In the discussion of “Moral Philosopher” I have mentioned the ethical considerations and the considerations relevant for ethics featuring other texts. This brings us to consider what kind of relationship runs between such writings. Most commentators depict this relationship in foundational terms: “Moral Philosopher” would contain James’s moral theory that he then applied, more or less successfully and consistently, to the resolutions of various ethical issues he tackles in the other writings. Having criticized the major premise of this inference – that is the presence of a moral theory in “Moral Philosopher” – I consequently resist its conclusion about the foundational character of the relationship with the other moral writings. If, as I have tried to show, there are grounds to think that “Moral Philosopher” contains no moral theory, then there would be no theoretical machinery James could have put to work in his other writings. As I stated in the first chapter, we should be rather drawing a non-foundational connection between these texts, based on a certain insistence on some themes that he tackled from different angles and with different intensities.

A more promising approach would thus be to characterize the difference between “Moral Philosopher” and the other texts as a division of tasks. We can in fact read the former as containing the rough guidelines and expressing the main concerns that would help us to understand what is going on in the latter: how to read the moral ruminations and concerns spreading in James’s writings. The relationship would hence be one of contiguity within what I have claimed to be the therapeutic and transformative theme informing James’s hortatory ethical register – and not, to be sure, a sheer application or refinement of some moral principles allegedly stated in the former text.
In the previous chapters I started to survey the nature of these underlying themes constituting the distinctive metaphilosophical *leitmotiv* of his investigations as well as James’s distinctive way of approaching them. What in the first chapter I labeled as the “critical theme” informing the dialectic of “Moral Philosopher,” characterized as anti-theoretical and experimental, warns us from those attempts and temptations to reduce ethics to the elaboration of a morality system of norms and rules standing on their feet independently from the active and steadfast exercise of our moral sensibilities. This theme is explored in original ways in such later texts as “On A Certain Blindness In Human Beings” and “What Makes a Life Significant,” in which James shows the difficulties we encounter when we alienate our expressive capacities and our moral sensibility to an impersonal gaze hiding ourselves from humanity (our own as well as that of the other individuals), jeopardizing in this way the very possibility of a genuine participation in the moral life. The goal of this therapeutic analysis is that of freeing ourselves from such inclinations and superstitious views by means of a transformative process that aims at the (re-)appreciation of our personal contribution to moral reflection itself.

The positive theme suggested by this change of emphasis as well of the direction of ethics that I have characterized, after James, as hortatory, discloses a way of rethinking moral reflection along non-foundational lines. Ethics is hortatory in the measure in which it suggests ways of rethinking the very relationship of moral reflection with an examined moral life.

This theme is explored by James in PP and in TT, in which our author presents the care for, and work on, the various aspects of our interiority as activities directly relevant for the articulation of a moral philosophy attentive and respectful of the various shades and overtones of the moral life. In his writings on psychology James elaborates a picture of the formation and care of the self that represents one of the most interesting instances and expression of his radical conception of ethical reflection. The therapeutic and transformative register of this hortatory conception has furthermore various consequences in the way we portray the various attitudes we might assume toward the world and our fellow inhabitants.

This motif will be reprised and developed in P and MT, in which James is interested in bringing our attention to the varieties of relationships that we might entertain with the truths we live by at the heart of our processes of experiencing and ways of world-making. In these writings James examines in depth the theme of the practical involvement