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Author: Colella, E. Paul
Title: Seeking the Center of Truth's Forest: William James in California, 1898
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Abstract: As his first public statement of pragmatism, 'Philosophical Conceptions & Practical Results' occupies a central place among James' works. This paper examines a diverse stream of sources that flowed through James' mind during the months leading up to its August 1898 delivery in California. A quarrel with Peirce over the nature of philosophy, an invitation to deliver the Gifford Lectures in Scotland, America's war with Spain, and his own mystical experience in the Adirondack twilight coalesced into this remarkable statement that announced the entry of America's distinctive voice into the wider philosophical conversations of Europe. More than merely tracing sources, the paper uses them to foreground the broad scope of concern that pragmatism possesses as these disparate founts of influence are fused in a lecture remarkable for its philosophical content, self conscious awareness of its distinctively American character, and its metaphorically rich style.

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