Philosophy and American Thought

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Education

Penn State Ph.D., with a Ph.D. Minor in Science, Technology, and Society

Notable Positions

Secretary, SAAP
Fellow (Past President), Josiah Royce Society

Research

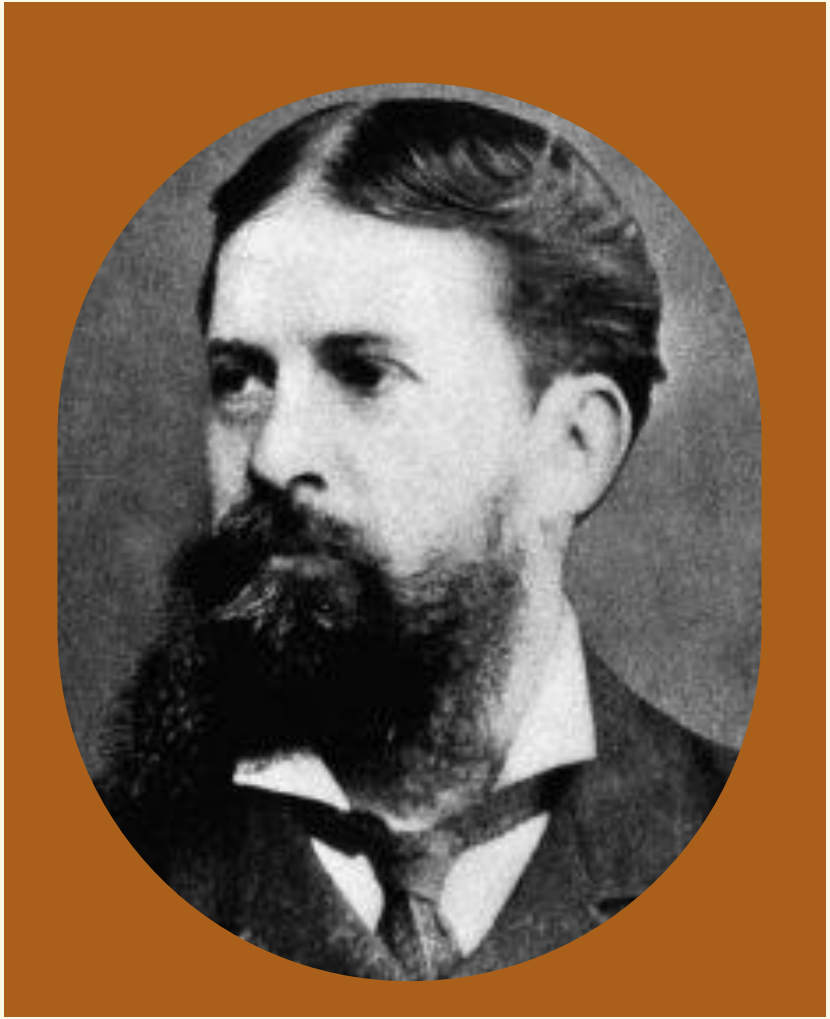
Disability, History of Philosophy, Philosophy of Science and Technology

Courses

Environmental Ethics
19th Century Philosophy
Philosophy of the Body

Classical American Pragmatists

Science and philosophy seem to have been changed in their cradles. For it is not knowing, but the love of learning, that characterizes the scientific man; while the "philosopher" is a man with a system which he thinks embodies all that is best worth knowing. (CP 1.44)

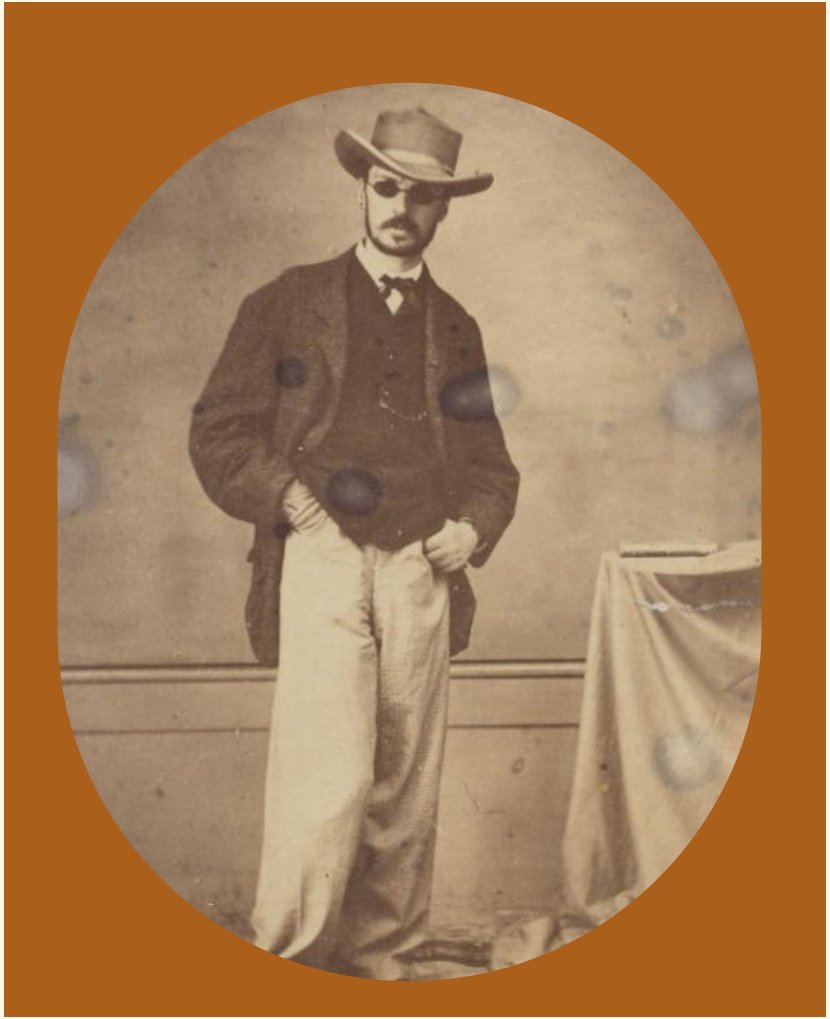


“”

Consider what effects, which might conceivably have practical bearings, we conceive the object of our conception to have. Then, our conception of these effects is the whole of our conception of the object.

“How to Make Our Ideas Clear” (1878)

Charles Sanders Peirce (1839-1914)

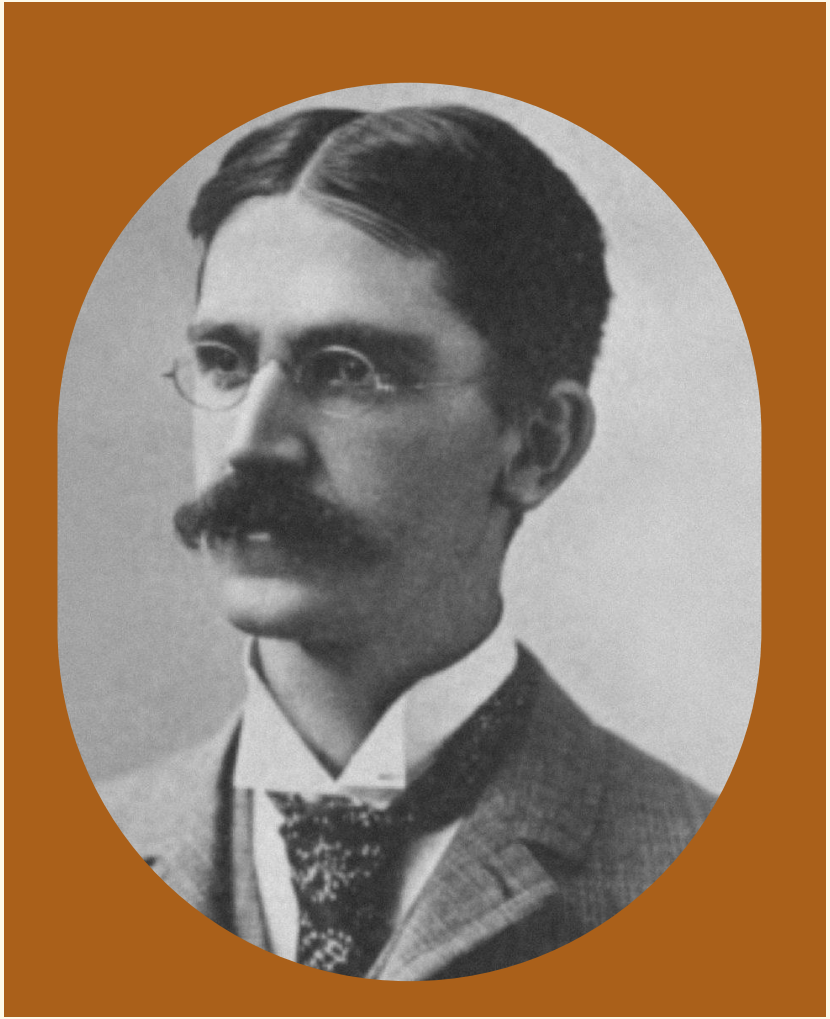


“”

"Grant an idea or belief to be true," it says, "what concrete difference will its being true make in any one's actual life? How will the truth be realized? What experiences will be different from those which would obtain if the belief were false? What, in short, is the truth's cash-value in experiential terms?”

Pragmatism (1907)

William James (1842-1910)



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Democracy is a way of life controlled by a working faith in the possibilities of human nature. . . . This faith may be enacted in statutes, but it is only on paper unless it is put in force in the attitudes which human beings display to one another in all the incidents and relations of daily life.

“Creative Democracy--The Task Before Us” (1939)

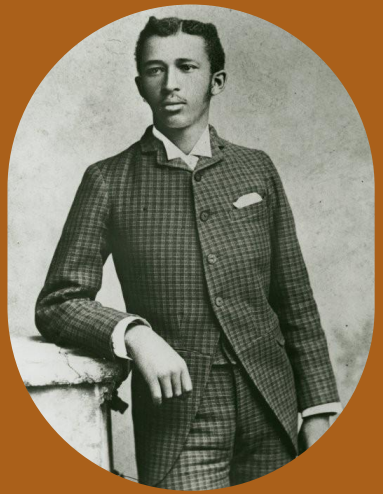
John Dewey (1859-1952)

Jane Addams

1860-1935

W.E.B. Du Bois

1868-1963

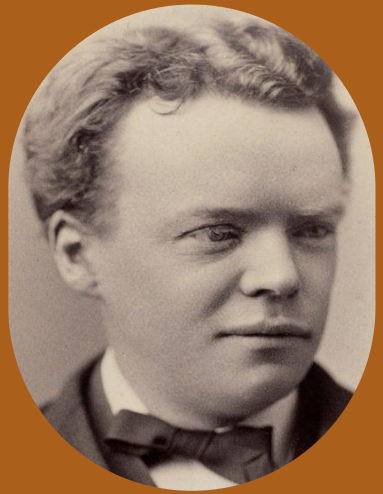


Alain Locke

1885-1954

Josiah Royce

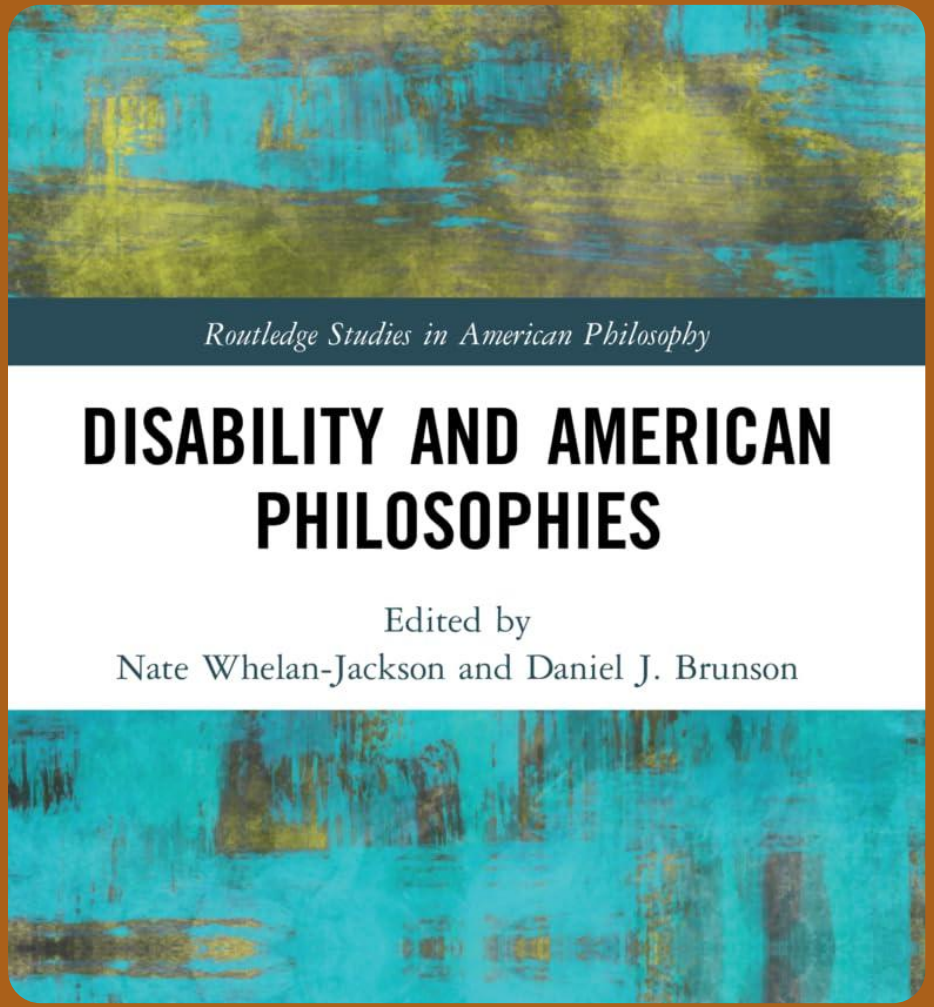
1855-1916



Pragmatism and Neurodiversity

It would probably astound each of us beyond measure to be let into his neighbor's mind and find how different the scenery there was from that in his own.
-James, *Principles of Psychology* (1890)

Disability and American Philosophies



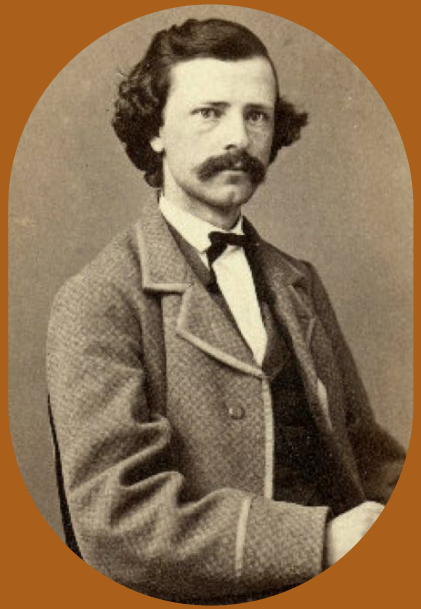
Principles of Psychology (1890)

Until very recent years it was supposed by all philosophers that there was a typical human mind which all individual minds were alike, and that propositions of universal validity could be laid down about such faculties as ‘the Imagination.’ Lately, however, a mass of revelations have poured in which make us see how false a view this is. There are imaginations, not ‘the Imagination,’ and they must be studied in detail.

Disabled Testimony

Melville Ballard (1839-1912)

Laura Bridgman (1829-1889)



Principles of Psychology (1890)

On the other hand, a deaf and dumb man can weave his tactile and visual images into a system of thought quite as effective and rational as that of a word-user. **The question whether thought is possible without language has been a favorite topic of discussion among philosophers.** Some interesting reminiscences of his childhood by Mr. Ballard, a deaf-mute instructor in the National College at Washington, show it to be perfectly possible.

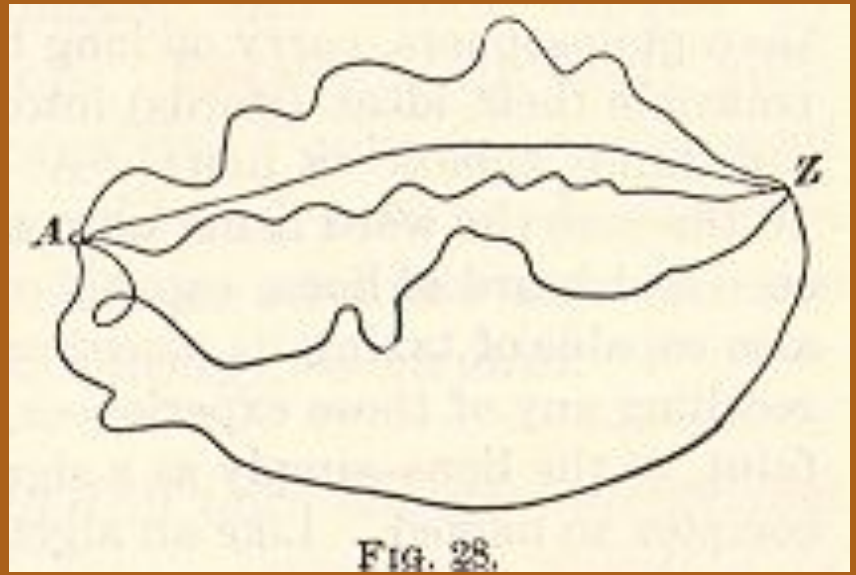
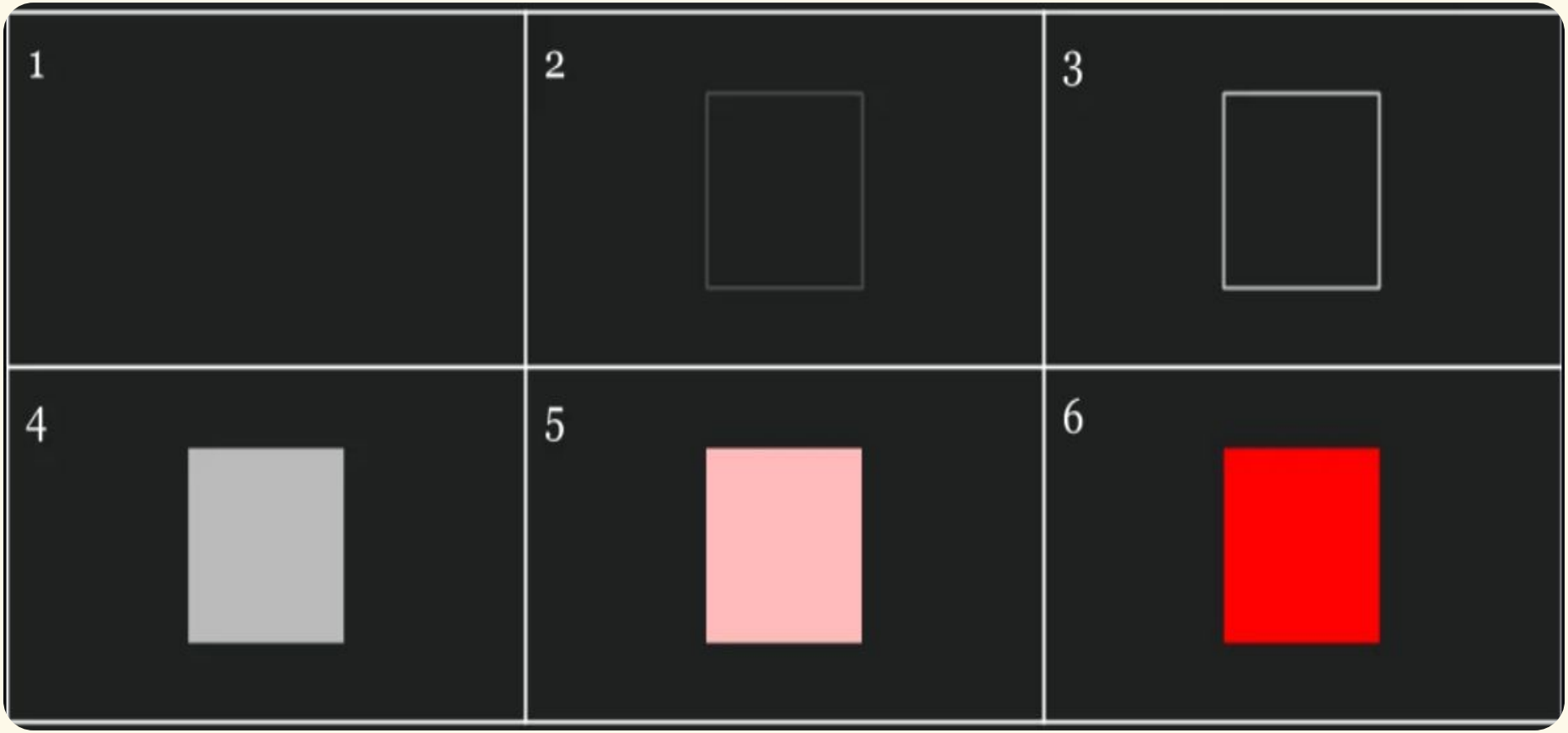


Fig. 28.

Let A be some experience from which a number of thinkers start. Let Z be the practical conclusion rationally inferrible from it. One gets to the conclusion by one line, another by another; one follows a course of English, another of German...With one, visual images predominate; with another, tactile....But when the penultimate terms of all the trains, however differing *inter se*, finally shoot into the same conclusion, we say and rightly say, that **all the thinkers have had substantially the same thought.**

- James, *Principles of Psychology*

Close Your Eyes and Imagine a Red Square



Aphantasia Scale

Our ideas or images of past sensible experiences may then be either distinct and adequate or dim, blurred, and incomplete. **It is likely that the different degrees in which different men are able to make them sharp and complete has had something to do with keeping up such philosophic disputes as that of Berkeley with Locke over abstract ideas.**

William James, *Principles of Psychology* (1890)