living things are, indeed, divided into natural kinds, it is not silly to classify terms such as "cat" as simple, lexical items, to be contrasted with phrasal items such as "the cat on the mat." Moreover, once a distinction has been made between simple but complex concepts and concepts that are simple in the sense of being primitive and not complex, one can more easily understand the difference between the Aristotelian-scholastic and the Lockean account of such concepts as "cat." For Locke, such a concept is not merely complex; it arises out of more primitive concepts that are epistemologically prior, and it is formed by composition in accordance with rules.

Sometimes the absence of useful philosophical distinctions seems to be related to a misunderstanding of the texts. For instance, in her discussion of what words signify (16–17, 93), Dawson castigates logicians for carelessly switching between two accounts of the relation between words and things, a binary account and a standard account that interposes ideas between words and things. However, the sources she cites for the so-called binary account seem to be concerned only with the logical distinction between use and mention. We can talk about the word "man," saying that it is a one-syllable English noun, or we can use the word "man," saying that man is an animal. The standard account, whereby words signify ideas, which in turn represent things, presupposes that we are considering words as used rather than mentioned.

The book is very nicely produced, with footnotes (sometimes amounting to mini-articles) rather than endnotes, and it has a well-constructed index. I noted only a few minor typographical errors. The one major irritant was Dawson's failure to use the standard method of referring to Aristotle's works by Bekker numbers. Instead, the reader is given the impossible task of checking page references in a number of different translations. While the reader should be cautious about some of the details, Dawson's book is, nonetheless, an exciting and important contribution to the literature on early-modern philosophy in general and on Locke in particular.

–E. Jennifer Ashworth

PLURALISM'S FORGOTTEN FATHER

Kennan Ferguson: *William James: Politics in the Pluriverse* (Lanham, Maryland: Rowman and Littlefield, 2007. Pp. xxviii, 110. $24.95, paper.)

doi:10.1017/S0034670508000624

William James's wide-ranging intellectual output included philosophy (*Pragmatism* and *The Will to Believe*), sociology (*The Varieties of Religious Experience*), and psychology (*Principles of Psychology*), but he never wrote a book on political philosophy. In fact, James rarely wrote about political

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matters even in passing or addressed groups on political topics. James's best biographers, such as Ralph Barton Perry, Gerald Myers, and Robert Richardson, have paid little attention to James's forays into the political discussions of his day. And yet, according to Kennan Ferguson's *William James: Politics in the Pluriverse*, politics and ethics may be the underling threads that tie James's writings together and provide the greatest lasting value.

Ferguson's political interpretation of James's extensive writing is an act of considerable boldness since there is much work to be done interpreting and extrapolating James's many works, mining the small body of secondary literature on his politics, and digging through the large body of literature on everything else that James wrote. While a few others have considered the political implications of James's work—and he readily admits in his acknowledgments that he owes an intellectual debt to George Cotkin's *William James: Public Philosopher* (University of Illinois Press, 1989) and Joshua I. Miller's *Democratic Temperament* (University Press of Kansas, 1997)—Ferguson's unique contribution is that he is the first to reflect deeply and cogently on the political implications of James's idea of pluralism, an idea that James has never received proper credit for having innovated. Ferguson's book deserves our attention if for no other reason than that he makes an important and brave contribution to this lacuna in the James literature and the history of that term.

Ferguson makes a robust case that reading James for political insight matters because James's pluralism could invigorate our contemporary and impoverished understanding of political pluralism. His analysis starts with James's *A Pluralistic Universe* in which James rejects the idea of a "universe" and what he called "idealized monadism," proposing instead a "pluriverse," a world that will "ultimately never be an all-form at all, that the substance of reality may never get entirely collected, that some of it may remain outside of the largest combination of it ever made"(William James, *A Pluralistic Universe*, Harvard University Press, 1975, p. 20). When we sum up our scientific calculations, linguistic descriptions, and philosophical systems that seek to "capture" given reality, there will always be a remainder, things that we cannot account for in our best theories, things that we do not or cannot understand, things that are "in addition to" every system or conception that we could come up with to encompass it. As a result of this metaphysic of pluralism, James believed that we should embrace diversity because no single perspective on the world could completely capture the "truth of the matter," but every individual viewpoint has intrinsic worth because it carries some unique and irreplaceable part of that truth.

Not only does James's pluralism caution us against ontological certainty and philosophical smugness, it also rejects totalizing systems, be they philosophical or political. James's pluralism directs us away from the hubris, utopianism, and state centralization in our political life and toward an attitude of greater humility about politics' potentials, tolerance for difference, and a rejection of coercive and one-size-fits-all solutions to political problems. To

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make his point, Ferguson describes James's reaction to the Chautauqua utopian community in western New York State. James ultimately found his visit to this community disappointing because, having seen utopian perfection realized, there was little room left for human striving and its characteristic frictions.

According to Ferguson, James's version of political pluralism values on-going difference and frictions within a political system because these spur the social order to constantly and perpetually grow and improve. In short, while a utopia is a nice place to visit, he would not want to live there. James's ideally pluralistic society is eternally melioristic, endlessly striving and struggling toward something better and allergic to "final solutions" and arguments for "the end of history."

We should have listened to James. The history of the twentieth century provides ample evidence of the dangers of universalistic solutions by totalitarian regimes, but Ferguson believes that even liberalism's commitment to pluralism in the twentieth century needs revision. Chapter 2 provides a useful tour through what he calls the "Descent of Pluralism," which documents the substantial divergence from James's original understanding of it. Followers of James, such as Harold Laski, J.N. Figgis, and G.D.H. Cole, ended up entirely politicizing pluralism as they sought merely better representation of nonstate interests within a statist model of government. Ferguson believes that the pluralism of Robert Dahl and David Truman, while seeming to embrace true pluralism with their focus on competing interests, parties, and pressure groups, in the end reduces pluralism to a "formal and institutional instrument," which makes the aim of the state "the safekeeping of political identities by providing a guarded structure to minimize conflict." For them and the political scientists that followed them, the recognition of pluralism becomes an occasion for achieving social equilibrium, not celebrating difference.

Ferguson provides some further examples of James's application of his pluralism to politics in his writings against lynching, his opposition to a centralized medical authority, and his pacifism, all of which demonstrate James's consistent opposition to the use of coercive political power to impose universalistic solutions. His most extended interpretation of Jamesian pluralism in chapter 3 addresses the principle of sovereignty and American involvement in the Philippines. It was James's view that "the right of people to determine their own destiny was morally crucial" (40). But unlike Wilson's ideology of self-determination, James defended national sovereignty as a means of increasing the fruitful dissimilarity among nations. Ferguson's interpretation of James's anti-imperialism serves as a subtle critique of current U.S. policy in Iraq, but it is never made quite explicit. Our attempts to foster democracy, encourage free-market capitalism, and cultivate a pro-American government would seem to fail James's pluralistic foreign policy standard, since it was the spread of homogeneity itself as much as military imposition that offended James's pluralistic sensibilities in the Philippines case.

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Political theorists are apt to skim chapters 4 and 5 where Ferguson pays considerable attention to the current rift in philosophy between the analytical and Continental traditions. These chapters distract somewhat from the overall political thesis even though they provide philosophical examples of the pluralist ethic. Ferguson believes that the fruitful philosophical collaboration of the American James and the French philosopher Herni Bergson—whose writing James said "has made me bold" and provoked him to write *A Pluralistic Universe*—points a way toward a proper philosophical appreciation of our "pluriverse," which requires the cooperative efforts of analytical philosophers and existentialists, empiricists and rationalists, realists and idealists. Ferguson starts what is surely a provocative argument of interest to philosophers, suggesting that the future of philosophy may require going back to thinkers such as James and Bergson who were not infected by either the analytical or the linguistic turn in philosophy and who blazed interesting philosophical paths that should be reconsidered. However, this project is for another book and a different audience.

It may well be the lasting contribution of this book to encourage contemporary liberalism to reconnect itself to the authentic version of pluralism of its forgotten father, William James. Ferguson has given this conversation a strong start that others will surely be inspired to continue.

–Jason Boffetti

THE TENSION OF EXISTENCE

Jeffrey C. Herndon: *Eric Voegelin and the Problem of Christian Political Order* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2007. Pp. xiii, 189. $39.95.)

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Throughout Eric Voegelin's work runs the constant theme of the "tension of existence"—of man's precarious position between beast and god, human and divine. The danger, as Voegelin perceives it, is that human beings are tempted to run from this tension, resolving it by taking refuge in ideology or immanentist projects of various kinds. Many, however, solve the tension in a different way, declaring themselves members of a "city of God," which they perceive as purer and more sincerely religious than the institutional church. This impulse toward perfectionism, Voegelin believes, has led to the current crisis of modernity.

Jeffrey C. Herndon's new book, *Eric Voegelin and the Problem of Christian Political Order*, sets out the details of this theory, with attention to both the psychological and historical evidence that Voegelin provides in support of it. His analysis is noteworthy because it addresses directly the controversy about Voegelin and Christianity, with the added benefit of having considered

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