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TWENTIETH-CENTURY PHILOSOPHY OF RELIGION

EDITED BY GRAHAM OPPY AND N. N. TRAKAKIS

THE HISTORY OF WESTERN PHILOSOPHY OF RELIGION

**TWENTIETH-CENTURY
PHILOSOPHY OF RELIGION**

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WESTERN PHILOSOPHY OF RELIGION

VOLUME 1: ANCIENT PHILOSOPHY OF RELIGION

VOLUME 2: MEDIEVAL PHILOSOPHY OF RELIGION

VOLUME 3: EARLY MODERN PHILOSOPHY OF RELIGION

VOLUME 4: NINETEENTH-CENTURY PHILOSOPHY OF RELIGION

VOLUME 5: TWENTIETH-CENTURY PHILOSOPHY OF RELIGION

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VOLUME 5

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EDITORIAL INTRODUCTION

Bertrand Russell's *History of Western Philosophy* (1946; hereafter *History*) provides a model for *some* of the significant features of the present work. Like Russell's more general history, our history of Western philosophy of religion consists principally of chapters devoted to the works of individual thinkers, selected because of their "considerable importance". Of course, we do not claim to have provided coverage of all of those who have made important contributions to Western philosophy of religion. However, we think that anyone who has made a significant contribution to Western philosophy of religion has either seriously engaged with the works of philosophers who are featured in this work, or has produced work that has been a focus of serious engagement for philosophers who are featured in this work.

Like Russell, we have aimed for contributions that show how the philosophy of religion developed by a given thinker is related to that thinker's life, and that trace out connections between the views developed by a given philosopher and the views of their predecessors, contemporaries and successors. While our primary aim is to provide an account of the ideas, concepts, claims and arguments developed by each of the philosophers under consideration, we think – with Russell – that this aim is unlikely to be achieved in a work in which "each philosopher appears as in a vacuum".

Again like Russell, we have only selected philosophers or religious writers who belong to, or have exerted a significant impact on, the intellectual tradition of the West (i.e. western Europe and the Anglo-American world). We realize that this selection criterion alone excludes from our work a number of important thinkers and religious groups or traditions, such as: Asian philosophers of religion, particularly those representing such religions as Hinduism, Buddhism, Confucianism and Taoism; African philosophers of religion; and individuals, texts and traditions emanating from indigenous religions, such as those found in the native populations of Australia and the Pacific Islands. Clearly, the non-Western world has produced thinkers who have made important, and often overlooked, contributions

to the philosophy of religion. We have decided, however, not to include any entries on these thinkers, and our decision is based primarily on the (admittedly not incontestable) view that the Asian, African and indigenous philosophical and religious traditions have not had a great impact on the main historical narrative of the West. It would therefore have been difficult to integrate the various non-Western thinkers into the five-volume structure of the present work. The best way to redress this omission, in our view, is to produce a separate multi-volume work that would be dedicated to the history of non-Western philosophy of religion, a project that we invite others to take up.

Where we have departed most significantly from Russell is that our work has been written by a multitude of contributors, whereas Russell's work was the product of just one person. In the preface to his *History*, Russell claimed that:

There is ... something lost when many authors co-operate. If there is any unity in the movement of history, if there is any intimate relation between what goes before and what comes later, it is necessary, for setting this forth, that earlier and later periods should be synthesized in a single mind. (1946: 5)

We think that Russell exaggerates the difficulties in, and underestimates the benefits of, having a multitude of expert contributors. On the one hand, someone who is an expert on the work of a given philosopher is bound to have expert knowledge of the relation between the work of that philosopher, what goes before and what comes after. On the other hand, and as Russell himself acknowledged, it is impossible for one person to have the expertise of a specialist across such a wide field. (Indeed, while Russell's *History* is admirable for its conception and scope, there is no doubt that it is far from a model for good historical scholarship.)

Of course, Russell's worry about a multiplicity of authors does recur at the editorial level: the editors of this work have no particular claim to expertise concerning any of the philosophers who are featured in the work. In order to alleviate this problem, we invited all of the contributors to read drafts of neighbouring contributions, acting on the assumption that someone who is an expert on a particular philosopher is likely to have reasonably good knowledge of contemporaries and near contemporaries of that philosopher. Moreover, each of the five volumes comes with an expert introduction, written by someone who is much better placed than we are to survey the time period covered in the given volume.

Obviously enough, it is also the case that the present work does not have the kind of narrative unity that is possessed by Russell's work. Our work juxtaposes contributions from experts who make very different theoretical assumptions, and who belong to diverse philosophical schools and traditions. Again, it seems to us that this represents an advantage: there are many different contemporary approaches to philosophy of religion, and each of these approaches suggests a different view about the preceding history. Even if there is "unity in the movement

of history”, it is clear that there is considerable disagreement about the precise nature of that unity.

Although our work is divided into five volumes – and despite the fact that we have given labels to each of these volumes – we attach no particular significance to the way in which philosophers are collected together by these volumes. The order of the chapters is determined by the dates of birth of the philosophers who are the principal subjects of those chapters. While it would not be a task for a single evening, we do think that it should be possible to read the five volumes as a single, continuous work.

* * *

Collectively, our primary debt is to the 109 people who agreed to join with us in writing the material that appears in this work. We are indebted also to Tristan Palmer, who oversaw the project on behalf of Acumen. Tristan initially searched for someone prepared to take on the task of editing a single-volume history of Western philosophy of religion, and was actively involved in the shaping of the final project. He also provided invaluable advice on the full range of editorial questions that arise in a project on this scale. Thanks, too, to the copy-editors and others at Acumen, especially Kate Williams, who played a role in the completion of this project, and to the anonymous reviewers who provided many helpful comments. We are grateful to Karen Gillen for proofreading and indexing all five volumes, and to the Helen McPherson Smith Trust, which provided financial support for this project. We also acknowledge our debt to Monash University, and to our colleagues in the School of Philosophy and Bioethics. Special thanks to Dirk Baltzly for his suggestions about potential contributors to the volume on ancient Western philosophy of religion and for his editorial help with the chapter on Pythagoras.

Apart from these collective debts, Graham Oppy acknowledges personal debts to friends and family, especially to Camille, Gilbert, Calvin and Alfie. N. N. Trakakis is also grateful for the support of family and friends while working on this project, which he dedicates to his nephew and niece, Nicholas and Adrianna Trakakis: my prayer is that you will come to share the love of wisdom cultivated by the great figures in these volumes.

Graham Oppy
N. N. Trakakis

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1

TWENTIETH-CENTURY PHILOSOPHY OF RELIGION: AN INTRODUCTION

Charles Taliaferro

Offering an overview of twentieth-century philosophy of religion is as daunting as offering a unified narrative of twentieth-century art. There is simply too much turbulence and diversity to make for any neat portrait. But one general observation seems secure: philosophical reflection on religion has formed a major, vibrant part of some of the best philosophy in the past century. We now have a virtual library of a hundred years of first-rate, diverse philosophy of religion. At the close of the century there are more societies, institutions, journals, conferences and publishing houses dedicated to philosophy of religion than any other area of philosophical enquiry. The enduring appeal of philosophy of religion may be seen in the fact that many prestigious twentieth-century philosophers whose names are not featured with their own chapter in this volume nonetheless did some work on the philosophy of religion. Selecting figures from the second-half of the twentieth century, Michael Dummett, Robert Nozick, Hilary Putnam and John Rawls are representative of those whose main work is remote from mainstream philosophy of religion, but who nonetheless contributed in different ways to philosophical reflection on God, revelation, the theistic problem of evil, mystical experience and the rationality of religious belief.

There are three sections in what follows. The first takes up what I suggest is the largest theme in twentieth-century philosophy of religion, the second takes up a greater breadth of projects and the third comments on one lesson we might learn from the historical study in this volume.

GODS AND GIANTS

One way to begin building up a picture of twentieth-century philosophy of religion is to invoke Plato's famous depiction of philosophy as a battle between the gods and the giants. In the *Sophist* Plato depicts the gods as trying to account for the world in terms of higher, incorporeal forms, while the giants seek to privilege

terrestrial, material reality. If we stretch this metaphor somewhat and depict the gods as idealists and theists and the giants as naturalists, a great deal of twentieth-century philosophy of religion may be seen as taken up in this massive, perhaps perennial, struggle.

The twentieth century in the Anglophone world began with the gods having a modest edge. F. H. Bradley and J. M. E. McTaggart propounded sophisticated idealist systems that were highly influential in philosophy of religion. While McTaggart was an atheist, he defended the view that souls are immortal, destined for a community of love. Bradley's work encouraged monist and theistic models of the divine. Bernard Bosanquet and Andrew Seth Pringle-Patterson also advanced an idealist foundation for religious belief. The assault on idealism by G. E. Moore and especially by Bertrand Russell may be seen as (in part) a movement to more thoroughly secularize the projects of philosophy. In his classic early paper, "The Refutation of Idealism" (1903), Moore explicitly sees himself as refuting a system of philosophy that characterizes reality as spiritual. Neither Moore nor Russell were thoroughgoing lifelong naturalists (indeed, at times both presented powerful arguments against naturalism), but they did tip the scales ever so slightly toward the giants.

Of those philosophers who feature in their own chapters here, the following may be seen as supporting theism, idealism or a religious understanding of the divine that goes beyond secular naturalism: William James, Henri Bergson, Alfred North Whitehead and Charles Hartshorne, Max Scheler, Martin Buber, Jacques Maritain, Karl Jaspers, Karl Barth, William P. Alston, Alvin Plantinga and Richard Swinburne. Others in the camp who flourished in the mid twentieth century include James Baillie, Nikolai Berdyaev, C. A. Campbell, A. C. Ewing, H. H. Farmer, Austin Farrer, Etienne Gilson, C. E. M. Joad, E. L. Mascall, H. H. Price, Hastings Rashdall, William Sorley, John Smith, A. E. Taylor, William Temple and F. R. Tennant. In the last quarter of the twentieth century, philosophical advocates of theism are abundant. The following are representative in addition to Plantinga, Alston and Swinburne: Marilyn McCord Adams, Robert Merrihew Adams, William Lane Craig, Alan Donagan, William Hasker, Brian Hebblethwaite, Norman Kretzmann, John Lucas, George Mavrodes, Basil Mitchell, Philip L. Quinn, James Ross, Eleonore Stump, Charles Taylor, William Wainwright, Merold Westphal, Nicholas Wolferstorff and Linda Zagzebski.

Interestingly, there are not many chapters in this volume arguing for an exclusively secular naturalist position. John Dewey allowed for religious values and was not a reductive or strict naturalist, but he certainly built a strong case against theism based on a broadly conceived naturalism. Russell dedicated serious work against theism along with idealism. And while A. J. Ayer's logical positivism shared with Berkeleyan idealism a high role for mental states, Ayer argued forcefully against the coherence of both theism and Hegelian idealism, along with a case against the cognitive meaningfulness of ethics. The movement that Ayer championed (along with Moritz Schlick and Rudolf Carnap) provided a powerful

critique of the metaphysics of religious belief. Using a refined Humean standard of meaning, Ayer, Antony Flew, Sidney Hook and Paul Edwards argued specifically against theism as well as against religious concepts of the soul. While some mid-twentieth-century critics of theism retained some idealist sympathies (Brand Blanshard and C. J. Ducasse), late-twentieth-century critics seem more solidly naturalistic, as is the case with John Mackie, H. J. McCloskey and Kai Nielson. At the close of the century some of the outstanding philosophers who have dedicated important work to the critique of theism and theistic arguments include Paul Draper, Nicholas Everitt, Richard M. Gale, Adolf Grünbaum, Anthony Kenny, Michael Martin, Graham Oppy, William Rowe, J. J. C. Smart and J. H. Sobel.

While the conflict between theistic and non-theistic projects was preoccupied with the meaning of religious belief in the 1950s through to the 1960s, the collapse of positivism has widened the agenda with a great deal of focus on the conditions for justified religious belief (how much, if any, evidence is requisite for religious belief to be rational?), the coherence and character of the divine attributes, and the classical theistic and anti-theistic arguments, from arguments from evil to arguments from religious experience and the contingency of the cosmos.

I offer several general observations about the literature on the problem of evil below, but before doing so I comment briefly on twentieth-century work on the divine attributes and theistic arguments.

Debate over the divine attributes has been massive since the retreat of positivism. Important philosophical work has been deployed in examining the coherence and interrelationship of divine goodness or perfection, omnipotence, omniscience, freedom, eternity, necessity, omnipresence, incorporeality, impassability, moral authority and worship-worthiness. Serious, but somewhat less in quantity, work has focused on God's simplicity and on Christian conceptions of the Trinity and Incarnation. This literature naturally displays the ways in which philosophy of religion has incorporated other subfields of philosophy. So, debate over the eternity of God incorporated work in metaphysics on time, the debate over omniscience incorporated current epistemology, and so on. Not since the late medieval era has there been so much attention on the articulation, critique and reformation of the divine attributes.

Work on the concept of God naturally helped refine and promote arguments about the existence or non-existence of God and the implications of God's existence for human values and practices. Perhaps the greatest beneficiary of the work on divine attributes has been work on the ontological argument. According to some formulations of the argument, if one has reason to believe it is possible God exists, one has reason to believe that God exists. The tenacity of the ontological argument since the end of positivism is extraordinary. Four of the more discussed theistic arguments are arguments from contingency (or cosmological arguments), teleological arguments, moral arguments and arguments from religious experience. The development of cogent defences and reformulations of these arguments, as well as the excellent forceful criticisms these arguments have provoked, has

falsified the idea that the Enlightenment (more specifically, David Hume and Immanuel Kant) put an end to philosophical theology. (To appeal to the analogy I employed above about art, the so-called death of natural theology is like the death of painting. At multiple times since the 1960s, painting has been declared dead but, for better or worse, painting in the art world seems as vibrant as ever.)

Two signs of the vibrancy of the theistic debate can be seen in reference books and in other subfields of philosophy. As for reference works, there was a profound shift in the framework of the first edition of the magisterial *Encyclopedia of Philosophy* in 1967 under the editorship of Paul Edwards to the framework of the second edition in 2005. Edwards designed the *Encyclopedia* to address religious issues in the spirit of Hume, Voltaire and Denis Diderot (see Vol. 3), namely, relentless criticism. In the second edition there is a shift to critical as well as constructive entries on virtually all areas of philosophy of religion. Quinn, the philosophy of religion editor, launched a far more capacious volume representing naturalism as well as theism and non-theistic religions in a critical but philosophically engaging setting. The same openness to philosophy of religion is evidenced in the competitive multi-volume *Encyclopedia of Philosophy* published by Routledge, with Eleonore Stump working as the philosophy of religion editor. To get some idea of the quantity of work produced, Barry Whitney's annotated bibliography on the problem of evil from 1960 to 1991, published by the Philosophy Documentation Center, has over four thousand entries. Also, one can see significant issues or concepts from the philosophy of religion in play in other subfields of philosophy, from ethics to philosophy of art. Most post-Second World War textbooks introducing philosophy for university and college classes contain some philosophy of religion.

While not represented in this volume, it should also be underscored how a great many theistic themes were taken in up in the twentieth century by continental existentialists and phenomenologists such as Simone de Beauvoir, Nikolai Berdyaev, Albert Camus, Gabriel Marcel and Jean-Paul Sartre. The philosophical exploration of theism was also an abiding interest of some of the best mid- and late-twentieth-century contributors to the history of ideas, such as Ernst Cassirer, F. R. Copleston, Étienne Gilson, Anthony Kenny, Arthur Lovejoy and John Passmore. These historians helped correct the beautifully written but philosophically prejudiced treatment of religion in Bertrand Russell's famous *History of Western Philosophy* (first published in 1945). The philosophical reconstruction of the history of philosophy of religion has also profoundly influenced late-twentieth-century developments. Work by Fred Fredosso and Thomas Flint on Luis de Molina has informed the literature on the divine attributes, as has the work of Brian Davies, Anthony Kenny, Norman Kretzmann, Ralph McInerny and Eleonore Stump on Aquinas. The major philosophers of the past who have received considerable attention in twentieth-century philosophy of religion include Boethius, John Duns Scotus, William Ockham, René Descartes, Blaise Pascal, John Locke, Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz, Hume, Kant, G. W. F. Hegel and Søren Kierkegaard (see Vols 2–4).

A major concern in the naturalism versus theism debate has been the relationship between science and religion. The nineteenth century hosted two dominant positions: on the one hand there were prominent historians such as William Whewell who saw religion and science in conciliatory, complementary terms, while on the other hand John William Draper and Andrew Dickson White construed science and religion in deadly combat. The title of one of White's books says it all: *A History of the Warfare of Science with Theology in Christendom* (1896). Both schools of thought have ample representatives throughout the twentieth century. E. A. Burt, Whitehead, Ernan McMullin and Ian Barber, among many others, continued the Whewell legacy. Charles Gillispie, John Greene and Alexander Koyré also challenged the sweeping portrait of the Draper–White account of science and religion, which is often referred to now as 'the conflict thesis'. At the close of the twentieth century, proponents of the conflict thesis are well represented by Richard Dawkins, E. O. Wilson and Daniel Dennett.

Apart from the general debate as to whether the practice of science is somehow inimical to the practice of religion, there is little doubt that different scientifically informed philosophies, often described as forms of naturalism, were deeply committed to the critique of theism. In the last quarter of the twentieth century this debate often centred on the prospects of a materialist account of consciousness. Flew, for example, compared the intelligibility of theism to the intelligibility of a dualist, non-reductive account of the mind. He argued that just as it has become apparent that the human mind is not a non-physical reality, separable from the body, it should be equally apparent that there is no incorporeal, non-physical God. In a way, these naturalists used Gilbert Ryle's critique of dualism, according to which the mind or soul is a ghost in the machine of the body, to argue that God is a mere ghost (and thus merely an object of superstition) in the cosmos. Those arguing against this position often linked their defence of theism with a sustained critique of materialist reductionism. This link between theism and the philosophy of mind is evident in one of the most important works in post-Second World War analytic philosophy of religion: Plantinga's *God and Other Minds* (1967).

The theism and naturalism debate not only ranged over different accounts of the natural sciences and their success or failure in providing a secular view of nature, but also included psychology and sociology. While not philosophers themselves, Max Weber and Sigmund Freud (see Vol. 4, Ch. 20) produced philosophically significant accounts of the origin and appeal of religion. This was met with competing, non-reductive accounts such as that of Rudolf Otto and his influential phenomenological study of holiness. Much of the work by Weber, Freud, Otto and others became important reference points on philosophical work on religious experience from the 1970s to the present.

Having described much of philosophy of religion as focusing on theism (either for or against), it needs to be appreciated how many philosophers throughout the century defended idealist positions (e.g. R. G. Collingwood, Benedetto Croce,

John Foster), and that some philosophers advanced models of God that moved away from classic theism. Idealists cited at the outset of this introduction, such as Bradley, did not embrace Christian orthodoxy. Boston Personalism, for example, launched by Borden Parker Bowne, and championed by E. S. Brightman and Peter Bertocci, posited a creator-God but denied God's limitless power or omnipotence. Alternative conceptions of the divine have been central to process philosophers such as Whitehead and Hartshorne, as well as in the uniquely Platonic work of John Leslie.

By way of a final introduction to the theism versus naturalism debate in philosophy of religion over the past hundred years, the focus of attention was often on what counts as a good explanation of phenomena. Theists, generally, have given pride of place to intentional teleological explanations. Naturalists have instead occupied two positions: either recognizing teleological explanations and treating these as emergent, new phenomena or explaining teleology in terms of non-purposive forces. The former faces the challenge of explaining how a naturalist universe can generate radically new types of life and value, while the second threatens to undermine what seems like a common-sense approach to human agency. After all, it appears that I am writing the Introduction and you are reading it in order to meet certain goals and fulfil certain intentions. If the complete explanation of what we are doing makes no reference to goals, purposes and intentions, our ordinary understanding of ourselves appears to be in jeopardy.

If naturalism faces difficulties with accounting for ostensible teleology, the biggest challenge to twentieth-century theism has been the problem of evil. How can one recognize some overriding *telos* or purpose in the suffering and evil in the cosmos?

Several of the chapters will chart the different arguments that have come into play over a theistic account of evil. Some of the twentieth-century literature has consisted in refining the work of earlier centuries. For example, recent work on whether a God who is maximally excellent (or, more modestly, completely good) can or should create a best possible world goes back to Leibniz, and the theistic recourse to appealing to freedom and greater goods has roots in pre-Christian Stoic philosophy. But what is partly distinctive about twentieth-century treatments of evil involves three elements. First, there has been enormous attention given to the twentieth century's most infamous, profound evil: the Holocaust. Reflection on the Holocaust has led to radical movements within Jewish philosophy of religion, some of which retain theism with the explicit incorporation of belief in an afterlife, while others reinterpret the nature of the divine covenant. Secondly, there has been an increasing stress on a passabilist understanding of God, according to which God also suffers with those who suffer. Traditionally, Christians have believed that God incarnate suffers as the Christ, but denied that God the Father suffers (impassibilism). Some Christian philosophical theologians contend that attention to the affective nature of God's presence enables us to make greater sense of how a good God may bring good or redemption out of what

appears to us to be a sheer, unmitigated tragedy. Thirdly, Darwinian evolution in the nineteenth century created a challenge for theists in accounting for the cruelty of nature, vividly described by John Stuart Mill for whom nature was no better than a vicious, serial killer. Late twentieth-century theists made use instead of contemporary Western ecology, which stressed the integrated valuable character of ecosystems. Nature still had red teeth and claws, but predation was seen in more amicable terms by later ecologists than their horrified, Victorian forbearers.

BEYOND GODS AND GIANTS

A range of philosophers covered in this volume took philosophy of religion in different directions. Some of these movements were theistic, but the emphasis was not over the metaphysics or epistemology of theism. Martin Heidegger, for example, shifted attention to a phenomenology of our experience of ourselves in the world. In Heidegger's later work we have what may be described as an extended meditation on being. His work defies any easy description; its richness is evidenced, in part, by the way in which it impacted such diverse theologians as Rudolf Bultmann, John Maquarie, Karl Rahner and Paul Tillich. Heidegger's early work inspired philosophers to explore concepts such as authenticity in religious contexts. His later work on being and poetry attracted the attention of many Asian philosophers of religion, especially those in Buddhist studies. Derrida's deconstruction of traditional philosophy inspired a new wave of continental philosophy of religion (leading figures at the end of the twentieth century include John Caputo, Jean-Luc Marion, Paul Ricoeur and Mark C. Taylor). This movement is quite diverse, but it may be seen as united in its promotion of apophatic theology or at least in its critique of cataphatic theology. Apophatic theology (also called the *via negativa*) gives primacy to what cannot be said of God, and resists cataphatic or *via positiva* theologies that reference God univocally or by way of analogy or metaphor. Emmanuel Levinas, a Jewish continental philosopher who rejected cataphatic theology, gave a central role to ethics over and against metaphysics. For Levinas, the heart of Judaism is to be found in ethics and a profound appreciation of the vulnerability of individual persons.

A survey of these other contributors to philosophy of religion makes clear that the field included far more than analytic conceptual analysis or debates in classical metaphysics. If one sees the field as limited to philosophers such as Richard Swinburne and John Mackie, for example, one may well conclude that while the field has shown exciting and substantial progress (the clarity, force, and scope of the arguments have increased over time), it has worked with a similar set of questions going back to Hume and Joseph Butler, or going back even further to the first English-speaking philosophy of the modern era: the Cambridge Platonists Ralph Cudworth and Henry More versus Thomas Hobbes in the seventeenth century (see Vol. 3). But when you turn to Simone Weil or Derrida or Levinas or Daly you

encounter different methodologies that mix theory and observation, history and ethics, politics and emotion. This is especially true in feminist philosophers of religion such as Pamela Sue Anderson and Sarah Coakley.

I shall risk four further observations here that speak to the fascinating, sprawling field of philosophy of religion.

First, in addition to a general division between what is loosely called continental philosophy (mostly German and French philosophers employing phenomenology in the middle of the century and then existentialism, structuralism and post-structuralism) and analytic philosophy of religion (giving pride of place to conceptual analysis), there has been a division between those philosophers who treat religious beliefs as metaphysically true or false, and those who eschew metaphysics and instead concentrate on religious contexts. The former are customarily considered 'realists' in that they are convinced that religious beliefs are true or false depending on whether the content of these beliefs match reality: for example, the belief that there is a God is true if and only if there is a God. There is no settled term for the opposing party, although some of its members could be said to be 'non-realists' in the sense that they treat religious beliefs as lacking any cognitive content whatsoever. So, in Britain, R. M. Hare and Richard Braithwaite construed religious belief in terms of attitudes (which are neither true nor false) or ethical practices that did not come with claims about what exists that would vex a secular naturalist. More difficult to pin down is the famous Wittgensteinian philosopher of religion, D. Z. Phillips.

From the mid 1960s to his death in 2006, Phillips argued that realist metaphysics as practised by contemporary philosophers of religion was the result of a misunderstanding of the very meaning of religion. For Phillips, and for Rush Rhees, Peter Winch and others, to engage in philosophical debates over whether theism or naturalism or idealism is true is to miss the whole point of religion, which is only to be found in the practices of prayer and other rites, moral action, pilgrimages and the project of living without vanity and in loving regard for one's neighbour. In a way, Phillips rekindled the old controversy over whether there is a division between the God of the philosophers and the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.

It is not obvious, in my view, whether Phillips succeeded in offering a compelling critique of realist metaphysics. But, in general, it can be observed that while the vast bulk of late-twentieth-century philosophy in the Anglophone world, as well as early-twentieth-century continental philosophy, has been metaphysically realist in orientation, challenges to this framework have compelled philosophers (of all stripes) to take more seriously the social, historical and cultural contexts in which religious beliefs and practices have meaning.

Secondly, philosophy of religion in the last quarter of the twentieth century has developed a far greater consciousness of history than in the past. Informed by the work of Alasdair MacIntyre, Hans-Georg Gadamer, Charles Taylor and others, philosophers seem more aware at the end of the twentieth century than

at the outset of the historically embedded context of philosophical theories and arguments. This is especially true in philosophy of religion, owing to the historical nature of religion itself. This is not to say that most late-twentieth-century philosophers of religion are historicists. Far from it; yet there is a greater sensitivity to the way ideas can be shaped by economics, politics, gender and so on.

Thirdly, philosophers of religion since the 1970s seem to have developed a great appreciation for how the assessment of a religious worldview is rarely a matter of assessing a single argument, but a wide network of reasons that offer evidential support. This more comprehensive perspective on religion coincides with a move in the philosophy of science in the last half of the twentieth century. Many philosophers came to the conclusion that the assessment of the cognitive meaning of such as Ayer. Ayer regarded religious beliefs (as well as moral beliefs) as non-cognitive because they did not entail empirical verification. In the 1950s Carl Hempel argued forcefully that the meaning of statements had to be determined in light of a comprehensive understanding of the framework in which such statements are made. I cite him at length, for the late-twentieth-century concern for a broader philosophical assessment of religion matches Hempel's successful aim of putting philosophy of science on a better footing:

But no matter how one might reasonably delimit the class of sentences qualified to introduce empirically significant terms, this new approach [by the positivists] seems to me to lead to the realization that cognitive significance cannot well be construed as a characteristic of individual sentences, but only of more or less comprehensive systems of sentences (corresponding roughly to scientific theories). A closer study of this point suggests strongly that ... the idea of cognitive significance, with its suggestion of a sharp distinction between significant and non-significant sentences or systems of such, has lost its promise and fertility ... and that it had better be replaced by certain concepts which admit of differences in degree, such as the formal simplicity of a system; its explanatory and predictive power; and theoretical reconstruction of these concepts seems to offer the most promising way of advancing further the clarification of the issues implicit in the idea of cognitive significance. (Hempel 1959: 129)

A parallel appreciation for the systemic way in which religious beliefs form part of comprehensive frameworks has generated a richer philosophy of religion literature at the end of the century than was the case at the beginning. Hand in glove with appreciating the comprehensiveness of worldviews is the appreciation of the role for cumulative arguments in support of religious beliefs.

This more comprehensive approach to philosophy of religion has meant that comparative studies – for example, a contrast between Buddhist and Christian approaches to enlightenment – are less piecemeal and abstract. Broader methods

have also brought to light various traditions within religious traditions, thus making it more difficult to reference *the* Buddhist or Christian position on enlightenment.

Fourthly, philosophy of religion since the 1970s has seen a growing concern for religious diversity. A significant body of philosophy of religion has taken up Hindu concepts of Brahman and revelation, reincarnation, karma, Buddhist views of the self, Buddhist epistemology, Daoism, African philosophy of religion and so on. John Hick has championed this expansion. Probably the philosopher who worked the hardest to promote the global study of religion was Ninian Smart, who has left us some superior work on the significance of religious pluralism. The contribution of Sarepalli Radhakrishnan also needs to be acknowledged. As well as being the president of India (1962–7), he was a compelling idealist philosopher who forcefully articulated Hindu philosophy in the English-speaking world. It is partly due to Radhakrishnan's success that his own school of Hinduism, Shankara's Advaita Vedanta, was the most widely discussed in the West during the twentieth century.

Taking seriously the plurality of religious traditions has generated expansive work in the epistemology of religious belief and in political philosophy.

Plural religious traditions created the following puzzles, which exercised late-twentieth-century philosophy of religion: what is the implication of there being two incompatible religious worldviews that appear to be equally well justified to their adherents? If, say, you believe that your religious stance is no more or less justified than an incompatible religious stance, should your confidence in your own beliefs diminish? Or, from the standpoint of a secular enquirer, if one concludes that a pair of incompatible religious worldviews are on a par in terms of evidence and that neither is more justified than remaining secular, is it permissible for the enquirer to accept either religion? These questions fuelled an enormous amount of work on the ethics of belief (should a person always proportion her beliefs to the evidence?), the voluntariness of belief (can I choose what to believe?) and comparative accounts of evidence (can what counts as evidence differ between religions?). A major enterprise led by Plantinga and Nicholas Wolterstorff called 'reformed epistemology' has opposed the proposal that religious beliefs require overt evidential justification. Religious beliefs may be warranted as basic beliefs that are generated by God or through God's creation. Debate over reformed epistemology was often framed by questions about religious pluralism: given that we do not know with certainty that Christian theism is true, can we have good reasons for holding that Christian beliefs are warranted as opposed to Buddhist or Hindu beliefs?

In political philosophy, the plurality of religions raised questions about tolerance and law. In a liberal, pluralistic democracy, is it morally and politically legitimate to advance legislation on the basis of religious values that are incompatible with other religious and secular values? Why should legislation not be justified by recourse to religious ethics for the same reason that legislation is sometimes backed by competing, incompatible secular theories of morality and value? To what extent can a secular democratic state legitimately prohibit or curtail the religious practices of its citizens? The debate over such questions at the end of the

twentieth century has been especially heated in the literature on political liberalism. Rawls, Thomas Nagel and Robert Audi argued for the primacy of secular values, whereas Wolterstorff, Quinn and Robert Adams argued for a more pluralistic political philosophy that would allow for specific, not universal, religious values to define legislation.

A LESSON OF SORTS

There have been brief periods when philosophy of religion in the twentieth century has been dominated by one school of thought. For a short time, Ludwig Wittgenstein seemed to dominate Cambridge and Oxford, and even as of this writing in Oxford there are still circles of philosophers who regard Wittgenstein's private language argument as irrefutable. At other times, the logical positivists seemed the dominant, unsurpassable paradigm in philosophy of religion. This is not unique to the field. In the late 1970s, nominalism seemed to be the only viable ontology at Harvard while, less than a hundred miles to the south, at Brown University Platonism was the supreme philosophy of the day. The different movements, the ebbing and flowing of competing arguments, give some philosophers reason to be sceptical about the whole enterprise. A different conclusion to consider is that philosophy of religion is not easy. The reasons behind the different methodologies, conclusions and topics of enquiry are complex and cumulative. Rarely is any project in philosophy of religion reliant on a single argument or experience. Rather than scepticism (and scepticism about God, reason, faith, etc. is a part of philosophy of religion, not something set apart from the field), I suggest that twentieth-century philosophy of religion provides some reason for respecting a plurality of methods and conclusions. Undoubtedly, philosophy departments in the future will form a consensus on *the only proper domain of philosophy of religion*. Perhaps the perceived *terminus ad quem* of the field will be naturalism or theism, feminism or Hegelism, idealism, Pyrrhonian Scepticism or rationalism, or any number of other schools of thought. A thorough engagement with the chapters in this volume should caution us, however, in assuming that one's own or one's institution's philosophy of religion is unrivalled as we see how deeply and forcefully competing positions have been advanced, involving many of the best philosophical minds of the twentieth century. This should, I think, cultivate a spirit of respectful openness (a golden rule of sorts may be commendable: treat others' philosophy of religion as you would like your own to be treated) and some humility, lest shortly after you proclaim philosophy of religion has finally come to a rest with your own philosophy, you are called on to admit that the field has moved on to even better positions and arguments. Perhaps the dynamic of this area of philosophy can be summed up in the words attributed to Galileo when he officially retracted his view of the earth's movement: *eppur si muove* (and yet it does move).

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WILLIAM JAMES

Richard M. Gale

William James (1842–1910) had a peripatetic childhood in which his father, the theologian Henry James, Sr, hustled him and his four younger siblings, among whom was the novelist Henry James, Jr, from one European nation to another in search of an adequate education. After a brief stint as a painting student of William Morris Hunt he entered the Lawrence Scientific School at Harvard in 1861. On graduation in 1864 he enrolled in the Harvard Medical School, completing the MD degree in 1869, with a year off to participate in Louis Agassiz's research expedition to Brazil. After suffering serious ill health and depression from 1869 to 1872, he became an instructor in physiology at Harvard, where he spent his entire career until his retirement in 1907. He rapidly moved up the academic ladder, becoming an instructor in anatomy and physiology in 1873, assistant professor of physiology in 1876, assistant professor of philosophy in 1880 and full professor in 1885, and a professor of psychology in 1889.

The philosophy of William James was an attempt to heal a deep breach within himself. On one level it consisted in an apparent clash between his need to do science and his equally strong need to be religious and lead the morally strenuous life: to be, as he put it, both tough-minded and tender-minded. His pragmatism is advertised as giving us a way to do it all with a clear conscience, thereby serving as a reconciler or mediator, but not a unifier, of these different stances toward the world. It does this by providing a theory of meaning and truth that is common to all these activities, and thus if one of them is legitimate, so are the others; and, since no one wants to deny the legitimacy of science, religion and morality ride its coat-tails to intellectual respectability, being subject to all the consequent privileges and rights. The pragmatic theory of meaning holds that the whole meaning of a belief or proposition is a set of conditionalized predictions specifying what experiences one will have in the future if certain actions are performed, for example, 'If you place this substance in *aqua regia*, then you will have experiences of its dissolving'. A proposition acquires truth when these predictions are actually verified. Pragmatism is based on a Promethean view of human beings as

creators of value and meaning through the active control of their environment. By conceiving of things in terms of what we can do with them and what they in turn can do to us, these Promethean endeavours are furthered.

There is, however, a breach within James that occurs on a deeper level, which involves an apparent clash between his Promethean and mystical selves. Whereas the former wants to gain mastery over the surrounding world, ride herd on it, the former wants to penetrate to the inner conscious core of everything, both natural and supernatural, through acts of sympathetic intuition, so as to achieve at least a partial unification with them. To achieve this, the self must abandon its Promethean stance, which requires that it jettison all concepts and become passive. There is an apparently different God for James' mystical self than there is for his Promethean self, and the challenge to the interpreter is to find some way to unify them, which is something that James never succeeded in doing. Each of these Gods will be considered in turn, and then it will be asked whether they can be combined or integrated.

THE GOD OF PROMETHEANISM

This is the God that fits the pragmatic theory of meaning and truth, and it was for this reason that James featured it in the final lecture of his 1907 *Pragmatism*, where it was his purpose to show that his brand of pragmatism was religion friendly. In his earlier essay of 1896, "The Will to Believe", he gave a similar Promethean rendering of the religious hypothesis that begins with the claim that it comprises the following two tenets:

First, she says that the best things are the more eternal things, the overlapping things, the things in the universe that throw the last stone, so to speak, and say the final word ...

The second affirmation of religion is that we are better off even now if we believe her first affirmation to be true. (WB 29–30)¹

As a favour to James, the second affirmation will be dropped, since it is not a creedal tenet of any of the major extant religions but instead something that might be claimed by a psychologist of religion about the beneficial effects of religious belief.

James gives a pragmatic analysis of the first affirmation in terms of this conditionalized prediction:

1. All references to James are to *The Works of William James* (James 1975–) and will be included in the body of the chapter using these abbreviations: WB, "The Will to Believe"; P, *Pragmatism*; ML, *Manuscript Lectures*; VRE, *The Varieties of Religious Experience*; PU, *A Pluralistic Universe*; ERM, *Essays in Religion and Morality*.

R If we collectively exert our best moral effort, then good will win out over evil in the long run.

This is the pragmatic ‘cash value’ of the proposition that God exists. It forms the core of his beloved religion of meliorism, which claims that it is a real, existentially grounded possibility that if we make the antecedent of R true by acting in a good-making fashion, the friendly forces within nature will aid us in making R’s consequent true. He imagines God offering us this proposal.

“I am going to make a world not certain to be saved, a world the perfection of which shall be conditional merely, the condition being that each several agent does its own ‘level best’. Its safety, you see, is unwarranted. It is a real adventure, with real danger, yet it may win through. It is a social scheme of co-operative work genuinely to be done. Will you join the procession? Will you trust yourself and trust the other agents enough to face the risk?” (P 139)

This conditionalized formulation of the religious hypothesis gets repeated at two places in his lecture notes: “Meanwhile I ask whether a world of hypothetical perfection conditional on each part doing its duty be not as much as can fairly be demanded” (ML 319), and pluralism holds that “the world ... may be saved, on condition that its parts shall do their best” (ML 412).

James claims that a “normally constituted” person would gladly accept this offer (P 139). This is the “healthy-minded person”, who is contrasted in his 1902 *The Varieties of Religious Experience* with the “sick soul” on the basis of their respective attitudes toward evil. Healthy-minded persons can look evil squarely in the eye because they feel empowered to cope with or even defeat it. In contrast, sick-souled persons are overwhelmed by evil, feeling incapable of coping with it on their own. They favour religions that stress the fallen condition of humanity owing to original sin. Only by undergoing a conversion, which can happen suddenly or gradually, can they acquire the healthy-minded Promethean stance towards evil.

James continually fluctuated back and forth between the healthy-minded and sick-soul stances toward evil. When he was in his healthy-minded moods, he was itching to engage in a Texas death match with evil without any assurance of succeeding. James, however, was also subject to the morbid states of the sick soul, as is amply attested to by his report of one of his own experiences as a medical student of existential angst on seeing a hideous catatonic youth:

That shape am I, I felt, potentially. Nothing that I possess can defend me against that fate, if the hour for it should strike for me as it struck for him. There was such a horror of him, and such a perception of my own merely momentary discrepancy from him, that it was as if

something hitherto solid within my breast gave way entirely, and I
became a mass of quivering flesh. (VRE 134)

The thought that the worst sort of evils can strike any of us at any moment, and that we are helpless to do anything about it, periodically haunted James throughout his adult life.

James, rightfully, claimed that the truth of R could not now be decided on evidential or intellectual grounds; for, it not only makes a conditional prediction concerning the indefinite future, there being no cut-off date for the eventual triumph of good over evil, but depends for its truth on how we shall decide to act. It is impossible that, in advance of her decision, a person can know either what she will decide to do or that an event will occur that depends on what she will decide to do. And the truth of R does depend on how we shall choose to act. What should we now believe with regard to the truth of R, given that its truth or falsity cannot be determined on evidential grounds? There were contemporaries of James, such as W. K. Clifford and T. H. Huxley, who argued that it is morally impermissible to ever believe a proposition on insufficient evidence. This universal moral prohibition requires that we suspend belief, adopt an agnostic stance, with respect to R. In opposition, James developed a doctrine called 'the will to believe' that spelled out the conditions under which one is morally permitted to believe on insufficient evidence and gave the religious hypothesis, R, as a suitable target for a will-to-believe option. This is his most distinctive and influential doctrine and has been the subject of heated debate since it was first presented in 1896, with there being no end in sight.

Basically, the will-to-believe doctrine gives an agent moral permission to believe a proposition on insufficient evidence when doing so will help them to bring about something morally desirable. A standard objection to the will-to-believe doctrine is that one cannot believe at will, voluntarily, intentionally, on purpose. James gets around this objection by pointing out that although in most cases we cannot believe at will, we nevertheless can at will do things that will help to self-induce a belief, such as acting as if we believe. In order to deflect objections that his doctrine licensed wishful thinking and gullibility, he required that the agent lack sufficient evidence for or against the truth of the proposition *after having done their best to discover such evidence*. This would rule out the self-serving ignorance of Clifford's shipowner who believes his ship is seaworthy and sends it on a voyage without properly investigating the matter. Yet another requirement for having a will-to-believe option is that there is a proposition, *p*, that it is morally desirable that one makes true, and one's chances of making *p* come true are increased by one's first believing another proposition, *q*. There are numerous cases in which an agent is aided in helping to make a morally desirable proposition become true by the confidence- and courage-building belief that she has the capacity to do so. A good example is the stranded Alpine climber who must jump across a ravine to get to safety in a storm: she increases the chances of making it become true that this happens by first believing

the conditional proposition that if she attempts the jump, she shall succeed. A will-to-believe option is relative to the psychological state of an individual, since people differ with respect to whether they need a prior confidence-building belief that they can succeed in some endeavour before they attempt to do so.

James firmly believed that many persons are so psychologically constituted that their chances of acting in a way that will help make it true that good wins out over evil in the long run, which is the consequent of R, is increased if they first believe R. There admittedly are sick souls for whom a will-to-believe option to believe R is not a real possibility, not a live option. The will-to-believe doctrine can be pressed into service on behalf of believing in the truth of good old-time religion and not James' moralistic substitute for it. For many people, believing that the God of traditional Western theism exists will give them the kind of inspiration and courage to act in a way that will help them to make it true that they become morally better, lead more meaningful lives, and the like.

THE GOD OF MYSTICISM

James begins with a special inward manner in which one person experiences another as a 'Thou' rather than an 'It', and then extends this to the experience of the world at large, even to God and nature. His analysis of the I-Thou experience bears a striking resemblance to that offered by Martin Buber some thirty years later. It is not only persons, both natural and supernatural, that can be I-Thoued, but also nature at large, as nature mystics have traditionally claimed. Clearly, James is personalizing the universe when he writes, "The Universe is no longer a mere *It* to us, but a *Thou*, if we are religious; and any relation that may be possible from person to person might be possible here" (WB 31). Taking a religious stance to the world "changes the dead blank *it* of the world into a living *thou*, with whom the whole man may have dealings" (WB 101). "Infra-theistic ways of looking on the world leave it in the third person, a mere *it* ... [but] theism turns the *it* into a *thou*" (WB 106).

Another part of James' account of the I-Thou relation that needs further elaboration is just how unified a person becomes with its Thou, be it another person, God or nature. There are monistic mystics who take the unification to be one of complete numerical identity, but James, being squarely ensconced within the Western theistic mystical tradition, takes it to be something less than that, a case of what he liked to call, using Benjamin Paul Blood's marvellous phrase, "ever not quite" (1874). Throughout his career James was a self-proclaimed 'pluralistic mystic'. In the 1909 *A Pluralistic Universe*, James introduced a strange type of identity, which holds between the I and the Thou. It is strange because it is an identity that is not transitive, thus allowing for X to be 'identical' with Y and Y to be 'identical' with Z even though X is not 'identical' with Z. You might say that X is 'identical' with Y, only not *that* identical, to paraphrase the punchline of an old shaggy-dog story.

The major thesis of *The Varieties of Religious Experience*, and one that I think is successfully maintained to James' everlasting credit, is that the basis of religion, including its institutional structure, theology and personal religious feelings and beliefs, is rooted in religious experiences of a mystical sort in which the individual has an apparent direct, non-sensory perception of a 'More', an 'Unseen' supernatural or purely spiritual reality into which she is to some extent absorbed and from which spiritual energy flows into her. These 'perceptions' of the 'More' can be viewed as a very heightened and intense form of the I-Thou experience. Through these I-Thou experiences of the More, the subject gets "an assurance of safety and a temper of peace, and, in relation to others, a preponderance of loving affection" (VRE 383).

Throughout *The Varieties of Religious Experience* James works with a perceptual model of mystical experiences, likening them to ordinary sense-perceptions in that both involve a direct acquaintance with an object, although only the latter has a sensory content. "Mystical experiences are ... direct perceptions ... absolutely sensational ... face to face presentation of what seems to exist" (VRE 336). A perception is 'direct', I assume, if the existential claims made by the subject on the basis of her experience are non-inferential. Another important, and highly controversial, assumption James makes in his likening mystical experiences to sense perceptions is that mystical experiences, like sensory ones, are intentional in the sense that they have an apparent accusative that exists independently of the subject when the experience is veridical. In this respect, they are unlike a feeling of pain, which takes only a cognate or internal accusative, since feeling a pain is nothing but paining or feeling painfully.

James tries to take a neutral stance on whether mystical experiences support a monistic or pluralistic view of the more or unseen reality, in spite of his own strong emotional commitment to the pluralistic version. At one place he seems to come down on the side of the modern-day mystical ecumenists, such as Daisetsu Suzuki, Walter Stace and Thomas Merton, who contend that there is a common phenomenological *monistic* core to all unitive mystical experiences that then gets interpreted by the mystic so as to accord with the underlying culture of her society. "In mystic states we both become one with the Absolute and we become aware of our oneness. This is the everlasting and triumphant mystical tradition, hardly altered by differences of clime or creed" (VRE 332). Some of James' major contentions in *The Varieties of Religious Experience*, however, require a dualistic experience. For example, James says that prayer is "the very soul and essence of religion", and then describes prayer as involving two-way interaction between two subjects. James' strong Protestant leanings cause him, for the most part, to give a dualistic interpretation of mystical experiences.

One of the features of mystical experiences, as well as conversion experiences in general, that James stresses is that the subject is passive in respect to them. While persons can take steps, such as following the mystical way, to help induce the experience, its coming is viewed by religious mystics as the free bestowal of

a gift on them by the grace of God. Through the experience the subject feels that her conscious will is held in abeyance as she finds absorption in a higher unity. "The mystic feels as if his own will were grasped and held by a superior power" (VRE 303). In both cases there must be a cancelling out of the finite so as to open ourselves to the infinite.

James, no doubt with his sick soul's experiences of existential angst in mind, stresses how such mystically based resignation cannot "fail to steady the nerves, to cool the fever, and appease the fret, if one be conscious that, no matter what one's difficulties for the moment may appear to be, one's life as a whole is in the keeping of a power whom one can absolutely trust" (VRE 230). The mystical experiences that such submission of the conscious will helps to foster are "reconciling and unifying states" (VRE 330) that "tell of the supremacy of the ideal, of vastness, of union, of safety, and of rest" (VRE 339). In such mystical union there is a "life not correlated with death, a health not liable to illness, a kind of good that will not perish, a good in fact that flies beyond the Goods of nature" (VRE 119). This is just what his Promethean self's beloved religion of meliorism cannot deliver; it cannot help him make it through the dark nights of his soul or face the hideous catatonic epileptic youth. A theme that runs throughout *The Varieties of Religious Experience* is the insufficiency of meliorism. It is condemned as being "the very consecration of forgetfulness and superficiality" (VRE 118–19).

James gives a non-pragmatic rendering of the meaning of the mystic's reality-claim in terms of the phenomenological content of her God-type experience, the truth of which depends on whether her experience is objective or cognitive. Meaning now is no longer based solely on future consequences that will be experienced if certain actions are performed. To be sure, the spiritual and moral benefits that the experience occasions become relevant, but only as a means of indirect verification, there now being, as there was not for meliorism, a distinction between direct and indirect verification, with an assertion's meaning being identified primarily with its direct verification. For mystical experiences this is the apparent object, the intentional accusative, of the experience. James seems to recognize this when he says that "the word 'truth' is here taken to mean something additional to bare value for life" (VRE 401). Accordingly, James makes the issue of the cognitivity or objectivity of mystical experience a central issue in *The Varieties of Religious Experience*. Concerning experiences of a mystical kind, he asks about their "metaphysical significance" (308), "cognitivity" (VRE 324), "authoritativeness" (VRE 335), "objective truth" (VRE 304), "value for knowledge" (VRE 327), "truth" (VRE 329), and whether they "furnish any warrant for the truth of the ... supernaturality and pantheism which they favor" (VRE 335), or are "to be taken as *evidence* ... for the actual existence of a higher world with which our world is in relation" (VRE 384). James is quite explicit that the answer to the 'objectivity' question is independent of the biological and psychological benefits that accrue from mystical experiences.

James concludes that there is a generic content that is shared by the many different types of mystical experiences that "is literally and objectively true" (VRE

405). He gives an argument for this based on an analogy between mystical and sense-experience, which has been ably defended in recent years by many philosophers, most notably William Alston and William Wainwright. First, an overview will be given of a generic version of their arguments, and then an attempt will be made to locate it, or at least the germ of it, in James.

It is an argument from analogy that goes as follows. Mystical and sense-experiences are analogous in cognitively relevant respects; and, since the latter are granted to be cognitive, so should the former. A cognitive type of experience is one that counts, in virtue of some *a priori* presumptive inference rule, as evidence or warrant for believing that the apparent object of the experience, its intentional accusative, objectively exists and is as it appears to be in the experience. For sense-experience, the presumptive inference rule is that if it perceptually appears to be the case that *X* exists, then probably it is the case that *X* exists, unless there are defeating conditions. These defeating conditions consist in tests and checks for the veridicality of the experience that fail on this occasion. Prominent among these tests are agreement among relevant observers, law-like coherence between the experience's content and the content of earlier and later experiences, and being caused in the right way. The presumptive inference rule is said to be *a priori*, because it cannot be justified by appeal to sense-experience without vicious circularity.

If mystical experiences are to be subject to an analogous *a priori* presumptive inference rule, they must be analogous to sense-experiences in having defeating conditions: checks and tests that can fail. All of the contemporary defenders of the cognitivism of mystical experiences argue that the great religious mystical traditions employ a fairly elaborate network of tests for the veridicality of mystical experiences, usually including that the subject, as well as her community, display favourable moral and/or spiritual development as a result of the experience, and that what her experience reveals accords with her religion's holy scriptures and the mystical experiences of past saints and notables, to name some of the more important tests of most of the great religious mystical traditions.

With a little imagination we can find most, but not all, of the elements of this analogical argument in *The Varieties of Religious Experience*. A good case can be made out that James deserves to be credited with being the founding father of this argument. In the first place, James makes a prominent use of a perceptual model of mystical experience, which is the analogical premise of the contemporary argument for cognitivism. He comes right out and says:

Our own more 'rational' beliefs are based on evidence exactly similar in nature to that which mystics quote for theirs. Our senses, namely, have assured us of certain states of fact; but mystical experiences are as direct perceptions of fact for those who have them as any sensations ever were for us. The records show that even though the five senses be in abeyance in them, they are absolutely sensational in their epistemological quality. (VRE 336)