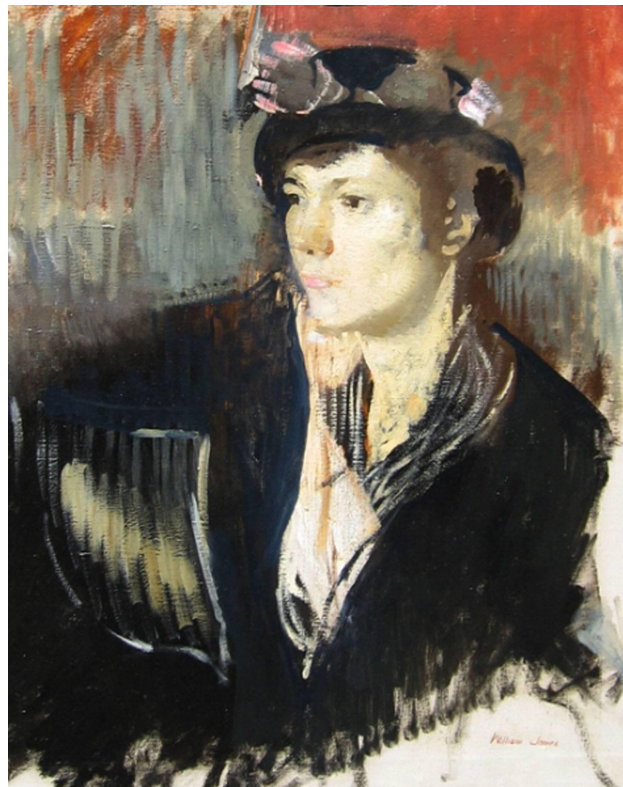


Divergent Perspectives on the Significance of Self in the Psychology of Mary Whiton Calkins and William James

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“Portrait of a Lady” – William James
(1882)
Oil on Canvas

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I hereby declare and assure that I, Lisa Kampen, have drafted this thesis independently, that no other sources and/or means other than those mentioned have been used and that the passages of which the text content or meaning originates in other works - including electronic media - have been identified and the sources clearly stated.

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Journal Article

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Abstract. Mary Whiton Calkins (1863 – 1930), an American pioneer in modern psychology, was one of the few to conduct doctoral work with William James (1842 – 1910) at Harvard. Recent studies by Bella (2022) and McDonald (2006) propose that Calkins’s conception of psychology as the study of conscious selves is drawn from James. This article marks Calkins’s proposition for self-psychology as a departure from James’s thinking instead, on the basis that Calkins’s and James’s understandings of the nature of self are irreconcilable. Interpreting Calkins’s proposition for self-psychology as her point of deviation from James’s psychological thought is systematically accurate, and contributes to recognition of her self-psychology as an independent and fully-developed psychological school.

1. Introduction

Mary Whiton Calkins (1863 – 1930) played an important role in the history of psychology, although there is little knowledge of her thought today. After conducting doctoral work at Harvard with William James (1842 – 1910) and Josiah Royce (1855 – 1916), Calkins was elected the first female president of the American Psychological Association in 1905, and of the American Philosophical Association in 1918. The period in which Calkins wrote and thought is recognized as the most dynamic phase in the development of schools and systems in the history of American psychology (Strunk 1972, 197; Mandler 2007, 52 - 53). Calkins developed her own system called “self-psychology”, which regarded the conscious self as integral to both introspective- and empirical psychological investigation.

Limited study on Calkins has been focused on the influence of her mentors, James and Royce, on this conception of psychology as a science of the conscious self. Recently, Michaela Bella has argued that James did not only influence Calkins’s humanistic

approach to psychology, but that her proposition for self-psychology is drawn from an assertion that James makes in his seminal work, *The Principles of Psychology* (1890/1950), namely: “the personal self rather than the thought might be treated as the immediate datum in psychology” (James as cited in Bella 2022, 74). Bella’s argument is supported by earlier research on James and his influence on Calkins’s self-psychology, most considerably by Dana McDonald (2006) and David Leary (1990).

In this article, I depart from the prevailing perspective Calkins’s proposition for self-psychology is drawn from James. Instead, I emphasize that Calkins’s proposal for psychology as a science of conscious selves represents a distinct point of departure from James’s psychological thinking. Calkins’s proposition embodies a divergence from James, because it displays Calkins’s and James’s different views on the significance of the self for psychological study. While Calkins consistently argued that the conscious self is the basal fact in psychology, James emphasized that thought is the elementary psychological fact. Marking Calkins’s proposition for self-psychology as her deviation from James’s psychological thought is not only systematically accurate, but also contributes to recognition of her self-psychology as an independent and fully-developed psychological school, rather than an extension of James’s legacy.

However, the argument in this paper is not simply that Calkins places greater importance on the self than James by formulating psychology as the study of conscious selves. I want to emphasize that Calkins’s deviation from James with respect to the significance of the self for the study of psychology can be explained by looking at their respective understandings of the nature of the self. By a comparative analysis of Calkins’s and James’s writing on the nature of the self, I stress that Calkins understands the self as transcendental and irreducible, that is, the self is an absolute condition for all mental processes, while James argues that the self is reducible to thought, as it is thought that is transcendental to mental processes. Because Calkins considers the self as irreducible and transcendental to mental processes, she regards the self as the basal fact in psychology (*FIP*, vii; Calkins 1906, 68). Since James believes that the self is constituted by ongoing thought, he does not consider the self as the elementary psychological fact (*PP1*, 225 – 226).

So, Calkins departs from James with her proposition that psychology is the study of conscious selves, because she does not only assign a different significance to the self in psychological inquiry, but founds this significance on a metaphysical understanding of self that is notably different from James. I support this argument by highlighting that Calkins and James, due to their contrasting interpretations of the self's nature, advocate distinct metaphysical systems at the end of their life. In the last stages of her career, Calkins advances absolute personalism, which she describes as: "the universe literally is one all-including (and accordingly complete) self of which all the lesser selves are genuine and identical parts, or members" (Calkins 1930, 209). Rather than placing an absolute self at the basis of reality, James stresses in his last essays on radical empiricism that "pure experience" is the "one primal stuff or material in the world", fitting his argument that the self is reducible to elementary thought (James 1904a, 478).

The article is structured as follows. In the first section, I introduce the argument for James's influence on Calkins's self-psychology, and stress that there appears to be one fundamental aspect on which James and Calkins differ, which is the significance of the self for the study of psychology. In the second section, I start my comparative analysis between Calkins's and James's understandings of the nature of self by introducing Calkins's transcendental and irreducible conception of self. In the third section, I present James's argument against this transcendental and irreducible conception of self, as well as his alternative functional understanding of self. In the fourth and final section, I point out that the difference between Calkins's and James's understanding of the nature of the self carries over in their metaphysical understandings of reality. After this final analysis, I conclude that marking Calkins's proposition for self-psychology as the point of departure from James is systematically accurate, and helps to understand her self-psychology as a full-fledged psychological school.

2. The Influence of James on Calkins's Self-Psychology

Calkins acknowledges in her autobiography that she owed an “academic and personal debt” to James that “could never be repaid” (1930a, 32). She was one of the few to do doctoral work with James at Harvard, after which they nurtured a lifelong relationship of intellectual exchange (Strunk 1972, 197). James actively promoted Calkins's admission to Harvard, which then only admitted male students (Scarborough & Furumoto 1986, 38). Calkins writes that because of her female presence, the other members of James's fall seminar in psychology dropped away, leaving them “quite literally at either side of a library fire” (1930a, 1). Consequently, James was one of the faculty members that protested against the decision to withhold Calkins's Ph.D. degree because of Harvard's gender exclusionary policy, and felt it necessary to put on record that “the scholarly intelligence displayed by Miss Calkins was exceptionally high when compared with that of nearly all candidates hitherto examined for the degree in this department” (James as cited in Seigfried 1993, 233). James also referred to Calkins's article on attention in the second edition of the abridgement to *The Principles of Psychology, Psychology: Briefer Course* (1892/2016). Finally, as Bella notes, it is “perhaps no coincidence that Calkins was elected president of the American Psychological Association in 1905, the year after James's second presidency” (2022, 71).

2.1 A shared humanistic approach to psychology

James did not only support Calkins's academic career, but also significantly influenced her approach to psychology. Bella (2022) and Heidbreider (1972) document that Calkins followed James in his argument that psychology should not merely mimic the methodology and claims of the natural sciences (78 – 80; 64 – 65).

At the time James wrote *The Principles*, proponents of several schools aimed at modelling psychology to natural science (Mandler 2007, 74). This objective is most prominently observed among adherents of experimental psychology, who vigorously strove to discover scientific objectivity in the study of subjective experience. For example, Edward B. Titchener (1867 – 1927), founder of structuralism and well-known

advocate of the experimental study of psychology, believed that psychology should study the objective structure underlying subjective conscious experience. Psychology could discover this structure through experimental study of the internal constitution of mental processes, such as affectivity, imagination and perception (Green 2010, 703 - 704).

Famously considered as one of the founders of the opponent of structuralism, functionalism, James stresses on multiple occasions that psychology should be concerned with the role mental processes play for the organism, rather than their institutional constitution (Hatfield 2015, 139 - 140). One of James's concerns with modelling psychology to the natural sciences was that he believed these sciences to think outer reality in a highly abstract manner. In *The Principles*, James stresses that "the essence of things for science is not to be what they seem, but to be atoms and molecules moving to and from each other according to strange laws" (PP2, 634). According to James, the physicist's description of reality through atoms and molecules does not match our everyday experience of reality. For him, "the order of scientific thought is quite incongruent either with the way in which reality exists or with the way in which it comes before us" (PP2, 634). The incongruity between the way in which reality exists, the way in which natural science describes reality and the way that reality is immediately experienced affected James's understanding of psychology as "the Science of Mental Life" (1950, 1). His aim was to develop a humanistic psychology that did justice to the findings of experimental research, but also to how reality is experienced, thereby understanding psychology as "part of the larger science of living beings" (Perry 1935, 121).

Calkins's approach to psychology is notably influenced by this humanistic understanding of James. As Bella stresses, Calkins shared James's "vision of psychology as a concrete investigation connected to the great problems of life" (2022, 68). Bella notes that in her first book, *An Introduction to Psychology* (1904), Calkins still makes a distinction between psychology as the study of ideas, which represents psychological schools that want to understand psychology as the study of a series of complex mental processes, such as structuralism, and psychology as the study of

personal selves, which conceives of psychology as the humanistic study of conscious selves in relation to external objects (v; Bella 2022, 74). But, as Bella emphasizes, Calkins dropped her discussion of psychology as the study of ideas by the time of her second book, because she questioned “the significance and the adequacy”, and deprecated “the abstractness, of the science thus conceived” (vii; Bella 2022, 74 - 75). Consequently, Heidbreider points out that Calkins was convinced that “psychology needed a general conceptual scheme capable of engaging effectively with its empirical subject matter, not only as that subject matter appears when observed under laboratory conditions and by certain approved methods, but as it presents itself in ordinary experience and in common-sense knowledge” (1972, 66).

An example of Calkins’s humanistic approach to psychology that adds to Bella’s and Heidbreider’s interpretations is Calkins’s conviction that ethics should be considered a branch of psychology, which is a point more interesting than I can elaborate on. During the last years of her life, Calkins wrote the following in the preface to her book on ethics, *The Good Man and the Good* (1918):

The book does not conceive ethics as a science of abstractions – of duty, goodness, virtue, or values – but as the science of the dutiful, the good, the virtuous man and his object. Thus concretely conceived, ethics is an inevitable outlet of psychology and an essential source of sociological science (vii).

The manner in which Calkins perceived of ethics as “an inevitable outlet of psychology” underscores her recognition of the practical implications of psychological inquiry, besides its experimental findings.

In addition to influencing Calkins’s humanistic approach to psychology, Bella argues that James’s influence can also be discerned in the methodology and content of Calkins’s psychological thinking (2022, 71 – 72). She identifies “three main aspects of James’s legacy” in Calkins’s thought: (1) the argument for introspection as the preferred methodology of psychology, (2) the proposition for psychology as a science

of selves, and (3) the admittance of relational parts of consciousness in order to describe the immediate or flowlike structure of experience (Bella 2022, 72 – 78).

All of the aspects formulated by Bella provide interesting avenues for further exploration, but I will be concerned with (2) in this paper. I address the second claim, because in contrast to Bella, I believe that Calkins's proposition for self-psychology is the exact point where her departure from James should be recognized. To my mind, recognition of this point of deviation is not only systematically accurate, but also ascribes to the understanding of Calkins's self-psychology as an independent and well-developed psychological school, rather than an extension of James's legacy.

2.2 Self-psychology as drawn from James's *Principles*

Bella's second claim is that Calkins's proposition for psychology as a science of selves is "legitimately drawn from James's assertion that 'the personal self rather than the stream of thought might be treated as the immediate datum in psychology'" (James as cited in Bella 2022, 74).

James makes this assertion in the chapter "The Stream of Thought" of his *Principles*. In this chapter, James discusses what he believes is the elementary psychological fact, namely, ongoing thought (*PP1*, 225). According to James, the most minimal assumption that a psychologist could make is that "thought goes on" (*PP1*, 225). However, when we ask: "How does it go on?," James comes to recognize that first of all, thought characteristically belongs to a personal consciousness (*PP1*, 225). He argues that the most fundamental characteristic of thought is that it is personal, because according to him, "it seems as if the elementary psychic fact were not thought or this thought or that thought, but my thought, every thought being owned" (*PP1*, 226). It is this realization of James that leads him to say: "on these terms the personal self rather than the thought might be treated as the immediate datum in psychology" (*PP1*, 226).

Bella bases her claim that Calkins's proposition for self-psychology is drawn from this assertion on two arguments (2022, 74). The first argument is that Calkins describes

psychology as “a science of consciousness,” and states that, “‘consciousness’ stands for ‘personal attitude,’ or ‘the self’s relatedness to objects’” (Calkins as cited in Bella 2022, 74). Bella interprets Calkins to contend, after James, that “psychology is a science of consciousness, and consciousness only exists in personal form” (2022, 74). Her second argument is that Calkins formulates the argument for psychology as a science of selves in a “Jamesian fashion” (Bella 2022, 74 – 75). Bella cites the following passage by Calkins in order to prove her point:

There is never perception without somebody who perceives, and there is never thinking unless someone thinks. And this somebody is not an isolated self but a self which is affected from without and which expresses itself in its behavior. In view of these facts psychology is more exactly defined as the science of the self in relation to, or conscious of, its environment (Calkins as cited in Bella 2022, 75).

Bella does not elaborate on why this passage is written in a Jamesian fashion, but when we compare Calkins’s statement “there is never thinking unless someone thinks”, to James’s remark “it seems as if the elementary psychic fact were not thought or this thought or that thought, but my thought, every thought being owned”, we can notice the similarity in formulation that Bella argues for (Calkins as cited in Bella 2022, 75; *PP1*, 226).

Notably, Bella is not the first to claim that Calkins’s proposition for self-psychology is drawn from James. McDonald argues that it is Calkins herself that attributes the proposition for self-psychology to the chapter “The Stream of Consciousness” in James’s *Principles* (McDonald 2006, 25). Her argument is based on a passage from Calkins’s autobiography, in which Calkins names James as one of the influences of her psychological doctrine. According to McDonald, Calkins specifically states that her doctrine was influenced, “despite a lack of external evidence...by the earlier part of James’s chapter on ‘The Stream of Consciousness’” (Calkins as cited in McDonald 2006, 25). McDonald adds that in “The Stream of Thought”, James “outlined what was later to become the central thesis of Calkins’s self-psychology”, namely that,

according to James, “no psychology can question the existence of personal selves” (McDonald 2006, 25).

McDonald rightly notices that Calkins names James as one of the influences of her psychological thought. However, Calkins does not claim that her proposition for self-psychology is drawn from the chapter “The Stream of Thought” in James’s *Principles*. In the autobiographic passage quoted by McDonald, Calkins stresses: “I wish that I could recall more completely the sources of this personalistic doctrine of psychology” (Calkins 1930a, 36). Consequently, she names the chapter in James’s *Principles* as one of the influences, “despite a lack of external evidence,” and further notes the thought of Royce, James Mark Baldwin (1861 – 1934), James Ward (1843 – 1925) and Hugo Münsterberg (1863 – 1916).

In considering James as one of the influences to her psychological thought, Calkins makes a claim considerably less strong than Bella and McDonald. McDonald argues that James “outlined” what was to become the central thesis of Calkins’s self-psychology (2006, 25). With this statement, she is contributing to a view that is concretely expressed by Bella, namely that Calkins’s proposition for psychology as the science of conscious selves can be considered an aspect of Jamesian legacy in her thought (2022, 68). In opposition to these claims, I think we need to mark Calkins’s proposition for self-psychology as her point of departure from James’s psychological thinking.

While Calkins framed psychology as the science of conscious selves, James states that psychology is the science of mental life (Calkins 1910, vii; James 1950, 1). James never advances a self-psychology, not in his *Principles* or in subsequent writings. Hence, Calkins assigns more significance to the self for the study of psychology than James, because she considers the self as psychology’s basal fact (*FIP*, 1 – 2). As stated, James regards ongoing thought as psychology’s elementary fact (Gale 2004, 162; Bordogna 2007, 514). So, Calkins’s proposition for self-psychology can be seen as a point of deviation from James’s thought, because it signifies that she and James portray notably different views on what is to be considered the basic existent of psychological study.

2.3 Different views on the significance of self for psychology: two caveats

As noted by Heidbreider, as well as Orlo Strunk and Phyllis Wentworth, one of the reasons that Calkins proposed self-psychology is because she believed that the psychological schools of her time unjustly ignored the self as the basal fact in psychology (1972, 59; 1972, 197; 1999, 119 – 121). In her presidential address to the American Psychological Association in 1905, Calkins argues that the defect of functionalism is that the school does not consider mental states as belonging to a self (1906, 63 – 64). As Calkins considers James's psychology part of the functionalist school, it seems that she concretely formulates their notably different views on what is to be considered the elementary fact of psychological study.

However, that Calkins and James hold different views on the significance of the self for psychological inquiry goes directly against David Leary's claim that any discussion of James's understanding of self can be seen "as presenting and discussing the central topic of his psychology: what his psychology is about at its very core" (1990, 228). Leary refers to James's analysis of the stream of thought as characteristically personal, in order to emphasize that "the self is implicated in every dimension of James's psychology" (1990, 229). Following Leary, we might state that Calkins's and James's positions on the significance of the self for the study of psychology are the same, but that Calkins simply lays greater importance on the self with her proposal for psychology as a science of conscious selves.

One argument supporting this interpretation is that Calkins appears to endorse it herself in her presidential address to the APA. The title of her address reads: "A Reconciliation between Structural and Functional Psychology." Her argument in the address is that the schools of structuralism and functionalism could be harmonized once they acknowledged the self as the basal fact of psychology (Calkins 1906, 65 - 68). Self-psychology could reconcile structuralism and functionalism, because according to Calkins, self-psychology studied both the analytic discovery of elements of the self, which is the focus of structuralism, and accounted for the functionalist's emphasis on "consciousness as involving internal relation to environment" (Calkins 1906, 73).

Despite Calkins's conviction that self-psychology could reconcile functionalism and structuralism once they acknowledged the self as the elementary fact of psychology, I believe that it is specifically Calkins's understanding of this elementary fact that prohibits such a reconciliation, at least in relation to James's functionalism. To my mind, Calkins's and James's different understandings of the nature of the self can explain why Calkins argues that the self is the basal fact in psychology, and James does not. Thus, I will not endorse the view that Calkins's and James's positions on the significance of the self for the study of psychology are the same, and that Calkins simply lays greater importance on the self with her proposition for psychology as a science of conscious selves. Rather, I will argue that Calkins's proposition for self-psychology marks a deviation from James, because their divergent understandings of the nature of the self are irreconcilable. In the following two sections, I stress that Calkins understands the self as transcendental and irreducible, while James asserts that no transcendental unity of the self need be supposed, for the functional identity of self is constituted by ongoing thought.

3. Calkins's Transcendental and Irreducible Conception of Self

By time of her second book in psychology, antithetically called *A First Book in Psychology* (1910), Calkins had become convinced that the self is an integral aspect of all psychological inquiry. In contrast to James, who argues that the most minimal assumption of the psychologist is that "thought goes on", Calkins argues that the fundamental assumption of the psychologist should be: "I think" (*PP1*, 225 *FIP*, 1; *PPP*, 426 – 427). Drawing on René Descartes's cogito-argument, Calkins stresses that psychology should consider the self as the most basic existent. She articulates this perspective by stating: "with Descartes...the self is discovered to be the one reality which can neither be denied nor doubted, since doubt and denial are alike impossible without a self to do the doubting or denying" (*PPP*, 427).

Calkins gives two reasons for insisting that the self is “an immediately known and then reflected-on reality, not merely an inferred being” (1908c, 273). Firstly, the self is “a reality basal to many conscious experiences, - whether these are named ideas, mental processes, psychic contents, conscious functions, or faculties” (Calkins 1908c, 273). Secondly, within these conscious experiences, the self manifests as persistent, unique and related to other-than-itself (Calkins 1908c, 273). In other words, the self is fundamental to conscious experience and by studying this experience, the self is experienced as persistent, unique and related to other-than-itself.

3.1 Self as mind in relation to body

Unlike Descartes, Calkins did not want to conceive of the I as a soul substance. She argues that the traditional philosophical conception of soul has two defects. The first defect is that it conceives of soul as analogous to material, since in early modern thought, soul was conceived as “a shadowy sort of body” (Calkins 1908c, 276). Calkins writes that theories of the soul in relation to the body “show the taint of unrealized materialism,” which is apparent from both Descartes’s and George Berkeley’s (1685 – 1753) efforts to indicate the seat of the soul, and in doctrines of the soul as moving the body (1908c, 276). The second defect is that the traditional conception of soul is an empty abstraction without any positive characteristics ascribed to it. Calkins argues that this defect is particularly apparent in the doctrine of John Locke (1632 – 1704) (1908c, 279 – 280). In making the distinction between self and soul, Locke deprives all positive attributes from the soul by stating that consciousness belongs not to soul, but to self (Calkins 1908c, 279). Calkins contends that the justified criticism of Hume and others against Locke’s soul as a “spiritual I-know-not-what,” has been unjustifiably interpreted as a criticism of the concept of self. She stresses that the criticism should be aimed at the spiritual substance and not at the self understood as “the occurrence of forms of consciousness” (Calkins 1908c, 280). Beatrice Zedler elucidates that Calkins believed the notion of self conflated with functions traditionally ascribed to the notion of soul, such as a source of life and immaterial substance, and that Calkins argues: “Though you may throw out the soul with its dubiously inferred characteristics, do not throw out the conscious self, which is directly experienced. Self is not soul” (1995, 108 - 109).

While Calkins did not want to equate the self with the traditional concept of soul, she also warned against a reduction of the self to the physical body. Calkins argues that the dominant position in psychology at the time was that body constitutes part of the self, and that the self may be conceived as “mind-in-body” (Calkins 1908a, 13). She names functionalism as one of the movements that holds this view, and specifically refers to James Rowland Angell (1869 – 1949). Influenced by James as well as John Dewey (1859 – 1952), Angell contended that psychologists should not consider what mental processes are, but how they evolved as a particular way to deal with conditions in the environment (Angell 1907, 82).

Contrasting Angell, Calkins argues that the self is “non-inclusive of body” (Calkins 1908a, 13). She explains that in self-psychology, “the psychologist regards the self as distinct from body, but related to it” (Calkins 1908a, 13 - 14).¹ Her argument for this position is that while there has been success in explaining psychic phenomena in non-psychic terms, such explanations offer no exhaustive explanation of psychic facts (Calkins 1908a, 20). She stresses that functionalists such as Angell point to specific psychophysical functions, such as selection, adaptation and variation, but they “never escape the necessity of distinguishing from these the ‘purely psychical’ and the ‘merely physiological’ functions” (Calkins 1908a, 13). It is because the functionalist still needs to distinguish psychical from physiological function that Calkins stresses: “nothing seems gained by the doctrine that the functioner is psychophysical” (1908a, 14). Accordingly, she states that we must consider the self as closely related to body, and not as a mind-in-body complex (Calkins 1908a, 14 - 15). Calkins acknowledges that this dualist position raises the problem how self and body might be related, but emphasizes that this gap is also a problem for advocates of the psychophysical organism, for they still acknowledge purely mental functions and purely physiological

¹ Heidbreider documents that in Calkins’s address to the British Psychological Association a few years before her death, she stated that for the sake of a unified psychology, she could conceive of selves as conscious biological organisms, contrary to “the strictly psychological view” that she advocated throughout her life (1972, 59).

functions. She concludes: “the difference is simply that the gulf lies, in one case, between self and body and, in the other case, between purely mental function and physiological function” (Calkins 1908a, 15).

3.2 The four characteristics of the self

Calkins recounts in her autobiography that upon receiving criticism for her first book in psychology, she became aware of making the same mistake as the traditional conception of soul, that is, of conceiving the self as an abstract entity with no positive characteristics ascribed to it (Calkins 1930a, 36). Accordingly, she writes an article in 1908 in which she identifies four positive characteristics of the self: (1) persistence, (2) inclusivity, (3) uniqueness and (4) relatedness (Calkins 1908b, 65). Calkins believes that these four characteristics of the self reveal themselves in introspective analysis of specific mental processes. For instance, uniqueness is noticed in emotion, will and faith (1908c, 273). Because the characteristics of the self are shown in the introspective analysis of various mental processes, Calkins considers the four characteristics of the self as immediately experienced (*FIP*, 3). As I will argue, Calkins’s description of the four characteristics of the self reveals that she conceived of self as transcendental and irreducible.

From Calkins’s discussion of the first characteristic of self, its persistence, follows that the self maintains its identity over time. Persistence is described by Calkins as “the realized fact of being the same self now as at some other time” (1908c, 273). Calkins explains that the mental processes in which the persistence of self is most apparent are recognition and anticipation. She describes the act of recognizing as “consciousness of an object as identical with an object of my earlier experience” (*FIP*, 124). Calkins gives the example of her recognition of the Swiss mountain Dents du Midi, and states that in the act of recognizing the mountain, “I regard my present self as experiencing in the present what I, this same self, experienced in the past”, as well as, “the object of my recognition”, which is the mountain as it is experienced in her personal recognition of it (*FIP*, 125 – 126).

By analyzing this example, we can see that Calkins proposes the self as transcendental to mental processes. It is only because the self is characteristically persistent, that is, maintaining identity, that Dents du Midi is able to become an object of her recognition. Hence, Calkins states that “not only mental imagery, but the consciousness of myself as ‘the same ego then as now’ is essential to recognition” (*FIP*, 124 – 125). That Calkins considers the self as transcendental to mental processes is also supported by her argument that persistence should not be considered a characteristic of the mental process itself (1910, 1). In a formulation that can be considered functionalist, Calkins stresses that some psychologists think of “mental processes,” such as recognition, “as persistent in mental and physical life” (1908b, 65 – 66). However, Calkins argues against this interpretation, for she posits that “consciousness does not occur impersonally” (Calkins 1910, 1). Calkins emphasizes that there is no instance in which recognition does not belong to a recognizer, wherefore we must consider persistence as a characteristic of the self, instead of the mental process (Calkins 1908b, 66).

From Calkins’s discussion of the second characteristic of the self, its inclusivity, follows that the self forms a unity. Calkins describes the self as inclusive, because thoughts, mental processes and experiences are all parts of the self considered as “a complex of ideas, functions, experiences” (Calkins 1908b, 66; *FIP*, 3).² Regarding this characteristic, Calkins simply states that “there is little need of further comment, for the complexity of the self is admitted on any view of it” (Calkins 1908b, 66).

So, in order to understand how Calkins can argue that the self is both transcendental to thoughts, mental processes, and experiences, as well as inclusive of them, we must consider her argument that the self is irreducible. Calkins claims that while the self is a complex of ideas, functions and experiences, this does not mean that it can be reduced to its parts. She argues that we have to consider the self as irreducible to the idea, because of its first characteristic of persistence. Specifically, she states that “it is plain

² While the interchangeability of the terms “mental process” and “mental function” is still common use, it helps to emphasize that Calkins also uses the terms “idea” and “thought” interchangeably, so long as there is no need to distinguish between “thought as idea” and “thought as judgement” (*FIP*, 133 – 147).

that this character of immediately experienced persistence differentiates the self from its ideas” (Calkins 1908b, 65). Calkins relies on David Hume (1711 – 1776) in order to argue that the self’s identity cannot be constituted by ideas, because they are “evanescent and fleeting” (Calkins 1908b, 65; Hume 1748/2007, 15). Hence, the self’s persistence prohibits it from being reduced to the idea, because the idea is passing.³ Accordingly, Calkins states: “the fact that we are directly conscious of identity as part of our unambiguously mental experience becomes the most persuasive argument for the existence of a self which is not a mere series of ideas” (1908b, 65).

That the self is irreducible to its thoughts, mental processes, and experiences, is also revealed by Calkins’s discussion of the third characteristic of the self, its uniqueness. Calkins states that the self’s uniqueness can be described as the difference of the I from the other, and is experienced most clearly in our emotional and volitional consciousness, for the phenomenality of these types of consciousness reflect a “this-which-could-not-be-replaced-by-another” (Calkins 1908b, 66; *FIP*, 171). Calkins argues that we are not conscious of ideas or mental processes as unique in this sense, because “a given self, with a different idea, is still this self; whereas a given idea is this or that idea according as it belongs to this or that self” (Calkins 1908b, 66). So, Calkins argues that the self is irreducible to its ideas, but ideas are only what they are insofar as they belong to a self.

Finally, that Calkins conceives of the self as an irreducible unity that is transcendental to mental processes, ideas and experiences, is supported by her description of the fourth characteristic of the self, its relatedness (Calkins 1908b, 66). Calkins describes the self’s relatedness as: “I am always conscious of something-other-than-myself to which I stand in some relation” (Calkins 1908b, 66).

³ In his argument, Hume reasons that the fleeting character of “ideas or thoughts” means that the identity and endurance of self ought to be questioned altogether (Hume 1748/2007, 15 - 18). Calkins only regards Hume’s argument as evidence for the fact that ideas must be differentiated from the persistent self (Calkins 1908b, 65).

Calkins explains that the self can be related to personal and impersonal objects, which may further be distinguished into private and public objects (*FIP*, 3). Personal objects are those objects in which, in the mental act, a self is predominantly conscious of conscious selves (*FIP*, 13). So, public personal objects are other conscious selves, and the private personal object is the self's consciousness of self (*FIP*, 4). Impersonal objects are those objects in which the personal self is conscious of something other than selves (*FIP*, 13). Public impersonal objects are externalized objects, such as "chemical formulae and sidewalks" (*FIP*, 4). Private *impersonal* objects are the experiences of the self as mine, for the reason that each is realized as an experience which can possibly be shared by others (*FIP*, 4). For example, Calkins explains that her experience of a chemical formula is "my experience of the formula as the common experience of many selves" (*FIP*, 4). In other words, in the experience of a formula, the self is related to its own experience (1) as experience, and (2) as able to be experienced by others. Therefore, the experience of self must be considered as a private impersonal object, as it is not the self but something other than the self which predominates the experience. Hence, Calkins's understanding of experiences as private impersonal objects shows that she considers the personal self as transcendental and irreducible to the experience, while the experience is only an experience insofar as it is part of a self.

4. James's Argument against the Transcendental and Irreducible Self

Calkins deviates from James's psychological thought with the understanding of self that I introduced in the last section, because it is precisely a transcendental understanding of self that James argues against in both *The Principles* and *Briefer Course*. In *Briefer Course*, James states:

Yet each of us spontaneously considers that by 'I' he means something always the same. This has led most philosophers to postulate behind the passing state of consciousness a permanent Substance or Agent whose

modification or act it is. This Agent is the thinker; the 'state' is only its instrument or means. 'Soul,' 'transcendental Ego,' 'Spirit,' are so many names for the more permanent sort of Thinker (*PB*, 63).

James stresses that common sense suggests that the I must be posited as transcendental to the mental state. In this section, I present his argument that since the most minimal assumption a psychologist can make is that thought goes on, the psychologist is not allowed to presuppose such a "permanent sort of Thinker" (*PB*, 63).

4.1 The distinction between the experiencing I and the empirical Me

James argues that any description of the personal self must begin in distinguishing between the empirical Me and the experiencing I (*PB*, 174; *PP1*, 291). He explains that "the Me" is the person's awareness of its personal existence, but that it is always "I who is aware" (*PB*, 174). In *Briefer Course*, James calls the position of the experiencing I, "the self as knower", and of the empirical Me, "the self as known" (*PB* 43 – 62).

James argues that three classes can be distinguished in the self as known: (1) the material self, (2) the social self, and (3) the spiritual self. The innermost part of the material self is the body, but James considers clothes, immediate family and home also as parts of the material self (*PP1*, 292 – 293; *PB*, 175). With respect to the social self, James famously states that "a man has as many social selves as there are individuals who recognize him" (*PP1*, 294; *PB*, 176 - 177). He describes the spiritual self as "rather the entire collection of my states of consciousness, my psychic faculties and dispositions taken concretely" (*PB*, 178). James argues that considering the spiritual self is a reflective process, in which we must be able "to think ourselves as thinkers" (*PP1*, 226). He states that in the reflective process concerning the spiritual self, the collection of thoughts that make up the stream of thought "become an object to my thought" (*PP1*, 226).

James also argues that "the spiritual self" is "the active element in all consciousness; saying that whatever content his thought may include, there is a spiritual something in him which seems to go out to meet these qualities and contents, whilst they seem to

come in to be received by it” (*PP1*, 297). Mahlon Brewster Smith (1993) argues that it is this description of the spiritual self as active that is problematic with respect to the phenomenological basis on which James constructed his account. He stresses that we might understand James’s distinction between the empirical Me and the experiencing I as the directedness of consciousness described by the phenomenological concept of intentionality (Smith 1993, 180). Franz Brentano (1838 – 1917), the German philosopher and psychologist to whom the phenomenological concept of intentionality is attributed, is commonly considered an inspiration to James (Kersten 1969). Brentano contends that every mental phenomenon is characterized by an act of consciousness, such as willing or intending, and that to which the act is directed, such as the willed drink or the intended compliment (Brentano 1874/1995, 88 – 94). Accordingly, James emphasizes that it is the I that is “that which at any given moment is conscious, whereas the Me is only one of the things which it is conscious of” (*PB*, 62). So, we might understand the experiencing I as the act of consciousness, whereas the empirical Me is what the act of consciousness is directed at, which in this case, is the personal self (Brentano 1995, 88 – 94; *PB*, 62).

However, by describing the self as the active element in all consciousness, Smith argues that James places the activity of the mind at the intentional object-pole, instead of the intentional subject-pole (Smith 1993, 180). His actual treatment of the empirical self would therefore be inconsistent with his earlier description of the distinction between the experiencing I and the empirical Me (Smith 1993, 180 – 182).

Smith’s argument is dismantled by taking a look at James’s description of the spiritual self in *Briefer Course*, written two years after *The Principles*. There, James rephrases his statement that the spiritual self is “the active element in all consciousness”, to read, “the more active-feeling states of consciousness are thus the more central portions of the spiritual Me” (*PB*, 48). In other words, the more active certain states of consciousness feel, the more central they are to the spiritual self. So, the spiritual self is descriptive of the activity that is felt when the stream of thought becomes an object to thought. In other words, the spiritual self refers to the identification with the activity of thought as mine, and not to the activity of thought itself.

Accordingly, I believe we must be careful with interpretations such as that of Smith, which conceive of the distinction between the experiencing I and the empirical Me as phenomenological intentionality. We must be cautious with such a phenomenological interpretation, because in contrast to the majority of phenomenologists, James does not conceive of the I as an absolute principle, or transcendental to mental processes. This brings us back to the fact that the difference between Calkins's and James's understanding of the nature of the self is that James does not conceive of the self as transcendental and irreducible.

Calkins's self can best be compared to what James describes as the experiencing I, or the self as knower, whereas Calkins's description of the self's relation to itself as a private personal object can be compared to James's relation of the experiencing I to the empirical Me (*FIP*, 4; *PP1*, 329 – 330; *PB*, 62 – 63). As we have seen at the beginning of this section, James finds that most philosophers unjustly postulate an irreducible I behind the most fundamental psychological assumption: ongoing thought (*PP1*, 401). James explains that in the spiritualist tradition, this I is conceived of as “an unchanging metaphysical entity like the Soul” (*PP1*, 401). Along with Calkins, James argues that no philosopher can give a positive account of what this soul might be (*PP1*, 342 - 350).

However, James contends that the same argument can be given for those who want to perceive of self as “a transcendental principle of unity” (*PP1*, 361 - 367). He argues that we cannot conceive of the experiencing I as such a transcendental unity, considering that the most fundamental assumption we can make is that “thought goes on” (*PP1*, 225). Because thought is the elementary fact of psychology, everything else must be reducible to ongoing thought, including the self (*PP1*, 225 – 226). Hence, James stresses that even though the first characteristic of thought is that it is personal, we cannot postulate a person, self, or experiencing I, behind ongoing thought. As a result, the experiencing I cannot be transcendental to thought, but must be conceived of as “the passing thought” (*PP1*, 342).

4.2 James's argument for the functional identity of the self

James was aware that he was going against common sense by reducing the self to passing thought, and admitted that it needed to be defended, especially with respect to the self's perceived persistence, or personal identity (*PB*, 63). As Richard Gale explains, James's understanding of the I as the passing thought means that "all of the psychological states, processes, and dispositions that were formerly predicable of the person or self now are to be predicated of a momentary Thought" (2004, 163). Accordingly, we have seen that Calkins argues that the perceived persistence of the self is what differentiates the self from the idea, or thought (Calkins 1908b, 65). She argues that in order for specific mental processes to occur, we must acknowledge a persistent self. For example, it is because of her persistent self that she can recognize Dents du Midi as "consciousness of an object as identical with an object of my earlier experience" (*FIP*, 124).

However, that Calkins considers the self as essential to mental processes is based on her transcendental understanding of self. In response to the argument that we can also think of mental processes as persistent in mental and physical life, Calkins responds that "consciousness does not occur impersonally" (1908b, 65 - 66; Calkins 1910, 1). Alternatively, James stresses that the fact that consciousness does not occur impersonally does not mean that we need to presuppose a persistent self behind ongoing thought, or mental processes. Rather, we need to conceive of this self as the passing thought, by a functional understanding of its identity or persistence.

James explains the functional identity of the experiencing I by arguing that in the stream of thought, we can discern an appropriative activity (*PP1*, 330). This appropriative activity consists of a thought appropriating another thought due to a feeling of "warmth and intimacy" (*PP1*, 330 - 332). By the act of appropriation, both thoughts, "know the same objects, and so far as the by-gone me is one of those objects, they react upon it in an identical way, greeting it and calling it mine, and opposing it to all the other things they know" (*PB*, 70). James illustrates the appropriative activity with the example of a herd of cattle:

It will be remembered that the beasts were brought together into one herd because their owner found on each of them his brand. The 'owner' symbolizes here that 'section' of consciousness, or pulse of thought, which we have all along represented as the vehicle of the judgment of identity; and the 'brand' symbolizes the characters of warmth and continuity, by reason of which the judgment is made (*PP1*, 337).

The herd-of-cattle-example elucidates how the passing thought constitutes the functional identity of the experiencing I. According to James, a "pulse of thought" brings together those thoughts that are "branded" as belonging to his herd. As James explains: "No beast would be so branded unless he belonged to the owner of the herd. They are not his because they are branded, they are branded because they are his" (*PP1*, 337). According to James, the feeling of warmth that a thought has for another thought, in other words, the brand, constitutes the identity, rather than that the brand is presupposed. In comparing this argument to Calkins, we can see that she makes the latter argument, namely that thoughts are only considered thoughts because they belong to a self that does the thinking (1910, v). In other words, thoughts are part of an irreducible self that is transcendental to the thoughts.

Furthermore, Francesca Bordogna explains that the herd-of-cattle-example reveals how James conceived of the self as consisting of a multitude of thoughts appropriating other thoughts (2007, 514 – 515). She stresses that by the described activity of a thought appropriating another thought, James contends that the experiencing I, as "the passing thought," does not only consist of "a bundle of thoughts that belong to us," but that the passing character of this bundle means that the performance of distinguishing between thoughts is always itself a "plurality of thoughts" (Bordogna 2007, 514 – 515). As Bordogna states:

Each current self (each 'passing Thought'), he proposed, was born a free 'owner' but died an 'owned', since it ended as a property 'possessed' by the subsequent self. Self-ownership – self-possession – became an internalized and transient relation, ever to be reconfigured among shifting terms (2007, 515).

From this passage, it becomes clear that if we were to describe the intentionality of consciousness according to James, the subject-pole is not a transcendental I, but rather always consisting of a plurality of thoughts in flux. James asserted that when we consider ongoing thought as the elementary fact of psychology, we can no longer presuppose an irreducible self, since it is not the I, but the passing thought that is our departing point (*PP1*, 336).

5. Different Perspectives on Reality: Absolute Self versus A World of Pure Experience

Multiple authors have questioned the systematic coherence of James's description of the appropriate activity of thought (Smith 1999; Gale 2004). For example, Gale contends that certain core aspects of self are more central than others, such as name and profession, but that James is not clear on how these thoughts retain a feeling of warmth and intimacy better than others (2004, 162 - 165). Gale believes this incoherency due to James's own struggle with his description of the experiencing I, as highlighted by that fact that of all the chapters of *The Principles of Psychology*, "The Consciousness of Self" was finished last, and James revised it most before publishing (2004, 169). For our purposes, the preliminary treatment of the appropriate activity of thought in the last section is enough to understand that Calkins and James have notably different understandings of the nature of the self.

The different views of Calkins and James on the nature of the self explains why they have divergent perspectives on the significance of the self for the study of psychology. Because Calkins considers the self as transcendental and irreducible to mental processes, she contends that psychology is a science of the conscious self. In opposition, James asserts that the most minimal assumption a psychologist can make is that "thought goes on", wherefore the psychologist is not allowed to presuppose such a transcendental and irreducible self (*PP1*, 225). Accordingly, he conceives of psychology as the science of mental life, in which the elementary fact is ongoing thought.

So, despite Calkins's honorable aim to reconcile functionalism and structuralism with her self-psychology, at least in case of James's functionalism, we must concede that it explicitly resists her transcendental and irreducible understanding of self. Accordingly, we must recognize Calkins's proposition for psychology as a science of self to mark her point of divergence from James's psychological thought. The last part of this paper supports this argument by highlighting that Calkins's and James's irreconcilable understandings of the nature of the self leads them to propose distinct metaphysical systems at the end of their life. These metaphysical systems are absolute personalism and radical empiricism.

5.1 Transcendental selves in Calkins's absolute personalism

Calkins's initial training was in classics and philosophy, rather than psychology (Furumoto 1979, 111). During the second part of her career, Calkins began to devote more time to her initial interest in philosophy, and became adamant in defending her metaphysical doctrine of absolute personalism (*PPP*; Furumoto 1979, 111 – 113).

Calkins defines absolute personalism as “the universe literally is one all-including (and accordingly complete) self of which all the lesser selves are genuine and identical parts, or members” (Calkins 1930b, 209). She reaches this definition in four steps. First, Calkins posits the statement: “the universe contains distinctively mental realities” (1930b, 200). She argues that irreducible mental realities exist, because they are immediately experienced and realized as different from what is observed as bodily processes (Calkins 1930b, 201). Calkins states: “I know immediately what perceiving, imagining, feeling and willing are; and I know as immediately that the subvocal contraction of throat-muscles in pronouncing a word, say ‘justice,’ is a phenomenon distinct from that of ‘thinking’ justice, though the two phenomena are closely correlated” (1930b, 201).

Second, Calkins emphasizes that mental realities are ultimately personal. By a reasoning that might now sound familiar, Calkins states that “the mental phenomena which I directly observe are not percepts, thoughts, emotions and volitions, in unending succession, but rather perceiving, thinking, feeling and willing self or selves (Calkins

1930b, 201). I discussed this argument at length in the last two sections, and have shown that it proposes an understanding of self as transcendental and irreducible. We have also seen that James opposes this argument by stating that no such transcendental unity need be supposed behind ongoing thought. So, it should come as no surprise that it is with respect to this understanding of the personal existence of mental phenomena that Calkins's and James's metaphysical account of reality differ. But before I discuss this difference, let us look at the third and fourth step in Calkins's argument that the universe is one all-including self.

In the third step of her argument, Calkins stresses that mental realities are not only personal, but that "all that is real is ultimately mental, and accordingly personal, in nature" (1930b, 203). For the first part of this statement, Calkins relies on Berkeley's argument that the only reality experienced is mental. For the second part, she relies on her other Harvard mentor, Royce, who argues that the distinction between physical and psychological reality is actually a distinction between uncommunicative and communicative selves (Calkins 1930b, 204). She states: "I contrast selves, or persons, with physical objects not on the ground that the selves, and not the things, are conscious, but on the ground that the selves, and not the things, are in actual or possible intercourse with me" (Calkins 1930b, 204). Calkins acknowledges that her reliance on Berkeley makes her suspect of advocating solipsism, that is, the perspective that the only mind that exists is her own. To counter that her position is solipsistic, Calkins states that relatedness is a characteristic of the self, for which we have to concede of "two assertions seemingly contradictory, yet each made with immediate certainty, that I am conscious (1) of limit but also (2) of somewhat-beyond-that-limit" (Calkins 1930b, 208 – 209). From these assertions, Calkins makes the fourth and last step in her argument, that is, the conclusion that the universe consists of one all-including self of which the other selves are parts (1930b, 209). She reaches this conclusion by stressing that if all is personal in reality, the somewhat-beyond-that-limit that is experienced by the self must also be personal (Calkins 1930b, 208). Because this somewhat-beyond-that-limit is experienced as personal, the personal self must be a part of the somewhat-beyond-that-limit. Therefore, Calkins concludes: "In fully knowing myself I therefore know the nature of that including self which is, from one

point of view, other than I, because greater, but which, since I am an actual part of it, also is a greater myself” (1930b, 209). In other words, it is by knowing herself that Calkins can concede that there is somewhat beyond the limit of herself, of which she also must be a part, considering that everything is personal. Therefore, there must be an all-including absolute self, or person, that exceeds her (Calkins 1930b, 200 – 209).

Calkins’s absolute personalism is in line with her understanding of self as transcendental and irreducible. In fact, Calkins uses the same argument for considering the self as the basal fact in psychology as she does for understanding irreducibly mental phenomena as fundamentally personal. But with her absolute personalistic doctrine of reality, Calkins goes one step further than she does in her initial understanding of the nature of the self. She now presents an idealism, by conceding that only mental realities exist. Next to an idealism, Calkins also proposes a monism, because of her statement that the universe literally consists of an absolute and all-including self, of which other selves are parts or members. As we will see in the next section, James’s metaphysical account can also be considered an idealistic monism. However, it does not fit the transcendental and irreducible understanding of self that is proposed by Calkins.

5.2 Nothing but pure experience in James’s radical empiricism

James’s metaphysical system is worked out in his essays on radical empiricism, which are considered part of James’s late philosophical works (Leary 2018, 1). In these essays, James postulates a monism, by stating that “pure experience” is the “one primal stuff or material in the world” (James 1904a, 478; James 1904b, 534 - 535). However, James wants to understand pure experience as neither material or immaterial. He explains that “there is no *general* stuff of which experience at large is made” (James 1904a, 487). Pure experience is “made of *that*, of just what appears, of space, of intensity, of flatness, of brownness, heaviness, or what not” (James 1904a, 487). In relation to pure experience having neither a material or immaterial character, it follows that immaterial thought is made of the same general stuff as material things, like tables and chairs.

Jeremy Dunham explains that “one of James’s key aims in his radical empiricist writings is to persuade us that there is no real duplicity of subject and object but rather

subject and object are simply functions of the same experience treated in one way or another (2020, 5). James contends that subject and object are functions of the same experience by using the terms “knower” and “known” (1904a, 487 – 488). In his writings on radical empiricism, he explains that knowing “can easily be explained as a particular sort of relation towards one another into which portions of pure experience may enter” (James 1904a, 478). In these relations we can distinguish a subject-pole, which is the knower, and an object-pole, which is the known.

We have seen that James also introduces the distinction between knower and known in his account on the nature of the self (*PB*, 43 - 62). Accordingly, it is my contention that James uses the distinction between knower and known in his metaphysical system, in order to show that pure experience has two modes of function. The pure experience that functions as knower creates order in reality by the activity of appropriation. Hence, James stresses that the world consists of “a chaos of experiences”, but it is because of knowing that “lines of order soon get traced” (James 1904a, 482). Consequently, that which gets appropriated is the pure experience as known, just as it is the self as known that the experiencing I, or the self as knower, knows when the collection of thoughts that make up the stream of thought “become an object” to thought (*PP1*, 297). Although pure experience functions either as knower, or as known, its constitution is the same. This further reflects James’s discussion of the nature of the self. In his understanding of self, James argues that we can distinguish between a subject-pole and an object-pole, but ultimately, both the experiencing I and the empirical Me consist of one elementary fact: ongoing thought.

When we compare the metaphysical systems of Calkins and James, we perceive that Calkins posits irreducible mental entities that are personal, while James advocates a neutral position with respect to the stuff of which the world is made. These respective positions can both be considered monist and idealist, but the difference is their respective understanding on the role and nature of the self in reality. The transcendental and irreducible understanding of Calkins leads her to posit an absolute self of which the personal self is a lesser part, while James’s conviction that ongoing

thought is the basal fact of reality leads him to ascribe the self a functional role of creating order in the world of pure experience.

Calkins's and James's respective understandings of reality further support the argument that the point where Calkins diverges from James is her proposition for psychology as a science of selves. For this reason, it is time to consider Calkins's self-psychology as more than an extension of James's legacy, namely, a full-fledged psychological school with its unique metaphysical underpinning. While James significantly influenced Calkins's career and humanistic approach to psychology, each held their own position on the philosophical nature of the self and the role it should play in psychological inquiry.

6. Conclusion

James undeniably influenced Calkins, as we can see from her biographical history and humanistic approach to psychological inquiry. As such, it is no surprise that the limited research on Calkins has been focused on the connections between her and her well-known mentor. However, the argument made by Bella (2022) and McDonald (2006), that Calkins's proposition for self-psychology is drawn from James, is not systematically accurate. With this argument, Bella and McDonald each contribute to an understanding of Calkins's self-psychology as an extension of James's legacy (Bella 2022, 68; McDonald 2005, 25). In opposition to this understanding, I have contended that Calkins's proposition for psychology as a science of conscious selves is the exact point where we have to mark her divergence from James's psychological thought. My argument has been based on Calkins's and James's different views on the significance of self for psychological study.

While Calkins consistently argues that psychology is a science of conscious selves, and stresses that Titchener's structuralism and James's functionalism could be reconciled once they acknowledged the conscious self as the basal fact in psychology, James never advances a self-psychology, not in *The Principles* and in subsequent works (Calkins 1906, 63 - 64; *PP1*, 225 - 226). By a comparative analysis of Calkins's and James's writing on

the nature of the self, I explained that Calkins's and James's different views on the significance of self for psychology is due to their diverging metaphysical positions. I interpreted Calkins's understanding of self as transcendental and irreducible, and presented James's argument that such a transcendental and irreducible self cannot be postulated, as the most minimal assumption a psychologist can make is that "thought goes on" (*PP1*, 225).

Finally, I highlighted that Calkins's and James's irreconcilable understandings of the nature of the self leads them to propose distinct metaphysical systems at the end of their life. Calkins uses the same argument for considering the self as the basal fact in psychology as she does for understanding all mental phenomena as fundamentally personal. She proposes an absolute personalism, in which the universe is one all-including self of which all the other selves are parts (Calkins 1930, 200). Rather than placing an absolute self at the basis of reality, James stresses in his radical empiricism that "pure experience" is the "one primal stuff or material in the world", which fits his distinction of the self as knower and the self as known (James 1904a, 478).

By reflecting on the different metaphysical underpinnings of Calkins's and James's psychological thought, I concluded that we must mark Calkins's proposition for self-psychology as her departure from James. Although Calkins aimed to unite James's functionalism with structuralism in her self-psychology, their respective understandings of the elementary psychological fact and the nature of the self prohibit such a reconciliation. Subsequently, it is time we consider Calkins's self-psychology as more than an extension of James's legacy. By understanding the self-psychology of Calkins as an independent and fully developed psychological school, we can truly embark upon the exciting journey of reinstating her place in the history of psychology.

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7. Key to Abbreviations

Calkins:

- ITP* An Introduction to Psychology
FIP A First Book in Psychology
PPP The Persistent Problems of Philosophy

James:

- PP1* Principles of Psychology (vol. 1)
PP2 Principles of Psychology (vol. 2)
PB Psychology: Briefer Course

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Research Proposal

Mary Whiton Calkins (1863 – 1930) and the Rise of Modern Psychology

1. Summary

This historico-philosophical research project aims to investigate an important but significantly understudied American pioneer in modern psychology: Mary Whiton Calkins (1863 - 1930). Its focus is Calkins's philosophical thought regarding the foundations, methods and implications of psychology.

As president of both the American Philosophical Association and the American Psychological Association, Calkins was particularly concerned with the philosophical aspects of the discipline of psychology. Her central argument was that psychology should be a study of “conscious selves in relation to other selves and to external objects” (Calkins 1910, vii). Understanding Calkins's development of a self-psychology is crucial in developing a deeper insight into the history of psychology, but also merits attention because of the resurgent interest in relational psychology by contemporary psychologists and philosophers of mind (Chalmers 2015; De Haan 2020), and because of the pattern of ignoring women's accomplishments in the history of science (Bella 2022).

The project aims to describe: (1) Calkins's philosophy of psychology in relation to her experimental work and philosophical framework (2) the contextualization of Calkins's philosophy of psychology vis-à-vis early psychological schools, and; (3) the contemporary relevance of Calkins's philosophy of psychology.

2. Description of the proposed research

a) Research Problem

The history of psychology “resists any easy or clean containment within disciplinary confines” (Harrington 2009, 504). Up to the turn of the twentieth century, psychology was still part of the philosophy curriculum, and when it eventually detached itself from philosophy, that separation generated several issues that must be left “permanently or at least temporarily for philosophy to deal with” (Rosenberg 2000, 2). Nowadays, these issues constitute the philosophy of psychology, and concern the foundations, methods and implications of the discipline of psychology (Bermúdez 2004). The prominent American philosopher and psychologist Mary Whiton Calkins (1863 -1930) was already concerned with philosophy of psychology during its early development, but little is known of her thought today.

Calkins had the strong conviction that psychology should fundamentally be a study of “conscious selves in relation to other selves and to external objects” (Calkins 1910, vii). Her relational self-psychology can be distinguished from then predominant psychological schools, such as atomism, behaviorism, *Gestalt-Psychologie*, the psychology of her mentor William James (1842 – 1910) and contemporary John Dewey (1859 – 1952). Calkins set up one of the first psychological laboratories in the world, was elected as the first female president of both the American Psychological Association and the American Philosophical Association, and was an honorary member of the British Psychological Association (Scarborough & Furumoto 1986).

Understanding Calkins’s philosophy of psychology serves to develop a deeper insight into the history of the discipline of psychology. In addition to its historical importance, Calkins’s thought also merits attention because of the pattern of ignoring women’s accomplishments in the history of science, and because it may contribute to the resurgent research on relational psychology by contemporary psychologists and philosophers of mind (Chalmers 2015; De Haan 2020; Bella 2022).

This research project will be the first comprehensive overview study of Calkins’s philosophy of psychology and its role in the development of psychology. Through an

analysis of both published and unpublished historical sources, the project will aim to describe: (1) Calkins's philosophy of psychology in relation to her experiments at the Wellesley psychological laboratory and her philosophical framework of personalistic idealism; (2) the contextualization of Calkins's philosophy of psychology with respect to early psychological schools; and (3) the legacy and contemporary relevance of Calkins's philosophy of psychology.

b) State of the Art

(b1) Historical research regarding the development of modern psychology

The development of modern psychology has been heavily researched. Its foundations have been traced back to late nineteenth century Germany and the United States (Benjafield 1996; Schultz & Schultz 2004; Mandler 2007). The established narrative of the emancipation of psychology from philosophy is that psychology emerged from philosophy "only when researchers came to rely on controlled observation and experimentation to study the human mind" (Schultz & Schultz 2004, 4). Yet Mandler (2007) notices that prominent early psychologists, such as James and Wilhelm Wundt (1832 – 1920), believed that empirical experiment was only to supplement introspective evidence, on the basis that mental life could not be reduced to the physical processes that were studied in psychological experiments. He states that experimental psychology only became dominant in psychology departments in the first half of the twentieth century, following the popularity of the new realist doctrines by G.E. Moore and Bertrand Russell (Mandler 2007).

What is lacking in the narrative regarding the emancipation of psychology from philosophy is Calkins's particular philosophy of psychology and a discussion of personhood or the self in general. Even specific intellectual histories on personal identity tend to focus on the history of the self in philosophy, rather than psychology (Martin & Barresi 2006). This is surprising, as not only Calkins, but also James and Wundt considered the self an integral part of the emerging discipline of psychology (Wundt 1874; James 1950). Acclaimed philosophical sources such as *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* fail to mention Calkins, stating that American personalism is "best known as represented by such figures as Borden Parker Bowne (1847 – 1910)"

(Williams & Bengtsson 2022). Yet Bowne's first use of the term "self" follows Calkins's use of it (Calkins 1904; Bowne 1908). Calkins is mentioned by Benjafield (1996) and Schultz & Schultz (2004), but the focus is on her gender, not her thought.

(b2) Historical research on women scientists at the turn of the twentieth century

Some historical literature with a focus on women scientists at the turn of the twentieth century does devote an introductory chapter to Calkins's thought (Dykeman 1995; Zedler 1995). Calkins also has a page on the website of the Center for the History of Women Philosophers and Scientists at Paderborn University, where her corpus is estimated to consist of four books and 90 articles (2023).

Introductions to Calkins's thought by Dykeman (1995) and Zedler (1995) establish that Calkins describes the self as immediately aware of its (1) persistence, (2) inclusivity, (3) uniqueness, and (4) relatedness, which are the four characteristics that psychology must study with the method of introspection. Introspection is described through Calkins's quote that this methodology concerns the careful examination of questions such as: "What do I mean when I say that I perceive, remember, believe?" (Calkins 1910, 6). Although Calkins's argument that introspective evidence should be supplemented with experimental research is mentioned in both chapters, there is no reflection on the methodological tension that Calkins sees between introspection and experimentation (Calkins 1910). This is likely due to the introductory purpose of these chapters. What is discussed in Dykeman (1995) and Zedler (1995) does not go beyond the prefaces of Calkins (1904) and Calkins (1910). The same holds for their introduction to Calkins's personalistic idealism, which establishes that she believed the fundamental nature of reality to be mental and personal, meaning that reality consists solely of "perceiving, thinking, feeling and willing selves" (Zedler 1995, 133).

(b3) Research with a specific focus on Calkins's thought

Literature that describes Calkins's thought in more detail is scarce. The philosophical literature regarding her personalistic idealism critically assesses the coherence of her philosophical framework (Magg 1947; McDaniel 2017). McDonald (2006) has written the only dissertation on Calkins to date, in which the relation between Calkins's self-

psychology and personalistic idealism is considered through the lens of virtue ethics. Interestingly, McDonald's estimation of Calkins's corpus is larger than that of Paderborn University, counting four textbooks and 148 articles. In the chapter "Self-Psychology and Personhood", McDonald discusses Calkins's arguments for the differentiation of self-psychology from other psychological schools, but this discussion does not go beyond Calkins's own considerations in Calkins (1910) and Calkins (1926) (McDonald 2006, 14–49). The paper by Scarborough & Furumoto (1986) is based on archival research, but focusses on Calkins's biographical history. Their account establishes that Calkins's career flourished despite inequality, of which the denial of her Harvard Ph.D. degree because of the university's exclusionary gender policy is the most striking example. Allport (1937) can be seen as exemplary of Calkins's influence in the twentieth century, as it contains many references to her self-psychology. Conspicuously, by the time of its third edition (1945), all references to Calkins had been dropped. Finally, in a rare booklet that was handed out during Calkins's memorial service it is stated that "her interest in psychology lay distinctly in its foundations, method and point of view" (Calkins 1931, 11). Bella (2022) recently called for more research into Calkins's philosophy of psychology, as "the most widely acknowledged Jamesian psychology lacks consideration for the personal sense" (79 – 80).

c) Methodology

This is a qualitative research project aimed at collecting, interpreting and analyzing historical and non-numerical data. Analysis of the data will result in a historically and philosophically accurate answer to the research question:

What was Mary Whiton Calkins's philosophy of psychology, and which role did it play in the development of the discipline of modern psychology at the turn of the twentieth century?

The method for answering this question will be through (c1) a collection of historical data, and (c2) a classification and interpretation of subsections.

(c1) Collection of historical data

Collection of data will start with the corpus listed by Paderborn University (2023) and McDonald (2006), and will be supplemented by a search in online databases and university libraries, as well as by material from The Harvard University Archives, The Wellesley College Archives and The Boston Public Library. Selection criteria for sources depends on the subsection as listed in (c2):

- Selection criterion for subsection c2.1 is that the source is either a publication by Calkins, archived material by Calkins, or literature from the turn of the twentieth century with direct reference to Calkins's thought. The content of the source must concern: (1) the foundations of psychology, (2) the methodology of psychology or (3) implications for psychology as distinct from philosophy.
- Selection criterion for subsection c2.2 is that the source is either from the turn of the twentieth century and directly concerns the psychological systems in Calkins (1910) and Calkins (1926), or a peer-reviewed contemporary discussion of these systems.
- Selection criterion for subsection c2.3 is that the source is from the twentieth century and contains a direct reference to Calkins's philosophy of psychology. Data collection regarding Calkins's relevance for contemporary systems in psychology and philosophy of mind is determined on the basis of conference attendance and in discussion with Professor Slors.

(c2) Classification and interpretation of subsections

The research will be divided into three subsections, each corresponding to a subquestion:

(c2.1) How can we understand Calkins's philosophy of psychology, both in relation to her philosophical framework of personalistic idealism, and in relation to her experiments at the Wellesley psychological laboratory?

The first part of the research project will be dedicated to gaining an understanding of Calkins's philosophy of psychology in three steps.

The first step is to gain an understanding of Calkins's philosophical thought regarding the *foundations* of psychology. Calkins states that psychology concerns the study of conscious selves, in which mental processes such as perceiving, remembering and believing should be considered as parts of a person who is perceiving, remembering and believing (Calkins 1904).

The second step is to understand the *methodology* of self-psychology, which displays a tension between introspection, which is the “personal”, “unexact” and “unmeasurable study” of psychological phenomena, and psychological experiment, which is “unpersonal”, “exact” and “measurable” (Calkins 1910, 8). Interpretation of the tension in Calkins's methodology and the significance of the self as the subject matter of psychology will result in Chapter 1: “Foundations and Methodology of Calkins's Philosophy of Psychology and its Application at the Wellesley Psychological Laboratory.”

The third step is to interpret the *implications* of self-psychology for Calkins's philosophical framework: personalistic idealism. Calkins describes personalistic idealism as “all that is real is ultimately mental, and accordingly personal, in nature”, and “the universe literally is one all-including (and accordingly complete) self of which all the lesser selves are genuine and identical parts, or members” (Calkins 1930, 200 – 209). Interpretation of Calkins's philosophy of psychology in relation to this particular philosophical framework will result in Chapter 2: “Implications of Calkins's Self-Psychology for the Philosophy of Personalistic Idealism.”

(c2.2) What is the relation of Calkins's philosophy of psychology to early psychological schools?

The second part of the project will determine the role of Calkins's philosophy of psychology in the development of psychology, by contextualizing her self-psychology with respect to early psychological schools. Point of departure of this contextualization will be the same as McDonald (2006), namely Calkins's list of psychological schools in Calkins (1910) and Calkins (1926). McDonald's interpretation will be improved by a comparison of Calkins's own arguments to an in-depth study of the literature she refers to, and a division of the schools into three groups, ranging from least related to self-psychology to most related to self-psychology. Least related is group (1), psychological

schools concerned with mental life as independent mental and/or physical processes, that is, behaviorism, atomism and structuralism. Somewhat related is group (2), psychological schools concerned with mental life as relational, that is, *Gestalt-Psychologie*, psycho-physical personalism and Freud's psycho-analysis. Most related is group (3), the pragmatic psychologies of William James and of John Dewey. Analysis of each group will result in a subsection of Chapter 3: "Calkins's Philosophy of Psychology within the Context of Predominant Schools of Early Psychology".

(c2.3) What is the influence and contemporary relevance of Calkins?

The third part of the project aims to determine the role of Calkins's philosophy of psychology in the development of modern psychology, first by getting a sense of how Calkins came to be forgotten in the twentieth century, and second by a discussion of how her work can be relevant today.

My current hypothesis is that Calkins came to be forgotten for two reasons. First, there is a general pattern of ignoring women's accomplishments in the history of science. Allport (1937/1945) provides a stark example of how Calkins's name was obliterated, as does Stanford Encyclopedia's discussion of Bowne, but not of his source of inspiration. The second reason is methodological, and has to do with Calkins's refusal to reduce psychology to an experimental study of physical processes, the latter being a conviction that became dominant in psychology departments in the first half of the twentieth century (see 9b1).

Discussion of the relevance of Calkins's self-psychology for contemporary psychology and philosophy of mind will focus on two recent movements for which Calkins's self-psychology is specifically relevant. Due to the rapidly changing landscape of contemporary psychology and philosophy of mind, this question will be addressed only in the last stage of the project. Yet two current examples are: (1) De Haan's enactive psychiatry, in which she expresses the need for an "integrative framework" that combines neuroscientific research with personal experience, and (2) the revival of panpsychism initiated by Chalmers (2015), which argues that mentality is a fundamental and ubiquitous feature of the physical world. Discussion of both the influence and relevance of Calkins will result in Chapter 4: "The Relevance of Calkins's Philosophy of Psychology in the Twentieth and Twenty-First Centuries".

d) Scholarly and societal relevance

The stark contrast between Calkins’s prominence in the fields of psychology and philosophy at the turn of the twentieth century and the current scarcity of research into her thought renders this project interesting from both an academic and societal perspective. Two additional reasons render the project even more relevant.

Firstly, this project accommodates the academic and societal need for inclusiveness and diversity, by expressing the conviction that it is extensive and detailed research rather than piecemeal introductions that assigns women their deserved place in (academic) history.

Secondly, the interest in relational psychology by contemporary psychology and philosophy of mind is related to the need for an integrative framework in mental health care. De Haan emphasizes that psychological and psychiatric practices are in deep need for “a model that integrates the many phenomena that play a role in the development and persistence of psychiatric disorders” (2020, 9). An investigation into Calkins’s effort to integrate introspective evidence and psychological experiment in her personal philosophy of psychology could inform this model from a historico-philosophical perspective.

3. Key words

Mary Whiton Calkins, history of science, philosophy of psychology, self-psychology, idealism

4. Timetable

Year	Period*	Research and education	Output
1	Semester 1: sept23 – jan24	- Course in cognitive psychology at the Amsterdam Center for Brain and Cognition (ABC) - Application Harvard Visiting Fellow Program - Collection of published sources for 9c2.1 - Draft Chapter 1	- Draft of Chapter 1
1	Semester 2:	- Semester at Cambridge, MA	- Draft of Chapter 2

	feb24 – aug24	- Harvard Visiting Fellow Program (3 months) - Collection of archival material for 9c2.1 at Wellesley College and the Boston Public Library (2 months) - Draft Chapter 2	- Presentation of results at a US conference
2	Semester 1: sep24 – jan25	- Interpretation of data 9c2.1 - Finish Chapter 1 - Finish Chapter 2	- Chapter 1 and 2 - Presentation of results at workshop “Exiled Empiricists” (ERC), University of Tilburg (Standing invitation by dr. Sander Verhaegh)
2	Semester 2: feb25 – aug25	- Collection of data for 9c2.2 - Write publishable article - Draft Chapter 3	- Draft of Chapter 3 - Publishable article 1
3	Semester 1: sep25 – jan26	- Interpretation of data 9c2.2 - Finish Chapter 3	- Chapter 3
3	Semester 2: feb26 – aug26	- Collection of data for 9c2.3 - Write publishable article - Draft Chapter 4	- Draft of Chapter 4 - Publishable article 2
4	Semester 1: sept26 – jan27	- Interpretation of data 9c2.3 - Finish Chapter 4	- Chapter 4 - Presentation of results at a national conference
4	Semester 2: feb27 – aug27	- Incorporate final feedback - Write introduction and conclusion	- Complete dissertation

**Standard amount of vacation time has been taken into account.*

5. Summary for non-specialists

The American philosopher and psychologist Mary Whiton Calkins (1863 – 1930) was incredibly important for the development of modern psychology in the early twentieth century. She was the founder of one of the first psychological laboratories in the world, the first female president of the renowned American Psychological Association and

American Philosophical Association, as well as an honorary member of the British Psychological Association. However, we know little about her today, and this is due to at least two reasons.

The first reason is that historical research indicates that female achievements in science have been undervalued for a long time. Angela Saini, in her book *Inferior: How Science Got Women Wrong and the New Research That's Rewriting the Story* (2017), discusses how “prestigious institutions, so crucial to the growth of modern science, excluded women as a matter of course” (17). Notably, Calkins was denied her Harvard Ph.D. degree in 1895, because of the university’s gender exclusionary policy.

The second reason for the little knowledge of Calkins pertains to her stance regarding the subject matter and methodology of psychology. Over the course of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, more and more psychologists became convinced that psychology could only develop as a science by placing experimental research at its core. Calkins contested the notion of psychology as an experimental science, arguing that it disregarded the personal identity of the individuals upon whom psychological experiments were performed. In light of this, she put forward the proposition that psychology should primarily focus on the study of the human being as conscious self. This perspective involved individuals engaging in introspective questions, such as: “What do I mean when I say ‘I see,’ ‘I remember,’ or I believe?” (Calkins 1910, 6). To Calkins’s mind, the experimental method should serve as a complement to this introspective study. Viewpoints in psychology like that of Calkins, which place emphasis on the relationship between mental processes and the personal experience of these processes, are experiencing a resurgence in contemporary psychology and philosophy of mind.

The proposed Ph.D. project will be the world’s first comprehensive overview study of Calkins’s philosophical insights regarding the foundations, methodology, and implications of the discipline of psychology. The study will be conducted in three parts. First, Calkins’s philosophical ideas concerning psychology will be interpreted through an analysis of her publications and archived material. Then, Calkins’s ideas will be

situated within the context of prominent psychological schools of that time, such as Freud's psychoanalysis. Finally, an attempt will be made to understand Calkins's legacy, by investigating her influence in the twentieth century and her relevance to contemporary psychology and philosophy of mind.

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7. Curriculum vitae

a) Education

2021 – 2023

ReMa History of Philosophy

Radboud University Nijmegen | Interim GPA: 8.5

- 2018 – 2021 **BA Philosophy**
 University of Amsterdam
cum laude | Graduation date: 30-07-2021
- 2014 – 2018 **BA Production and Stage Management**
 Amsterdam University of the Arts
cum laude with distinction “Creative Producer” |
 Graduation date: 26-09-2018

b) Honours, prizes, scholarships and grants

- 2020 – 2021 **Interdisciplinary Honoursprogramme University of Amsterdam**
 Extended bachelor thesis and 24 EC in interdisciplinary courses
- 2017 – 2018 **Disciplinary Honoursprogramme “Creative Producer” at Amsterdam University of the Arts**
 Special curriculum, now part of the DAS Theatre masterprogramme
- 2017 **NTF Prize Best Theatre Play Netherlands: *De Warme Winkel speelt De Warme Winkel* (highest distinction in Dutch Theatre)**
Nomination VSCD Dance Prize
 Responsible for the stage production and tour-management of this play

c) Relevant academic experience

c1) Internships

- 2020 – 2021 Individual research internship, part of University of Amsterdam’s Honoursprogramme, at the ERC Starting Grant Project: ‘Skilled Intentionality for ‘Higher’ Embodied Cognition: Joining forces with a field of affordances in flux’. Project funded to Dr. Erik Rietveld

2018 – 2019 Internship at magazine *Theatermaker* and *Theaterkrant.nl*

c2) International activities

- 2021 – 2023 Organization of the international conference “The Reevaluation of Subjectivity in Contemporary Continental Philosophy”, 9-10 February 2023, Faculty Club Huize Heyendaal, RU Nijmegen
- 2022 Copenhagen Summer School in Phenomenology and Philosophy of Mind, University of Copenhagen, Denmark

c3) Committees

- 2022 Committee member (BAC), promotion Arjen Kleinherenbrink to UHD2, Radboud University
- 2019 Committee member recruitment Artistic Director Production and Stage Management, Amsterdam University of the Arts

c4) Teaching

- 2023 Seminar lecturer “Philosophy of Mind, Brain and Behaviour” (B2, Psychology), Radboud University
- 2023 Student-assistant “Metaphysics and Philosophical Anthropology: New Ontologies for Mutable Worlds” (B1, PPS), Radboud University
- 2022 Seminar lecturer “Philosophy of Business Administration” (B1, Economics and Business Administration), Radboud University

c5) Conference Lectures

- 02-12-2022 Lecture Nijmegen-Groningen Colloquium in the History of Philosophy: “The Evolutionary Foundation of William James’s World of Pure Experience”, Radboud University and University of Groningen

03-11-2022 Lecture Annual Moving Humanities Conference:
“Delegitimizing Meillassoux’s Argument for
Anthropocentrism against Husserl’s Phenomenology”,
Radboud University and University of Groningen

c6) Workshops

2023 Self-Identity in High Modern Age, OZSW and University of
Amsterdam
2022 The History of Philosophy and the Sciences, OZSW and
University of Groningen
2021 Body, Self and Community: Perspectives from
Phenomenology and Embodied Cognitive Science, KNAW
and University of Amsterdam
2021 OZSW Winter School, Utrecht University

d) Other relevant positions

2020 – 2021 Editor-in-Chief, Babel Magazine of the Humanities,
University of Amsterdam
2019 – 2020 Editorial Assistant, Berghauser Pont Mediagroup
2014 – 2018 Creative Producer for various theatre companies, such as
The Dutch National Opera and Ballet and De Warme Winkel.

e) Language competence: Dutch (native), English (C2), German (B2), French
(B1)

f) Output

2020 – 2022: Articles in (online-)magazines on philosophy, including:

Kampen, L. (2022, November 28). De moderne mens eet geen appel, maar een bron
van vitamine C. *Bij Nader Inzien*, [https://bijnaderinzien.com/2022/11/28/
de-moderne-mens-eet-geen-appel-maar-een-bron-van-vitamine-c/](https://bijnaderinzien.com/2022/11/28/de-moderne-mens-eet-geen-appel-maar-een-bron-van-vitamine-c/).

- Kampen, L. (2021, June). Maurice Merleau-Ponty en het lichamelijk perspectief. *Babel Magazine*, 10 (1), 4 – 5.
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- Kampen, L. (2019, March). Het nagesprek als filosofische oefening. *Theatermaker*, 3 (1), 54 – 56.

2018 – 2019: Articles for the online magazine *Theaterkrant* on inclusivity, including:

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