jews?" by Conor Cruise O'Brien, in *The New York Review of Books* (April 27, 1989), 250 W. 57th St., New York, N.Y. 10107.

Hitler had backed away from confrontation with the Church, fearing that it would hurt the morale of Nazi Germany's armed forces, and he did so again in 1940-41, when Catholics and Protestants protested the *Führer's* euthanasia program, which would have claimed the lives of "unfit" Gentiles. Hitler postponed it.

On their own, Germany's Catholic and Protestant clergymen were of no mind to oppose the anti-Semitism that led to the Final Solution. Germany's churches were so saturated in nationalism, writes O'Brien, that "the *Volk* [the German people] came ahead of any Gospel message in their hearts and minds."

Nationalism, ironically, was a product of the Enlightenment, which had aspired to replace religion with reason. "War, persecution, and the spirit of intolerance would fade away along with the [religious] authority which had legitimized these things," writes O'Brien. Instead, the Enlightenment bred new creeds, none more

virulent than nationalism. And nationalism nowhere became more virulent than in Nazi Germany.

It soon infected Germany's Protestant theologians. They came to view the German *Volk* as "the carriers of God's will in history." From there, it was but a short step to declaring Hitler, "a 'pious and faithful sovereign'" sent by God to save the *Volk*, as a relatively moderate Lutheran thinker, Paul Althaus, wrote in 1937.

Catholic doctrine was made in Rome, and thus did not bend as easily to Nazism. But, without papal leadership, German Catholics also succumbed to the nationalist disease. Like the Protestants, they accepted Hitler's depiction of the Jews as enemies of the *Volk*, responsible for Germany's humiliating surrender in 1918. The Christians "preserved a frigid and universal silence" when Hitler launched the first pogroms during the 1930s, and the *Führer* "understandably, took that Christian silence for consent."

SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY

Shuttle Trouble

"U.S. Access to Space" by John M. Logsdon and Ray A. Williamson, in *Scientific American* (March 1989), Box 3187, Harlan, Iowa 51593.

Three years after the *Challenger* disaster, the U.S. space shuttle is flying again. The bad news is that the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) has not learned from its past mistakes.

According to Logsdon and Williamson, of George Washington University and the Congressional Office of Technology Assessment, respectively, NASA's exaggerated hopes for the shuttle booster and orbiter during the early 1970s led it to abandon development of other space launchers. Entrepreneurs were discouraged from creating new rockets as long as NASA offered to launch scientific and commercial satellites into orbit at (subsidized) low prices. When the *Challenger* blew up in January 1986, the United States

had only a few Delta, Atlas, and Titan missiles (all based on the technology of the early 1960s) to fill in. They failed, too. Today, up to five years after their scheduled launch, several important satellites remain in mothballs.

Although the Pentagon is now developing updated versions of the old rockets to launch military satellites, NASA still has all its eggs in one basket, the authors say. After a fourth orbiter comes into service in 1992, it plans 12 to 14 flights per year, at a cost of between \$250 and \$500 million per launch. Fortunately, if NASA's plans again prove too optimistic, new private and foreign rockets will be available to launch most U.S. civilian satellites. But NASA also plans to complete a manned space station