sciousness as it emerges from tactile and visual experience. This is equally true of the experience of the individual unities of paintings and places, as well as of the total physical and visual "impression" of complex and complete Italy itself. Henry manifests this sense of the picturesque in a letter to William from Rome. He writes that he has realized for the first time what it is. It is "simply the presentation of a picture, self-informed and complete."

The work of both William and Henry was joined by close but different ties to Italy. Pragmatism enjoyed a significant influence in Italy. William, as well, admired Papini's description of it as a method being "like a corridor in a hotel, from which a hundred doors open into a hundred chambers," all with their own actualities and possibilities. For Henry, as Lombardo affirms, the reality of Italy lay in the drama of the artist, which ultimately lay in the drama, destiny and truth of the human condition. Italy was sunny but cast the shadow of darkness. It was bright but dank with the tide of time. It held forth the bitter-sweet taste of the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge. Jamesian art was a representation of life and beauty and joy -- often of Italy -- but always in the shadow, the human shadow, of sorrow, mystery and death. It is no wonder then that brother Henry so appreciated William's appropriate inscription on his sister Alice's urn. It was a line from Dante: "ed essa da martiro e da essilio venne a questa pace" (from martyrdom and exile she came to this peace).

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William James, Public Philosopher, by George Cotkin. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1990. xii+218. $32.50.

Cotkin's volume is a vibrant, valuable study of James the man and thinker, America's public philosopher, par excellence.

The impetus behind this book, in addition to seeking to bathe itself and its reader in the warm light of James's personality and ideas, is to return James to the context of his life and time . . . . This book is an avowedly contextualist reading of James and his philosophy. It is predicated on the assumption that the personal, philosophical, and historical are emphatically connected. (2)

Cotkin's James is a late nineteenth-century thinker who responded to an agenda of American problems and issues:

I argue that James's life and thought may be fully comprehended, and the grand contours of this great thinker heartily embraced, by demonstrating the cen-
trality of his role as public philosopher. To be a public philosopher meant accepting responsibility for addressing public problems and for applying insights gained from one’s technical work to public issues; James did this during the years of his greatest success and acclaim, from 1890 until his death in 1910. (4)

Cotkin sees public and philosophy as mutually reinforcing. That is, James philosophized to solve pressing (and practical) problems and, in turn, public issues and concerns influenced his philosophy. The latter claim is not persuasively handled with reference to James's "professional" philosophy. Essays in Radical Empiricism and A Pluralistic Universe and Some Problems in Philosophy are not treated and Cotkin's examination of Pragmatism is deficient. On this last point, see the review by Ignas Skrupskelis in the Peirce Society Transactions 27 (1991): 115-120. While I endorse Skrupskelis's view that Cotkin is less convincing (and competent) in his dealing with James's "professional" works—Skrupskelis is especially critical of Cotkin's final chapter, "The Politics of Pragmatism"—Cotkin's book deserves high marks and a wide readership for its sympathetic understanding and convincing assessment of James as a leading spokesman for nineteenth-century America.

Cotkin's thesis is parallel to and an extension of the view presented in Howard M. Feinstein's biography Becoming William James. James was not the only wealthy, bright young man afflicted with vocational (and personal) paralysis. Cotkin argues that "a slowness to mature and an inability to find the correct vocation for one's energies and proclivities were the generation's common complaints" (25). James and his confreres were not only guilty about their Civil "war-time bench-sitting (30)," they were beset with philosophical and religious doubts and they "enjoyed " too many vocational choices. As a result they suffered from neurasthenia—the nineteenth-century's equivalent of today's yuppies's "chronic fatigue syndrome." For James's generation Hamlet's indecision dramatized the philosophical, emotional, physical and spiritual torpor of their lives. Accordingly, Cotkin's third chapter, "From Hamlet to Habit" diagnoses the symptoms of James's disease and eventual breakdown, and his fifth, "The Discourse of Heroism" explores James's mind (and body) cures: will to believe, "energizing belief in God (89)", formation of robust habits and heroism.

Cotkin's book sparkles with James's personality, his charisma, his vigor and his moral seriousness. Life was, for James, earnest; its challenges real and its rewards satisfying. James offered real actions and important outcomes in place of the tea cup tragedies described in the best selling novels of his brother Henry and a family friend, William Dean Howells. Naturalist Frank Norris hooted at "the real Realism" of Henry James and Howells as he mocked their fixation with
the smaller details of everyday life, things that are likely to happen between lunch and supper, small passions, restricted emotions, dramas of the reception-room, tragedies of an afternoon call, crises involving cups of tea. ("Zola as a Romantic Writer," Frank Norris: Novels and Essays, New York: Library of America, 1986, pg. 1106)

Instead, James's public philosophy offered manly and morally valuable discourses. "James marshaled his considerable powers of evocation, explication and exhortation to convert those Americans whose 'bogey was dessication' [sic]--individuals caught in the desert of doubt, unable to think or act in religious and moral terms" (78).

James's melioristic philosophy offered no guarantees but it made a convincing (and appealing) case that human lives involved significant triumphs along with painful losses, converted opportunities as well as missed chances. As Cotkin repeatedly and convincingly documents how James made life meaningful and that James anodyne to "the Hamletian state of passivity (99)" in the face of chaos and the abyss, on the one hand, and determinism and absolutes, on the other, was very effective. His readers--more significantly and importantly for James, his listeners--responded to his philosophy of energy and heroism with the result that they were able to see themselves as "empowered individual[s]" (103).

Cotkin's strong suit is cultural history. That vantage allowed him to paint a penetrating and persuasive portrait of James as a man of his times. This alone makes this book valuable and important; moreover Cotkin gives needed emphasis and attention to James's popular, public lectures. Cotkin notes that "On a Certain Blindness in Human Beings" was one of James's favorites. James, persuaded as he was of the difficulty of appreciating another's values and visions, would have recognized himself in Cotkin's portrait. He would have been especially delighted and enthused to see his popular philosophy given such prominence. Public Philosopher is, as Cotkin's convincingly argues, an accurate and important description of William James.

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Colapietro's perspective of the Peircean self provides scholars with two important contributions. First, the book is