



WILLIAM JAMES ON THE NATURE OF RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCE


CHOLBHAVAT BORIRAKKUCHAROEN

A Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of  
The Requirements for the Degree of  
Doctor of Philosophy  
Graduate School of Philosophy and Religion  
Assumption University of Thailand

Academic Year 2002

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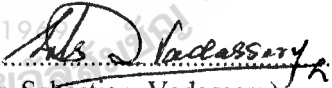
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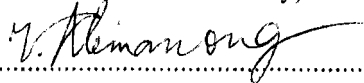
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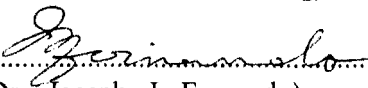
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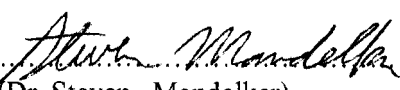
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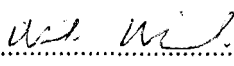
  
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**ABSTRACT**

William James (1842-1910) was both a psychologist and philosopher who has attained international reputation as America's most original thinker. He aroused a public interest in philosophy in general, and pragmatism in particular. James rejected intellectualizing and theorizing about religion in favor of an empirical approach and his task became that of articulating the way in which experience may justify religious beliefs. He was a pluralist in love with variety and with experience as he found it.

James's interest in religion was in personal terms only. The meaning and importance of his religious writings can properly be understood only in the light of his belief that the most fruitful approach to religion is an empirical one. His pragmatic justification for religious belief has often been challenged, on both ontological and moral grounds. From a standpoint, critics argue that James's accounts of religious truth and its justification is perniciously subjective. Nevertheless, once



James's conceptions of religious truth and justification are understood in their full measure of depth, this charge can be seen as misplaced.

James's pragmatic justification for religious belief is thought to be a disguised form of humanism, a support of religious belief made solely by appeal to the beneficial consequences in the life of the believer which follows upon religious commitment. James's defense of religious experience holds the most significant pragmatic consequences of religious belief.

His pragmatism is not only the basis of his theory of perception but also his theory of intentionality. It explains how my perception of, say, a particular pen is indeed of that pen and not of the thousands of other virtually indistinguishable pens. James states the key elements "to be radical, empiricism must neither admit in its constructions any element that is not directly experienced, nor exclude from them any element that is directly experienced. For such a philosophy, the relations that connect experiences must themselves be experienced relations, and any kind of relation experienced must be accounted for as real as anything else in the system." (Essay in Radical Empiricism, 1904, p.22)

The goal of this dissertation is to explore James's doctrine of 'religious experience' and to examine the implications of his views as well as to illustrate the extent to which other philosophers sidestepped the basic import of his ideas. It is readily apparent that James' papers do not make easy reading. He is a brilliant stylist whose popular writing is a model of clarity and persuasive power.

In this dissertation, I explore and develop James's views on the nature of religious experience in a way that enables his views to be understood as well as criticized. A study of James is valuable not only for its own intrinsic interest, but also because it reveals a great deal about his more general philosophical positions.

To accomplish my dissertation, I divide it into three main parts: First, background of William James and the Varieties of Religious Experience; Second, James's views on the nature of religious experience. Third; I develop a central thesis and justify it, and finish with the conclusion.



## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

No dissertation is the work of its researcher alone. I owe much to the pioneers of philosophy who first identified its major issues and developed its knowledge, especially William James (1842-1910). The researcher's appreciation is extended to Assumption University for offering her new curriculum: Doctor of Philosophy Program in Philosophy. My special gratitude goes to *Bro. P.Martin Komolmas*, the Rector, for his direction and vision.

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I also owe my deepest and respectful gratitude to those around me who had to live through the daily struggles of writing this dissertation: To my parents who not only gave me life but have been teaching and supporting me in ever since. They are my first teachers and my virtuous-life paradigm. Gratitude to them always stands at the nub of my heart. To my younger brother, *Venerable Phra Purk Suthinano*, who has been involved in all my success in every aspect of life. I confess that without his spiritual and physical assistance, I would not have been able to stand at this point. To Naraporn, whose strong encouragement, fresh insights and support lead me to success. Last but not least, my appreciation goes to my grandmother who taught me much about life. I am truly blessed.

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

#### 1.1 Background and Significance of the Study

This research explores William James's foundation of religious experiences described in his classical work: *The Varieties of Religious Experience*. In his work, he examines man's religious constitution or appetite for religion, with special emphasis on extraordinary human religious experiences.

*The Varieties of Religious Experience* accents on the religious experiences of individuals. In accordance with James's conviction that "the stronghold of religion lies in individuality" and in "real facts in the making" (James, 1958, pp. 395-6) religious experiences can be reached only in the inner recesses of private feeling. James believes that the evidence for God lies primarily in inner personal experiences. (James, 1920b, p. 34). Therefore, his philosophy is characterized by individuality, individual feelings, by sympathetic understanding of human suffering by the eccentricity of behavior and by the predominance of fact over abstract formulation.

James employs in the *Varieties* a direct approach in justifying religious faith in terms of empirical evidence. In evaluating, he identifies two types of judgment (James, 1958, p. 13) each independent of the other.

1. Existential judgment that is directed to a phenomenon's constitution as well as to its origin and history. It begins by

means of description and classification, followed by analysis of the causal forces that brought about the phenomenon into being.

2. Spiritual judgment that is addressed to its inner value - its significance, importance, and meaning (Wulff,1997,p.483).

Applied to philosophy of religion, *The Varieties* is a judgment of the spiritual type. James seeks to understand from within and appreciate the uniqueness of every individual experience. James's profound concern for the human individual and all the aspects of his personality as well as his concern for the reality of the concrete experiences sprang from his philosophical perspective. The theme of the *Varieties* is best stated in a letter to Miss Frances R. Morse (1920): "The problem I have set myself is a hard one: *first*, to defend experience against philosophy as being the real backbone of the world's religious life. And *Second*, to make the hearer or reader believe, what I myself invincibly do believe, that, although all the special manifestations of religion may have been absurd, the life of it as a whole is mankind's most important function" (James,1920c,p.127).

In other words, religion is not a secondary product, a mode of feeling or action evoked by a secular view of the world, but has its own direct and independent evidence. As early as 1884 James had written to Davidson that he despaired of any popular religion of a philosophic character (James,1920b,p.236). He wondered whether there can be any popular religion born from the ruins of the old Christianity without the presence of a belief in a living reality, and the tremendous human possibilities arising from it. Abstract considerations about the soul and the reality of a

moral order does not offer a glimpse into a world of new phenomenal possibilities enveloping our present life.

It is with such “phenomenal possibilities” that the *Varieties* is concerned. Nevertheless, while James identified religion with certain specific experiences, and with specific facts, events, forces, and entities which these experiences revealed, he did not identify religion with any particular creed. By religion he means historic religions, in respect of their common content and not their particular claims (Perry,1935b,p.237).

As regards James himself the ideas which he developed in *The Varieties of Religious Experience* sprang from his filial piety and personal experiences. This research attempts to explore James’s nature of religious experience which is the foundation for philosophy of religion. The importance and originality of this research is that it encircles entirely on the ground of religious experience. It also brings out the important philosophical ideas, which were sidestepped by his contemporaries. To achieve this, the researcher analyses critically *The Varieties of Religious Experience* and the core ideas contained therein to obtain James’s nature of religious experience.

## 1.2 Dissertation Statement

This dissertation is on the Nature of Religious Experience as expressed in William James’s work “*The Varieties of Religious Experience*”, that “Divinity can be experienced within”.

This thesis statement can be syllogistically expressed in the following manner:

All religious experiences are personal experiences of Divinity.

Experiences related in the *Varieties of Religious Experience* are religious experiences.

Experiences related in the *Varieties of Religious Experience* are personal experiences of Divinity.

### 1.3 Objectives of the Dissertation

1. To understand the philosophy of “Varieties of Religious Experiences.”
2. To explore whether Divinity is the center of religious experience.
3. To see religious experience from the perspective of other philosophers.

### 1.4 Limitation of the Dissertation

This thesis will focus only on James’s understanding of the nature of religious experience as articulated in *The Varieties of Religious Experience*.

### 1.5 Methodology of the Dissertation

The researcher specifically explores the dimension of the nature of religious experience. He employs an analytical approach in defending William James’s thesis. Data for this study is taken from William James writings and from articles and journals on him by other scholars as well as from Internet sources.

### 1.6 Definitions of the Terms Used

1.6.1 "*Religion*", according to James, means the feelings, acts and experiences of individual men in their solitude, so far as they apprehend themselves to stand in relation to whatever they may consider the divine (James, 1958, p.46).

1.6.2 "*Experience*", in this context stands for, sensation, feelings, communion with the divine, change of heart, deliverances from fear, and transformation of attitudes. Experience is the cornerstone of James's pragmatic metaphysical pluralism.

According to James, experience is only a collective name. There are as many 'stuffs' as there are 'natures' in the things experienced. In James's view 'experience' is just exactly what it is, whatever it is that is experienced (James, 1904, p.487).

## 1.7 Expectations

The researcher expects that this thesis would stimulate more interest in the field of philosophy of religion. He also expects his readers to pause and start looking into their own religious experiences in order to affirm their religiosity.



## CHAPTER II

### WILLIAM JAMES AND THE VARIETIES OF RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCE

#### 2.1 Background of the Varieties of Religious Experience

*The Varieties of Religious Experience* is the best expression of William James's philosophy of religion which he prepared for delivery at the Gifford Lectures on Natural Religion held at the University of Edinburgh during 1901-1902, and their publication in the following year. This series of lectures delighted enthusiastic audiences at Edinburgh and later inspired generations of readers. *The Varieties of Religious Experience* presents some aspects of James's thinking on the subject of religion and was also an act of filial piety. James wrote to his wife immediately after his father's death in 1882, stating:

"You have one new function hereafter, or rather not so much a new function as a new intellectualization of an old one: you must not leave me till I understand a little more of the value and meaning of religion in father's sense, in the mental life and destiny of man. It is not the one thing needful, as he said. But it is needful with the rest. My friends leave it altogether out. I as his son (if for no other reason) must help it to its rights in their eyes. And for that reason I must learn to interpret it as right as I have never done, and you must help me" (Perry, 1935b, p. 237).

*The Varieties of Religious Experience* is the fulfillment of this pledge after a lapse of almost twenty years. James once said: "I myself believe that the evidence for God lies primarily in inner personal experiences" (James, 1920b,p.34). His father's influence explains James's general inclination to give importance to "personal religious experiences."

In his philosophy of religion, James reveals his personality and thought which shaped his work. His profound concern for the human individual and for all the aspects of man's personality, his concern for the reality of concrete experiences sprang from his philosophical perspectives. James maintains that to understand another's perspective we must first become familiar with the individual's personal life. James' influence is said to lie in his remarkable personality rather than in the principles he expounded. Thus, the Gifford Lectures arise from James's personal experiences. In it, James emphasises individuality and feeling, regarding the *Varieties of Religious Experience* as a study of morbid psychology and mediating philosophy (James,1920b,p.34).

## 2.2 James's Personal Religious Life

James's own religious life began with his religious formation in the intensity devout and extremely heterodox household of his prophet father, and then moved through a period of naturalism when he reacted against traditional theism. The works of Renouvier (1820) gave him the courage to think and believe.

James declared that, far from ever having had a mystical experience, he

actually found it impossible to pray; often he envied those gifted to do so. In 1904, he expressed his personal position very clearly:

“My personal position is simple. I have no living sense of commerce with a God. I envy those who have, for I know the addition of such a sense would help me immensely. The Divine, for my active life, is limited to abstract concepts which, as ideals, interest and determine me, but do so but faintly, in comparison with what a feeling of God might effect, if I had one. It is largely a question of intensity, but differences of intensity may make one’s whole center of energy shift. Yet there is something in me which makes response when I hear utterances made from that lead by others. I recognize the deeper voice. Something tells me, ‘thither lies the truth’ - and I am sure it is not old theistic habits and prejudices of infancy. Those are Christian; and I have grown so out of Christianity that entanglements therewith on the part of a mystical utterance has to be abstracted from and overcome, before I can listen. Call this, if you like, my mystical germ. It is a very common germ. It creates the rank and file of believers” (James, 1920c, p.211).

James says that once you allow the mystical germ to influence our beliefs (James, 1920c, p.212), then God is a combination of ideality and final efficacy, a person in so far as He must be cognizant and responsive in some way. James asserts that his belief in God’s existence was not based on formal, logical arguments, but

upon the need he experienced for such a being and the authority of the whole tradition of religious people. He thought of God as a powerful ally of his own ideals, but not as real as an earthly friend. While he never felt God's presence directly, but 'a germ of something similar' in him which forced him to respect the testimony of those who claimed to have had such a type of experience.

James own personality is very much attended to his view of philosophy of religion. His sense of humor, his impatience with pretense, his rejection of trifling and his attitudes toward life all made his philosophy of religion independent, and profoundly challenging. He was described as "the greatest of American psychologists," "the most famous American philosopher since Emerson," and a man whose "death leaves vacant a place in the world of English letters which no living writer and thinker can fill" (Miller,2000).

### **2.3 James's Ideas in the *Varieties***

As regards James's ideas which are developed in *The Varieties of Religious Experience* they represent one of the two threads which can be traced back continuously to his youth. There are two kinds of faith, the fighting faith and the comforting faith.

#### **2.3.1 The Fighting Faith and the Comforting Faith**

The fighting faith is the faith that springs from strength, preferring good to evil, the moral person fights for it with the sort of confidence that the brave man feels in himself and his allies, exulting in the danger and in the uncertainty of the issue. This is the faith of James's tough-mindedness, the bracing air which he prefers

to breathe when his hygienic tone is good; and it is also the faith of last resort, when skepticism has deprived him of every other support (Perry,1935b,p.324).

The comforting faith is the faith that springs from human weakness, and asks for refuge and security. In the fighting faith religion is a stimulant to the will; in comforting faith, on the other hand, it is at the bottom of one's heart, relaxing. Though one may row with great earnestness, one is aware of being carried to port-safely, inexorable-by the very current in which one floats. The need for this sort of faith James understood both from his own periodic weariness and from his sympathy with that extremely tragic plight which is the common lot of man. To this comforting faith, James devote special attention in the Gifford Lectures.

### 2.3.2 The Sick Soul

There is also a close relation between James's view of religious conversion and his own crisis in 1870-1872. His sense of black despair and morbid fear is used in *The Varieties of Religious Experience* to illustrate the state of the sick soul. He tells us that the experience made him "sympathetic with the morbid feelings of others and that both his melancholy and his emergence from it had a religious bearing" (James,1958,p.121). His own salvation came through self-reliance and the idea of moral freedom, rather than through a sense of supporting grace.

In James's opinion, the role of thinking is to redirect the individual into experience better prepared to meet future contingencies. It follows from this that intellectual activity, if it is to perform its function, must have consequences outside itself for feeling and conduct. It is from this position that James rejects traditional



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philosophical attitudes toward thinking as an activity that is self contained and valuable in itself. James's theory of meaning develops from these ideas.

For James, to call a belief or idea meaningful is to recognize it as fulfilling its function. However, if this is the case, then meaning must be integrally tied to the thinker's concrete or practical concerns. Actually, James is not interested in meanings as isolated from experience and conduct. To search for the meaning of ideas independently of their applications and functions would be like trying to understand the nature of a tool without inquiring about what it can be used for.

In centering on the function and application of ideas and beliefs James steps outside the range of traditional philosophy. Typically, philosophers have held that the meaning of an idea is one thing, and the way it can be used is another. Indeed, that meaning must be fully determined before any assessment of function can be made.

In the *Varieties*, James did face religious experiences with objective open-mindedness; and responded to them with profound sensitivity. The *Varieties* is not a descriptive analysis of secondhand religious life. It deals with firsthand accounts of human experiences which James considers as constituting the specific data of religious life.

## CHAPTER III

### WILLIAM JAMES ON THE NATURE OF RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCE

#### 3.1 The Principle of Religious Experience

In order to define the nature of religious experience, we should first find out “What is religion?” and “what is experience?” The word *religion* does not stand for any single principle or entity, and religion has many characters which may in turn be equally important. Philosophers have various views on ‘*religion*’. Karl Marx (1818-1883), describes religion as an ideological weapon of the ruling class which has a function that is harmful. John Dewey (1859-1952) finds religion has a valuable function to perform. Therefore, any abstract conception that is singled out to eliminate all others is misleading (Bernard,1968,p.103).

Instead of being seduced into the theorizing fallacy of seeking a definition as the key to the nature of religion, one should inquire into its various meanings in human experience. Hence, religion has its external aspects, worship, sacrifice, theology, ceremonies, and ecclesiastical organizations. It is also, in a more personal way, the inner dispositions “which form the center of his interest, his conscience, his helplessness, and his incompleteness”(James,1958,p.121). Nevertheless, one might argue that religion is not religion but a psychological manifestation, like Sigmund Freud (1856-1939). Freud sees religion as a form of wish-fulfillment, the dogmas of religion are illusions derived from deep and persistent wishes.

##### 3.1.1 James’s Concept of Religion

James, in *The Varieties of Religious Experience*, generally considers religion only in its personal aspect, believing that this is more fundamental than theologies:

“Churches, when once established, live second hand upon tradition; but the *founders* of every church owed their power originally to the fact of their direct personal communion with the divine. Not only the superhuman founders, the Christ, the Buddha, Mohammed, but all the originators of religious sects have been in this case; so personal religion should still seem the primordial thing, even to those who continue to esteem it incomplete” (James, 1958, p.30).

The meaning of religion, as one should generally understand it throughout James's writings, is described in *the Varieties* in the following practical terms:

“Religion, therefore, as I now ask you arbitrarily to take it, shall mean for us *the feelings, acts, and experiences of individual men in their solitude, so far as they apprehend themselves to stand in relation to whatever they may consider the divine*. Since the relation may be either moral, physical, or ritual, it is evident that out of religion in the sense in which we take it, theologies, philosophies, and ecclesiastical organizations may secondarily grow ” (James, 1958, p.31).

At this point, Levinson (1981) criticizes James, claiming that his definition of religion is characterized by his own problem of religion more than the phenomena in all of their complexity. “*The feelings, acts, and experiences of individual men in their solitude, so far as they apprehend themselves to stand in relation to whatever*

*they may consider the divine*" (James,1958,p.31). Levinson claims that "James does so for the methodological reasons." Again, "the purpose of the lectures is to isolate religious facts or data; and the only way to do that on James's grounds is to turn to the religious innovations which set patterns of behavior for religious groups" (Levinson,1981,p.90).

Let us come to see 'what is experience?' Everyone has had experiences of one kind or another. But my question is how does experience come to us and where is it from? Is there anything behind it, causing it to be as it is? Common sense tells us that we are in the universe and the experience of the universe is inside us. James in his *Psychology* made it clear that our minds are directly aware of reality. They do not handle offprints of something out there. Objects are mainly perceived as independent of our thoughts. These various notions do not hang together. Common sense is a philosophy in disguise and one not quite well knit from end to end. For instance, how the World Trade Center Twin Towers in New York City look after they were destroyed when you and I look at them, can be in your mind and also in my mind.

Primitive experience is entirely free from any general idea of the dependence of objects upon the knowing of them, there are certain accepted cases in which an experience is definitely recognized as *my experience*, which is regarded as deriving existence from a *for-me* relation (Barton,1904,p.43). This is a very different idea from that of the functioning of the sense-organs. That I see and hear and taste is a commonplace of all experience, and I may study what I see without effecting any

discontinuity in my practical or scientific world of things. But to believe that what I see is constituted by my seeing of it, is to define a new realm, an anomalous science, and possibly a new philosophical method. Such a belief must arise very early in connection with illusory experiences.

### 3.1.2 James's Concept of Experience

Experience, in James's view, is every bit an affair of transitions and relations as it is of the substantive ideas and images on which empiricist analysis has traditionally focused:

“When we take a rapid general view of the wonderful stream of our consciousness, our mental life, like a bird's life, seems to be made of an alternation of flights and perchings... The resting-places are whose peculiarity is that they can be held before the mind for an indefinite time, and contemplated without changing; the places of flight are filled with thoughts of relations (transitive parts), static or dynamic, that for the most part obtain between the matters contemplated in the periods of comparative rest” (James, 1904a, pp. 2-3).

James's argument for the continuity of consciousness in experienced relations lies at the very heart of his radical empiricism. In 1909, for example, in the preface to *The Meaning of Truth*, James characterizes the essence of radical empiricism in terms of a postulate, a statement of fact, and a generalized conclusion that make the centrality of experienced relations abundantly evident. His postulate



is 'that the only things that shall be debatable among philosophers shall be things definable in terms drawn from experience'. His statement of fact is that the relations between things, conjunctive as well as disjunctive, are just as much matters of direct particular experience. His generalized conclusion is that the parts of experience are held together from next to next by relations that are themselves parts of experience (James, 1975, p. 534).

James's postulate places him squarely within the tradition of empiricism, but his statement of fact and his generalized conclusion take empiricism to its logical extreme. To be radical, as James puts it, empiricism must neither admit into its constructions any element that is not directly experienced, nor exclude from them any element that is directly experienced. For such a philosophy, *the relations that connect experiences must themselves be experienced relations, and any kind of relation experienced must be accounted for as 'real' as anything else in the system.* (James, 1904b, p. 534).

For James, all which exists is pure experience and pure experience is all that exists. There is no *general* stuff of which experience at large is made. There are as many stuffs as there are 'natures' in the things experienced. Experience is only a collective name for all these sensible natures. There appears no universal element of which all things are made. Before experience can be experienced, it must be attended to. James says :

"My experience is what I agree to attend to. Only those items which I notice shape my mind – without selective interest, experience is an

utter chaos. Interest alone gives accent and emphasis, light and shade, background and foreground – intelligible perspective, in a world” (James,1890,p.484).

All our life is a mass of habits – practical, emotional, and intellectual – systematically organized for our weal or woe, and bearing us irresistibly toward our destiny, whatever it may be. A new habit is formed in three stages. First there must be need or desire. Then one needs information: methods of learning how to maintain the habit. One might read books, attend classes, and consciously explore ways how others have developed the desired habit. The last state is simple repetition; consciously doing exercise or actually reading and speaking until the acts become usual and habitual. For intellect there are two levels of knowing: Knowing through direct experience and knowing through abstract reasoning. James calls the first level “knowledge of acquaintance.” It is sensory, intuitive, poetic, and emotional. “I know the color blue when I see it, and the flavor of time when I feel it pass...but about the inner nature of these facts or what makes them what they are, I can say nothing at all” The higher level of knowledge James calls “Knowledge-about.” It is intellectual, focused, relational; it can develop abstractions; it is objective and unemotional. “When we know about it, we can do more than merely have it; we think over its relations, to subject it to a form of treatment and operate upon it with our thought. Through feelings we become acquainted with things but only with or thoughts do we know about them” (James,1890,p.221).

James observes that philosophers are only men thinking about things in the most comprehensive possible way. What goes by the forbidding name of metaphysics is nothing but an unusually obstinate effort to think clearly. Philosophy is essentially second thoughts, and we must be ready to follow them with athletic fortitude (James,1958,p.31).

### 3.1.3 James's Concept of Religious Experience

Religious experience to which men find themselves related in their religious acts and feelings may be any object that is godlike, whether it be a concrete deity or not (James,1958,p.31). Religious experience, according to James, refers to man's total reaction upon life that there must be something solemn, serious, and tender about any attitude which we denominate religious. If glad, it must not grin or snigger; if sad, it must not scream. Where a religion regards the world as tragic, the tragedy must be understood as purging, religious sadness, wherever it exists, must possess a purgatorial note (Bernard,1968,p.104).

The hub of religious experience is divine encounter. James suggests that 'divinity' can be construed in ways that accounted as much for Buddhist and transcendentalist experience as for Christian phenomena. Even though Buddhists and transcendentalists do not positively assume a God in the sense of a superhuman person (James,1958,p.31). When persons encounter divinity, they transact with some objects that order the world in a way that protects all ideal interests. A religious experience (or divine experience- sometimes it is difficult to distinguish neatly between "subject" and "object") is an experience of first things in

the way of being and power, which overarches and envelops other things so completely that what relates to them is the first and last word in the way of truth (James,1958,p.34).

As anthropologists like Frazer (1835) and Jevons (1882) have pointed out, fetishism and magic may have preceded religious traditions. But these things could just as easily be considered primitive science as elementary forms of religious life. James was interested in the descent of current and competing religious options, and these were traditions or movements that originated when the religious experiences of religious geniuses were commemorated in specific ways (Levinson,1981,p.90).

Therefore, religious experience is composed both with the sense of well-being and well-doing. The sense of well-doing that the moralist achieved when he set out seriously and solemnly to accomplish some objective. And the sense of well-being that religious people demanded. Such events permitted James's religious reading to continue by showing in positive ways how the supernatural functioned in the lives of men and how men can experience such functions in the same way.

## **3.2 The Characteristics and Types of Religious Experience**

### **3.2.1 The Characteristics of Religious Experience**

The Characteristics of the religious experience includes the following beliefs:

- a. That the visible world is part of a more spiritual universe from which it draws its chief significance;
- b. That union or harmonious relation with that higher universe is our true end;

- c. That prayer of inner communion with the spirit thereof—be that spirit “God” or “law” --- is a process wherein work is really done, and spiritual energy flows in and produces effects, psychological or material, within the phenomenal world.

Religion also includes the following psychological characteristics :--

- d. A new zest which adds itself like a gift to life, and takes the form of either lyrical enchantment or of appeal to earnestness and heroism.
- e. An assurance of safety and a temper of peace, and, in relation to others, a preponderance of loving affections.

Religion must be considered vindicated in a certain way from the attacks of her critics. It would seem that she cannot be a mere anachronism and survivor, but must exert a permanent function, whether she be with or without intellectual content, and whether she has any, it be true or false.

James asserts that we must next pass beyond the point of view of merely subjective utility, and make inquiry into the intellectual content itself. First, is there, under all the discrepancies of the creeds, a common nucleus to which they bear their testimony unanimously?

Second, ought we to consider the testimony true? The warring gods and formulas of the various religions do indeed cancel each other, but there is a certain uniform deliverance in which religions all appear to meet. It consists of two parts which are an uneasiness and its solution (James, 1958, p. 418).

The uneasiness is a sense that there is something wrong about us as we naturally stand. The solution is a sense that we are saved from the wrongness by making proper connection with the higher powers.

In the more developed minds, the wrongness takes a defilement and the salvation takes a mystical tinge. James cites that we shall keep well within the limits of what is common to all such minds if we formulate the essence of their religious experience in terms like these:

“The individual, so far as he suffers from his wrongness and criticizes it, is to that extent consciously beyond it and at least in possible touch with something higher, if anything higher exists. Along with the wrong part there is thus a better part of him, even though it may be but an almost helpless germ. With which part he should identify his real being is by no means obvious at this stage; but when stage two (the stage of solution or salvation) arrives, the man identifies his real being with the germinal higher part of himself; and does so in the following way. He becomes conscious that this higher part is coterminous and continuous with MORE of the same quality, which is operative in the universe outside of him, and which he can keep in working touch with, and in a fashion get on board of and save himself, when all his lower beings have gone to pieces in the wreck” (James, 1958, p. 412).



For James, all the phenomena are describable in these very simple general terms. They allow for the divided self and the struggle; they involve the change of personal centre and the surrender of the lower self; they express the appearance of exteriority of the helping power and yet account for our sense of union with it; and they fully justify our feelings of joy. There is probably no autobiographic document to which the description will not well apply. One need only add such specific details as to adapt it to various theologies and various personal temperaments, and one will then have the various experiences reconstructed in their individual form.

### 3.2.2 Types of Religious Experience

In *Varieties*, James's religious attitude can be divided into two great types (James, 1958, pp. 83-121).

1. *The religion of healthy mindedness*, that is persons who are optimists, sometimes instinctive and spontaneous, sometimes reflective and self-conscious. Persons of a healthy-minded bent tend to see everything in this life as good. The outcome is happiness and in the religious sphere the response is one of grateful admiration and desire for union with the divine. For its possessors, evil is a more or less negligible quantity, and re-birth is a thing unknown. This is the 'once-born' type. Rousseau, Bernardin de Saint-Pierre, and the whole liberal movement in Christianity belong to this category.

2. *The religion of the sick soul* is more complex. It begins with a tragic sense of sinfulness, slowly invades the torn and troubled life, and finally transforms it through the dramatic process of conversion. The sick soul is sensitive to life's discordances. An individual of this inclination finds evil to be an essential clue to the world's dimly perceived meaning. This is the 'twice-born' type.

The religion of the sick soul springs from a condition of morbid melancholy and fear; from human weakness, and the conviction of spiritual failure. It is a religion which responds to the need of deliverance from a sense of the vanity of mortal things, a sense of sin, a fear of the universe. We are all, at least potentially, sick souls, James asserted; the sanest and best of us are of one clay with lunatics and prison inmates; "mere sanity is the most philistine and unessential of a man's attributes." If we recognize this, we crave for a religion which will give us a new sphere of power and a new sense of well-being. A supernatural assurance of salvation will redeem our interior world from waste, wash away our fears, and fill our lives with genuine spiritual meaning.

From the sick soul's perspective, evil is not easily dismissed as born of our ignorance. This type of person experiences a pain deep within. The sick soul is said by James to encompass the broader range of experiences incorporating the genuinely evil aspects of reality (Wulff,1997,p.491).

The healthy-minded and the sick soul live, says James, on the opposite sides of the pain threshold, one habitually dwelling “on the sunny side of their misery line,” and the other living beyond it, “in darkness and apprehension” (James,1958,p.115). They correspondingly require different types of religion. For the once-born type, the world has one story only, possessing precisely those values it seems to have. For those who must be twice-born to achieve happiness however, the world is a double-storied mystery. The life that appears before us is a deception and a cheat, and only by renouncing it can we hope to discover truth (James,1958,p.139).

The ‘Once-born’ type of religion is the religions of purely natural man and the ‘twice-born’ type may insist upon the death of the natural man and his rebirth into the godly world of faith. Buddhism, Christianity, Judaism, and Mohammedanism are examples of the ‘twice-born’ type of religion. Stoicism and Epicureanism marked the conclusion of the ‘once-born’ period in religion and represent the highest flights of the purely natural man (James,1958,p.505).

The insistence of ‘twice-born’ religions upon the need for spiritual death on the level of the ‘natural’ plane and rebirth on the higher level of the spiritual plane has its basis in the fact that the two ‘lives’ cannot coexist in one person: “There are two lives, the natural and the spiritual, and we must lose one before we can participate in the other” (James,1958,p.167). In Christianity, for example, they must die to an unreal life before they can be born into the real life (James,1958,p.165).

In the history of religion most of the great saints and leaders are to be found among the twice born souls and in the twice born religions; there are to be found the great forces for developing man's spiritual life in the richest variety of ways.

### **3.3 Pragmatism and Religious Experience**

James's approach to the philosophy of religion is characteristically pragmatic and empirical. He discovers what religion really is by examining the experiences of religious persons. The values of religious phenomena are discovered by examining the effects that they produce.

#### **3.3.1 James's Concept of Pragmatism**

What is James's concept of pragmatism? Pragmatism, originally a method of looking at experiences. James develops it to clarify or eliminate unnecessary considerations about issues in one's life or one's thought. From this he proposes pragmatic as a useful definition of truth. True ideas are those we can assimilate, validate, corroborate, and verify. False ideas are those that we cannot. He understands that there are truths that cannot be assimilated, and so on, but he points out that this second class of truths (which he sees as useless) may be put aside when one is faced with a personal choice or a real decision. Although this point of view may appear obvious to some, it was roundly attacked and criticized at its inception. He writes: "I fully expect the pragmatist's view of truth to run through the classic stages of a theory's career. First, you know, a new theory is attacked as absurd; then it is admitted to be true, then it is obvious but insignificant; finally it is seen to be so

important that its adversaries claim that they themselves discovered it” (Frager and Fadiman, 1984, p. 252).

In his Pragmatism, James said that ideas become true just so far as they help us to get into satisfactory relations with other parts of our experience, and that the truth is the name of whatever proves itself to be good in the way of belief. Lying behind this view about truth is the conviction of James that everything must be understood in the light of human purpose, including thought.

### 3.3.2 Rationality and Subjectivity

In the essay ‘the Sentiment of Rationality’, James argued that there can be no adequate definition of reason which ignores the feeling of rationality, the ultimate sense of logical fit. James believed that the subjective dimension is a feature of philosophy. Thus, his philosophy is subjective. James Earle (1967) says about James, if his pragmatism is a description of what actually happens when men seek truth, then it is part of psychology. If the dualism between human and natural processes is finally inadmissible, then psychology is a chapter of general metaphysics. Nevertheless, James’s pragmatic approach to the philosophy of religion is dominated by ethical considerations. He approaches religious experiences and theology by way of ethics. What is desirable and what is true in religion are determined by examining the moral fruits of various religious practices and beliefs. Thus, it is true, as Julius Seelye Bixler (1926) observes, “that the threads of his philosophy converge at one point into a defense of religious faith, and

that his ethics and his purposive view of human life lead him to belief in a Deity” (Julius,1926,p.4).

### 3.3.3 Pragmatism and Introspection

James makes a special application of pragmatism. He uses introspection as an investigative tool just because it was practically valuable and this cannot be ignored fully in deciphering his pragmatism (Anna,1997,p.12). According to James, introspection is a kind of inner observation. It means the looking into our own minds and reporting what we discover there. He views the role of thinking as a teleological mechanism. For him, thinking is only a stage in a larger process whose natural endpoint is action (Suckiel,1982,p.31). Ideas and beliefs are tools whose function is to benefit the thinker in the concrete situations of his life.

I agree with James that ideas or thoughts are tools by which human beings try to achieve ends and they must be judged by their efficiency in sub serving these ends. Beliefs are also tools for dealing with experience and must be judged as such. From this the word *pragmatism* has come to be a name for any position which lays emphasis on results as a test of satisfactoriness.

In *pragmatism*, James argues that if theological ideas prove the notion of God, how could pragmatism possibly deny God’s existence? (James,1975,p.62). For him, true knowledge regarding the nature of God is not to be found in the realm of rationalistic thinking but in the concrete particulars of life. In all of these particulars God is somehow present.



In my opinion, James's pragmatism widens the search for Religious Experience. As we can see, Rationalism sticks to logic while empiricism sticks to the external senses. Pragmatism is willing to follow either logic or the senses as well as personal experiences. She will count mystical experiences if they have practical consequences. She will take Divinity who lives in individual private heart. Pragmatism's test of probable truth is what works best in the way of leading us.

### 3.4 William James and Religious Consciousness

Baldwin's *Dictionary of Philosophy* defines consciousness, on the one hand, as 'the distinctive character of whatever may be called mental life and mind,' on the other hand, as 'the individual's conscious process, together with the dispositions and predispositions which condition it.' Indeed, there is no philosophical term at once so popular and so devoid of standard meaning. How can a term mean anything when it is employed to connote anything and everything. One hears of the object of consciousness and the subject of consciousness, and the union of the two in self-consciousness, and also the transcendental consciousness; the inner and the outer, the higher and the lower, the temporal and the eternal consciousness. Then there is consciousness-stuff, and unconscious consciousness, called respectively mind-stuff, and unconscious psychical states or subconsciousness to avoid a verbal contradiction.

Indeed the definition of being in terms of consciousness is set down, as the surviving and most illuminating truth of philosophy (Barton, 1904, p.42). Consciousness so regarded as the fundamental ontological truth, is called upon to

carry and protect man's moral and religious interests. The term consciousness as at present stands for a general propaganda: psychology and transcendental logic, prove the immortality of the soul. Therefore, consciousness cannot mean everything and yet mean anything.

Several philosophers like Descartes (1596-1650), Spinoza (1632-1677) and Leibniz (1646-1716) do in a measure represent in their several conceptions of consciousness the three stages and categories which we have been considering. For Descartes consciousness is a substance, for Spinoza it is a series or complex of qualities corresponding point to point with the physical series, while for Leibniz consciousness is a relation.

What applies to Leibniz in this matter applies equally to Herbart, (1776-1841). For Herbart too, developed a relational view of consciousness. Like the Leibnizian view, Herbart failed to gain general acceptance by reason of the metaphysical doctrines with which it was entangled. In fact, modern conceptions of consciousness at that time have been dominated almost entirely by the more primitive attitudes of Descartes and Spinoza. During the nineteen century, in both England and Germany consciousness has been treated as a substance in which the apparently independent object of the experienced world inhered as dependent states or 'ideas,' which is the attitude of Lock (1632-1704) and Berkeley and no less than of Kant (1724-1804) and Fichte (1762-1814). After the manner of Spinoza, consciousness has been conceived as a series of purely secondary qualities, running

parallel to the stream of purely primary qualities supposed to constitute the material world.

Lock and Kant conceived consciousness to be a kind of receptivity set over against the things which were to give it a content. Huxley in his essay on 'Sensation and the Sensiferous Organs' appears to have a similar conception. Indeed, it is mainly after this manner that consciousness has been conceived and discussed in modern theories. Nevertheless, it seems to be quite impossible to find out anything verifiable about consciousness from the point of view of this conception, because we are not able to produce an instance of the distinction between consciousness and other things that it involves (Woodbridge,1905,p.90). Consciousness is never discovered as one thing set over against other things which are not already its content.

Some Philosophers have inaugurated a movement to put consciousness on a par with other objects of study, by investigating it under the category of Relation, for example, Mach (1902) in Germany, and Bawden(1905), Woodbridge (1905) in America. They have formulated the difference between physical and psychical as a difference of relational context. However, that gratifying of these new formulations of the relational theory of consciousness, made most of them suffer from the taint of very subjective and non-relational view which they are intended to replace. Mach, for example, uses the term 'sensation' to denote the primary elements which are to stand as the terms of both the physical and of the psychical order of relation. Thus implying that both physical and psychical are ultimately modes of the psychical.

With Bawden's functional view of the physical and psychical, he finds the same difficulty. It would also make consciousness the ultimate reality within the physical and psychical orders are differentiated in response to the pragmatic needs of the conscious experience itself.

According to James, there is less of subjectivism in either of the foregoing and here also the elements of reality are described by the psychical term 'pure experience' (James, 1904a, p. 478). Even a *pure experience* implies a consciousness of it; its *esse* depends upon *perceive* (James, 1904b, p. 534). James's adherence to the 'humanistic' theory of knowledge, which many of its critics appear to regard as an axiom or postulates. To hold that propositions owe their truth to the fact that people believe them would seem to indicate that despite certain realistic features 'radical empiricism', it is not quite free from the subjectivism of Berkeley and Hume (1711-1776).

Woodbridge's statement of the relational theory stands out in contrast to the formulations thus far considered, in that it contains a recognition that objects and truths do not depend for their existence or nature upon any consciousness of them. They are for the reason not to be described by any such psychical terms as sensations or mental needs or pure experiences. But they would be described as real and independent *object* in space and time.

For James, the word 'consciousness' is the fact that things not only are, but get reported and are known (James, 1904a, p. 402). Whoever blots out the notion of consciousness from his list of first principles must still provide in some way for that

function's being carried out (James,1904a,p.403). If we start with the supposition that there is only one primal stuff or material in the world, a stuff of which everything is composed, and if we call that stuff 'pure experience,' then knowing can easily be explained as a particular sort of relation towards one another into which portions of pure experience may enter. The relation itself is a part of pure experience, one of its 'term's becomes the subject or bearer of the knowledge, the knower, the other becomes the object know (James,1890,p.212).

Consciousness, for James, is adequately defined as a certain context. 'The peculiarity of our experiences, that they not only are, but are known, which their 'conscious' quality is invoked to explain, is better explained by their relations – these relations themselves being experiences – to one another.' As a given experience, it originally occurs 'a simple that,' to which subjectivity is imputed, not by virtue of what it is, but by virtue of what it does or of the relations in which it stands. 'Its subjectivity and objectivity are functional attributes solely, realized only when the experience is taken' (James,1904a,pp.485-6).

While the given experience which thus functions in two contexts is necessarily a part of some individual experience, the contexts themselves are apparently distinguishable by the fact that one of them – the subjective –falls wholly within, and is thus identical with, 'individual experience,' while the other is mainly outside. As James mentions that 'one of them is the reader's personal biography, the other is the history of the house of which the room is a part.

Consciousness as such is entirely impersonal self and its activities belong to the content. My experiences and your experiences are 'with' each other in various external ways. Nevertheless, my experiences pass into mine, and your experiences pass into yours in a way in which yours and mine never pass into one another (James,1904a,pp.481-2).

James claims about religion that religion comes to the rescue when people realize (James,1958,p.47). Within the context of James's ontology, he proposes to argue that religion is the most important function of mankind. Humanity can neither live without religion nor live with it as it is. Without religion, the dreams of the sick-soul could never come true; they require supernatural help if they are ever to be well. Furthermore, James wants to show that supernatural is inevitably tied to the ways that coercive people thought and act.

James argues that the immediate contents of religious consciousness are happenings that can be publicized and investigated. They are personal happenings. The elementary psychic fact, James claims, is not 'thought' or 'this thought,' or 'that thought,' but '*my thought*, every thought being owned' (James,1890,p.226). But whatever one person can specify as 'owned' can be related to another person. In part, this is true because "men have no eyes but for those aspects of things which they have already been taught to discern" (James,1890,p.443). They perspective what they see in the sense that their perceptions are formed by standards of appropriateness they inherit through education; hence, "the only things which we preperceive are those which have been labeled for us, and the labels stamped into



our mind. If we lost our stock of labels we should be intellectually lost in the midst of the world (James, 1890, p. 443).

Persons, James argues, are born into languages that they must learn to speak and to speak they have to think. From this point of view, the immediate content of consciousness amounts to someone's thoughtful life as it is going on and before it becomes, in turn, the subject or topic of another thoughtful life. According to James, therefore, there is nothing in principle that one person can observe about himself that cannot be shared with others. People may not share pain or silent trains of thought, but one person can tell another as much about those things as he can tell himself. As James put it in his work on human blindness, one can come to know others for the spiritual beings that they are, but coming to know them involves learning a good deal from the subjects themselves.

### 3.5 William James and Religious Attitudes

The religious attitudes of religious experience are set, according to James, in encounters with Divinity. Feelings or thoughts of some unseen order provoke religious optimism, pessimism, meliorism, and indifference. Each of these religious attitudes presuppose : the belief that there is an unseen order, and that our supreme good lies in harmoniously adjusting ourselves thereto (James, 1958, p. 53).

People's religious attitudes do not emerge as news from nowhere; they are responses to their perceptions of reality. This criterion of reality holds whether or not things are sensible. In either case, they cause reactions. Thoughts without sensible reference provoke reactions that are stronger than those stimulated by

sensible presence. The memory of an insult, for example, makes people angrier than the insult itself. Christ never appears to many Christians who lead intensely Christian lives. Their thought of Christ polarizes their lives through and through. Finally, certain imageless thoughts, like the best things are the more eternal things, can swamp behavior in quite definite ways for purpose of definite description.

On top of these arguments, James asserts that “the whole universe of concrete objects, as we know them, ...in a wider and higher universe of abstract ideas that lend it its significance” (James, 1958, p. 56). This evidences James’s commitment to conceptual idealism. That is the doctrine that analysis of human apprehension of the world is incomplete without reference to the standards of appropriateness that people brought to their experiences.

James argues that persons who thought or felt divinities reacted by developing certain attitudes. They evinced patterns of sadness and gladness in particular, though the precise complexion of these emotions depended in large part on the sense of the kind of object to which religious self-surrender was made. Some encounters with divinity provoked intense convictions of sin when the gap between divinity and personality was revealed. This led to sadness. Others encounter provoked feelings of release from sin and practical union with divinity, the gladness of deliverance. Still others unleashed a gladness in persons who knew no need for release from sin. James noted that the most complex religious attitude was the sense of well-being actualized in deliverance from fear.

In *Varieties*, James cited that the spiritual attitudes informed personal experience were “as describable as anything else” (James,1958,p.500). But this did not imply that looking at the immediate content of the religious consciousness led to any easy discoveries about religious experience. He assumed that investigations of persons which did not require instruction by the subjects themselves were bound to be ethnocentric or egocentric evaluate, the conduct of persons without understanding what the goals, desires, interests, standards of appropriateness, and feelings of achievement. James argued that while these things were initially mysterious in any given case, they were illuminated by articulating all the variables of personal experience.

These variables included an objective and a subjective part : the objective part consisted in the thing that people thought or felt; the subjective part was the inner state, from which others were normally, but not terminally, excluded. A matrix of ideals, problems, and conceptual strategies provided the context for the things people thought, an orientation from which thinking comes to pass (James,1958,p.498).

James asserted that distinctively religious facts were personal facts, which demanded investigation of both objective and subjective parts. In order to appreciate religious experience, investigators had to describe not only what religious persons thought or felt, but also the spiritual attitudes from which those thoughts and feelings emanated. They had to pursue “full” facts. Full facts, according to James, were constituted by a conscious field *plus* its object as felt or thought of *plus* an

attitude towards the object *plus* the sense of a self to whom the attitude belongs (James,1958,p.499).

These claims about full personal facts guided the formation of James's first series of Gifford Lectures. He attempted to indicate religious attitude in his circumscription of the topic of religion. The goal was well-being, as specified in various ways. Religious persons were haunted by questions and problems connected with personal destiny, and they organized perceptions, conceptions, and rules of action in ways that facilitated answers and solutions. Within this context, religious originals felt or thought of some unseen reality, or encountered some sort of divinity. The encounter informed their sense of destiny and stimulated them to participate in the actualization of that destiny in distinctive ways. In James's third lecture, "The Reality of the Unseen," he investigated the psychological peculiarities associated with "belief in an object which we cannot see" (James,1958,p.63).

James's conception of 'full' personal facts highlighted the connections between 'beliefs' and 'emotions.' Religious happiness and religious contribution were responses to objects of consciousness. There was an inevitable judgement in the constitution of emotions, along with the variables of bodily change and subsequent disposition. Without objects of consciousness bodily changes would be unemotional. Religious emotions were total views, which depended on experiences of divinity. Religious optimism and religious pessimism were the two most prominent contemporary cases. They issued from encounters with different gods, even with different sorts of gods.

James went on the religion of healthy-mindedness to clarify the connections between belief and emotion. He wanted to appreciate the success of such religious movements as liberal Protestantism, transcendentalism, and the various sorts of experimental religions. James claimed that the systematic cultivation of optimism was consonant with important currents in human nature. Normally, he suggested, religious persons diverted their attention from suffering and evil enough to concentrate on the actualization of their ideals and interests (James,1958,p.90).

The various sorts of religious optimism were matched by a “radically opposite” religious attitude “based on the persuasion that the evil aspects of our life are of its very essence, and the world’s meaning most comes home to us when we lay them most to heart”(James,1958,pp130-1).

Religious individuals expressed different levels of pessimism. However, every sort of religious pessimist thought that healthy-minded consciousness was “a bell with a crack; it draws its breath on sufferance and by accident (James,1958,p.136). Religious pessimists thought that evil meant a maladjustment with things in their environment and sought natural strategies of assimilation and accommodation to correct disorder. Twice-born pessimists thought evil was a wrongness or vice in their own nature. They pictured the wrongness as so divisive that no “superficial rearrangement” of the self could cure it; evil required a supernatural remedy.

James had signaled allegiance to the twice-born position on evil. Failure was a pivotal human experience; escape from it was just a lucky chance. But

failure was only the first stage of the world-sickness (James,1958,pp.136-140). People reached the second stage when they realized that the purely naturalistic look at life was sure to end in sadness. Then, momentary successes were struck against an “evil background. (James,1958,p.140).

Indeed, the actual experiences of sick souls demonstrated the inadequacy of healthy-mindedness “as a philosophical doctrine, because the evil facts which it refuses positively to account for are a genuine portion of reality (James,1958,p.163).

### **3.6 William James and Self in Transformation**

The heart of James’s analysis of religious experience is his investigation of the sort of self to which religious attitudes belong. He claims that religious attitudes belong to selves in transformation, to divided selves becoming integral selves, to world-sick selves becoming well as never before (James,1958,p.169). He is particularly interested in the transformation of selves.

James saw that personalities arose from the continual interplay of instincts, habits, and personal choices. He viewed personal differences, developmental stages, psychopathology, and the rest of personality as arrangements and rearrangements of the basic building blocks supplied by nature and slowly refined by evolution. Every thought tends to be part of a personal consciousness. Therefore, there is no such thing as individual consciousness independent of an owner. There is only the process of thought as experienced or perceived by an individual. Consciousness always exists in relation to a person; it is not a special kind of stuff. Within each personal consciousness thought is always changing. We can never have the same exact



thought twice. We may see the same object, hear the same tone, taste the same food, but our consciousness of those perceptions changes each time. What seems upon cursory inspection to be repetitious thought is actually a changing series, each unique, each partially determined by previous modifications of the original thought. Within each personal consciousness thought is sensibly continuous.

The most spiritual person must be concerned with and aware of physical needs because the body is the initial source of sensation. However, consciousness can transcend any level of physical excitement for a limited period of time. The body, necessary for the origin and maintenance of personality, is subservient to the activities of the mind. The body is an expressive tool of the indwelling consciousness rather than the source of stimulation itself. The self is that personal continuity that each one of us recognises each time we awaken. While we agree to a remarkable degree in what we find interesting in our own selves are for each of us of unique importance. James distinguishes several layers of self (Wulff,1997,p.4785).

1. *The Material self* : The material layer of the self includes those things that we identify with ourselves. The material self includes not only our bodies but also our homes, possessions, friends, and family. To the extent that a person identifies with an external person or object, it is part of his or her identity.
2. *The Social self* : A man's social self is the recognition which he gets from his mates." It is any and all roles that we willingly or unwillingly accept. A person may have many or few social selves, consistent or

inconsistent, but whatever they are, one identifies with each in the proper setting. James suggests that the proper course of action is to pick one to stake your life on. All other selves thereupon become unreal, but the fortunes of this self are real. Its failures are real failures, its triumphs real triumphs.

3. *The Spiritual self* : The spiritual self is one's inner and subjective being. It is the active elements in all consciousness. It is the home of interest – not the pleasant or the painful, not even pleasure or pain, as such, but that within us to which pleasure and pain, the pleasant and the painful, speak. It is the source of effort and attention, and the place from which appear to emanate the fiats of the will. One expression of this self is exemplified in religious experiences, which have no proper intellectual deliverance of their own, but belong to a region deeper and more vital and practical, than that which the intellect inhabits.

The material self consists of one's body and at least some of one's material possessions. The social selves are the various personalities one presents to various others; these, to a large extent, dictate one's behavior. One's spiritual self is not the whole of one's inner life but that portion of which we say that it has the thoughts, feelings, etc. That make up our stream of consciousness. Although James calls this self 'spiritual,' he does not identify it with a continuous soul substance. Introspection reveals only a stream of thoughts, of which the present one is the judgement that I am the same self I was yesterday. A judgement based on resemblance of present

bodily feelings to past ones and on the continuity of this thought with its predecessors. The present thought appropriated (selected) past thoughts of the stream; it is the 'thinker.'

Therefore, James says "there are indefinite number of inborn impulses that are apparently common to all human beings. These impulses occupy two spheres, a lower one of fleshy sensations, instincts and desires, of egotism, doubt and the lower personal interests and a higher more profound sphere. Where it may be found, for example, the self-forgetful expansive affections and the tendency to subject oneself to strenuous challenge and sacrifice. This duality in human nature provides the general basis for all experience." Even Sigmund Freud developed two descriptions of the basic impulses. The early model described two opposing forces, the sexual (or, more generally, the erotic, physically gratifying) and the aggressive or the destructive. This basic antagonism is not necessarily visible in mental life because most of our thoughts and actions are evoked, not by one of these instinctual forces in isolation but be both in combination. Freud writes: "The sexual impulses are remarkable for their plasticity, for the facility with which they can change their aims, for their interchangeability – for the ease with which they can substitute one form of gratification for another, and for the way in which they can be held in suspense" (Freud,1933,p.94).

James appears the latest instance of this theory. Nearly every shade of doctrine, from common-sense dualism to absolute idealism, involves this objective

reference. It is proposed to construct the world out of 'pure experience'. Thus, eliminating this objectionable feature of external reference (Henry,1905,p.55).

James cites that the normal evolution of character mainly consisted in the straightening out and unifying of the inner self. Normally, the maturation of thought amounted to relief from mental division and the emergence of a mind whose parts are accommodated to one another (James,1890,p.309). An accompanying sense of conviction makes some divided selves religious. Divided selves who are religious try to overcome the divisions they feel within themselves as well as fail attempts. Therefore, their unhappiness takes the form of "moral remorse and compunction, of feeling inwardly vile and wrong, and of standing in false relations to the author of one's being and appointer of one's spiritual fate" (James,1958,p.170).

According to James, religion is only one of many ways to attain a unified self. Some people have experienced new birth away from religion into unbelief or incredulity; others have been converted from divisive moral scrupulosity to single-minded license. In every sort of self-unification, religious or otherwise, a "firmness, stability, and equilibrium succeeded period of storm and stress and inconsistency" (James,1958,p.498).

Nevertheless, several qualities distinguish the self-unification of religious originals from irreligious transformations. First, religious transformation brings a sense of release from conviction of sin. Second, religious originals escape the sadness of division as a result of their "firmer hold upon religious realities"

(James,1958,p.189). Third, the “new identity” of religious originals, born of religious experience is indefinite and conservative enough to sustain interest in personal destiny at the center of consciousness. But also revolutionary enough to displace fear and anxiety as the basic motive for conduct, with assurance of well-being and love for the other as it lives for itself (James,1958,p.190).

James develops a model of religious transformation that turns on issues of avowal, not of belief. He notes that alterations of character are normal, but that transformations are extraordinary. Transformations occur whenever one aim grows so stable as to expel definitively its previous rivals from the individual's life (James,1958,p.194). Whenever transformation occurs, an individual avows his identification with a new and particular group of ideas. Thus, religious ideas previously peripheral in his consciousness take a central place and that religious aims form the habitual center of his energy. The variables are tied to a picture of mind as both conscious and self-conscious. Their explanatory power lies in a subject's ability to tell an investigator what associations of ideas and habits informed his view on things, and what new information strains that view.

In self-surrendering conversions, according to James, some hidden process was started in people trying to escape conviction of sin, “which went on after the effort ceased, and made the result come as if it came spontaneously”

(James,1958,p.196). Person suffering from religious melancholy made efforts to escape his natural wrongness, the identity he avowed was still the imperfect self, so that the more perfect self he longed to be was jammed. James agreed with Starbuck

that relaxation of the will of an avowed imperfect self, permitted subconscious forces to take the lead. Supposing that the group of ideas which constituted the convert's born again identity were among those forces, they could only rise to consciousness.





## CHAPTER IV

### A DEFENSE OF JAMES ON THE NATURE OF RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCE

In this chapter, I argue that the nature of religious experience as understood by James can be put into three areas: (1) The nature of mysticism, (2) Religious experience and Supernaturalism, and (3) Divinity is experienced within.

#### 4.1 The Nature of Mysticism

In defining 'mystical experience', James proposes that the following 4 essential characteristics should be involved (James, 1958, pp. 319).

1. Ineffability. The subjects of mystical experiences say that such an experience defies expression, that no adequate report of the contents can be given in words. It follows from this that its quality must be directly experienced; it cannot be imparted or transferred to others.
2. Noetic Quality. Those who have mystical experiences claim that they have gotten or received deeply significant and important insights during the experiences. Although so similar to states of feeling, mystical states seem to those who experience them to also be states of knowledge. They are states of insight into depths of truth unplumbed by the discursive intellect. They are illuminations, revelations, full of significance and importance, all

inarticulate though they remain; and as a rule they carry with them a curious sense of authority for after time.

3. Transiency. Mystical states cannot be sustained for long. Except in rare instances, half an hour, or at most an hour or two, seems to be the limit beyond which they fade into the light of common day. Often, when faded, their quality can be but imperfectly be reproduced in memory; but when they recur it is recognized; and from one recurrence to another it is susceptible of continuous development in what is felt as inner richness and importance.
4. Passivity of the Subject. Although a person can prepare himself for and help bring about mystical experiences, when the characteristic sort of consciousness has set in, the mystic feels as if his own will were in abeyance, and indeed sometimes as if he were grasped and held by a superior power.

Furthermore, he indicates that “the mystical feeling of enlargement, union, and emancipation has no specific intellectual content whatsoever of its own.” Mysticism contributes to knowledge by greatly enlarging man’s field of consciousness, thereby opening up new areas of knowledge and putting “rational” knowledge into truer perspective (James, 1958, p.425).

For normal rational beliefs, they should be grounded on

- a. definitely stable abstract principles

- b. definite facts of sensation
- c. definite hypotheses based on such facts
- d. definite inferences logically drawn.

James suggested that mystics made a virtue of personal tenacity. They held a doctrine of religious appreciation that made the value of religious life a function of the veracity of religious testimony, just as many philosophers did. But their position was distinguished from the philosopher's, in that mystics claimed that the testimony of religious witnesses; that is, people who had encountered divinity, was intellectually authoritative. Mystics claimed that religious truths were revealed to them only when they were at peace and in the privacy of their mind. The religious testimony, emerged from these religious experiences, was self-validated and whatever people did in consequence of such experiences was legitimized by revelation.

James perceives mysticism in two ways: (James, 1958, p. 427)

1. Mysticism as a distinctive state of consciousness.
2. Mysticism as revelation of truths in a special manner.

Mystical states of consciousness are distinguished from ordinary consciousness, as they elude articulation during and after their occurrence. They are qualitatively cognitive because they include objects of consciousness. Unlike ordinary consciousness, mystical states cannot be sustained for long. Those who encounter them will experience a surrender of themselves to someone higher.

Therefore, Mystical states of consciousness stand at the root and center of personal religious experience.

If we look back in history, James's mystical consciousness is supported by important historical precedents like the Romantic moment, followers of the Yogic *Samadhi* tradition in India, and Buddhists seeking *Dhyana* cultivated "consciousness of illumination." As did the Sufis among the Moslems in their spiritual exercises. Mystics justified their claims to religious knowledge by virtue of their achievement through revelation or illumination. They claim that their deliverances carry the one requisite mark which made them incorrigible.

James cites people cannot assume that mystical claims are indubitable simply because they cannot point to any existing method for settling disputes about them. James's science of religions provides ways to settle disputes about mystical claims that mystics have no way to settle themselves (Dotter, 1998, p.28). James's aim is to appreciate the mystical states of consciousness that generated these claims as well as to inspect religious conduct informed by them.

I argue that the messages of mystical experiences, though profoundly significant for those directly involved, have no necessary binding effect on others in the sense that they must accept them uncritically. As James mentioned, there is evidence from the point of view of psychological mechanisms that the classical mysticism and the lower mysticism spring from the same mental level (James, 1958, p.426).

My point is that whatever comes must be shifted and tested, and run the gauntlet of confrontation with the total context of experience, just like what comes from the outer world of sense. Its value must be ascertained by empirical methods, so long as we are not mystics ourselves.

Nevertheless, in my opinion, whatever the non-mystical majority may believe, they should not deny the mystic's right to follow his insights. As James states that if the mystical truth that comes to a man, proves to be a force that he can live by, the majority have no right to order him to live in another way (James,1958,p.427).

Alston (1982) supports James's ideas that mystical experiences serve as evidence of abilities to signal events unreflectively. In any case, many of the claims purported, resulting from religious experiences point in directions to which the religious sentiments of non mystical men incline. They tell us about the supremacy of the ideal, its vastness, its union, its safety, and so on (Alston,19892,p.5).

Forman (1998) argues for James that mystical states might result in the most energetic inspiration, but on the mystics own grounds, this could be reckoned an advantage only in case the inspiration were a true one. If the inspiration were erroneous, the energy would be all the more mistaken and misbegotten (Forman,1998,p.202).

My argument is that the truth of the mystic's beliefs are verified in the same general way in which all truths are verified. Of course, these are on the basis of their origination in experience and in terms of the fruitful relations which they establish

with reality in terms of human conduct. Mystical beliefs are also liable to be erroneous, just as they come from the outer world of sense. Therefore, I argue for mysticism that derives from the inner sense.

#### 4.2 Supernaturalism of Religious Experience

The supernaturalism admits miracles and providential leadings, and finds no intellectual difficulty in mixing the ideal and the real worlds together by interpolating influences from the ideal region among the forces that causally determine the real world's details.

We belong to this dimension, James argues, in a more intimate sense than that in which we belong to the natural world, for we belong in the most intimate sense wherever our ideals belong (James, 1958, p. 353). Yet the supernatural dimension is not merely ideal, it produces verifiable effects in the natural world of everyday life. When we commune with it, work is actually done on our finite personalities; we are regenerated, or born anew, or are lifted to a higher level of consciousness; and in ordinary life as a consequence his conduct manifests this change of consciousness (James, 1958, p. 353). The reality of the supernatural world is established by the fact that it produces real effects.

It is a verifiable fact that the supernatural world precipitates an actual inflow of energy when we put ourselves in the faith-state or prayer-state. How does the transforming flow of energy take place? James regarded the discovery of an extra marginal field of consciousness as the most important advance made in philosophy of religion, because it revealed an entirely unsuspected peculiarity in the



constitution of human nature. In the phenomenon of prayerful communion, James asserts that certain kinds of incursion from the subconscious region take part. He offers the hypothesis that the subconscious mind is the channel of communication between our finite personalities and a wider world of being. By holding open the subliminal door, James affirms that we can experience union with something larger than ourselves and in that union find peace. Through this door, higher energies filter in to increase our vital potential (James, 1958, p. 298).

James's philosophy of religion views human life as part and parcel of that deep reality (James, 1904b, p. 445). For man through the prayer-state or faith-state, can participate directly in God's consciousness and life. This possibility is the real import of James's supernatural and it is likewise the verifiable fact upon his philosophy of religion.

James's hypothesis consists of introducing the subliminal or subconscious self as an intermediary between the ordinary personality and the hidden spiritual world, in order to explain all the typical phenomena of the religious experience. Particularly, the sentiment that something is continuous with and at the same time transcend with the conscious self. It is left free to believe that the subliminal sphere is in its turn in touch with higher realities. The latter transmit their influences, more or less modified, through the subconscious to the conscious self.

As James asserts, our beings extend to an entirely different sphere or dimension of existence from this world of the senses. Through a state of faith or prayer, we enter into communion with this supernatural sphere. An actual change is

effected in our finite personality, we are transformed into new men and our regeneration, translated into conduct, produces practical consequences in the natural world.

Alston (1992) argues for James that the most productive way to pursue theoretical problems concerning the supernatural is to raise the issue of union. He suggests that if every theology accepted the existence and activity of the supernatural, it is distinguished from the others on the basis of conceptions of union. His challenge is to develop finer-grained analyses of the continuity involved in such events and of the “farther limits of this extension of our personality” (Alston,1992,p.108).

My observation is that James addresses these challenges by issuing an over-belief which is worth further probing. The whole shift of his education led him to believe two things. First, human-divine continuity is transactional, that is, Slavonic events are codependent on the operations of both human and nonhuman agents. Second, the wider selves who cooperate with humans to bring about well-being have experiences of their own.

As Myers (1986) mentions, James’s theistic interpretation of the supernatural that surrounds each experience is connected not only to the subconscious but also to the concept of pure experience (Myers,1986,p.473). James uses pure experience to blur out the distinctions between mind and body between one person and another, between Divinity and humanity.

Alston (1992) argues for James that the subconscious and the supernatural are the boundary free parts of a vast system of pure experiences. When contemplated religiously, the supernatural can be called Divinity to emphasize that it is personal and is a source of causation. It can also be called a mother-sea to emphasize that we are neither distinct nor identical from Divine (Alston,1992,p.112).

I agree with Myers when James defined pure experience as heterogeneous unities, he means that macrocosmic world of pure experience is a manyness-in-oneness. Thus, humanity and Divinity are together as boundary-free parts of it. We and Divine may have business between one another.

In James's thesis of how subconscious self may be related through the extension of our experiences beyond what we are conscious of at any moment - to divine selves, just as narrow experiences are related to wider ones. His theory is supported by Fechner's Thesis (1972) that waster orders of mind go with the waster orders of body in a hierarchy of consciousness, so that there may be souls of the earth, the solar system, and so on. James praised Fechner's analogy between humanity and sense-organs of the earth's soul; like Plato's imagery, this analogy verified James's own religious conceptions. Moreover, Fechner's hierarchy of consciousness suggests that we might be related to superior beings through a series of levels of consciousness.

As for Supernaturalism, Fechner provided us with a definite gate of approach to him in the shape of the earth-soul, through which in the nature of things,

we must first make connection with, all the more enveloping superhuman realms, and in which our more immediate religious commerce at any rate has to be carried on (James, 1977, p81).

In my opinion, Divinity needs to enter into wider cosmic relations in order to justify the subject's absolute confidence and peace. In other words, religion has to be more than a mere illumination of facts already elsewhere given. It implies simply communion with Divinity which gives us inner peace and the strength to live.

#### 4.3 Divinity is Experienced as Within

Religious persons are often occupied with questions and problems of personal destiny. They resolve those questions and problems in the light of Divine experiences encountered. The answers and solutions they reveal are varied according to their temperament, the intensity of their complaints, and the sort of power they experienced when they encountered divinity.

Let us consider the meaning of the 'divine.' In *Varieties*, James construes the divine as: (1) It is active. (2) It denotes any object that is *godlike*, whether it be a concrete deity or not. (3) It overarches and envelops gods from whom there is no escape. (4) It (divine) means the primal reality that the individual feels impelled to respond *solemnly* and *gravely* neither by a curse nor a jest. (5) It refers to an energetic religious response. (6) It connotes a religious response that exceeds the moral frame of mind. Morality involves volitional effort, an athletic attitude, while the religious state of mind the will to assert ourselves and hold our own has been displaced by a willingness to close our mouths and be as nothing in the floods and

waterspouts of God. Finally, (7) It alludes to the religious state of mind filled with happiness. (James,1958,pp.35-52). It is a higher type of happiness that holds unhappiness in check. All this prompted James to conclude that religion is the only agency that can accomplish human difficulties, its vital importance as a human faculty stands vindicated beyond dispute.

The feelings that religious persons have of divinity in their religious experiences are as convincing as any direct sensible experience and more convincing than any results ever established by mere logic. Most of the people listening to James have probably encountered similar experiences that no matter how illogical are strikingly intuitive. In such instances, James asserted that our whole subconscious life, our impulses, our needs, our divinations have prepared the premises, of which our consciousness now feels the weight of the result; and something in us absolutely knows that the result must be truer than any logic (James,1958,pp.71-72).

Perry (1935) mentions that there is no path to Divine by coercive reasoning, or even by strong analogy or induction. Our belief in Divinity is not due to our logical reason but as a response to our emotional wants (Perry,1935a,p.493). That is to say, belief in God is due to faith, i.e., creative forces in life which are themselves deeper, broader, and related more intimately to reality than "mere" logic.

I argue for James that there is a sense of reality in human consciousness which is deeper than any particular sense experiences. This particular sense of reality is somehow more authoritative than reason or logic. As religious persons feel

that there is a feeling of objective presence or a perception of what we may call 'something there' which arises from the inner heart.

James Pratt (1875-1944) argues for William James that Divinity made known to man not in general abstractions but in specific acts of love, in concrete claims made upon man, and in the loving assistance which God provides for the fulfillment of His claims: "But the only force of appeal to us, which either a living God or an abstract ideal order can wield, is found in the 'everlasting ruby vaults' of our own human hearts, as they happen to beat responsive and not irresponsive to the claim" (Pratt, 1908, pp. 435-454). So far as they do feel it when made by a living consciousness, it is life answering to life.

James had encountered divinity himself in 1898. At least, his description in a letter from St. Hubert's Inn in Keene Valley, written on July 9, 1898, to his wife, closely resembled many of the cases of encounter he chose to include in his lectures. He had been hiking with friends, but had chosen to be alone during one evening and "got into a state of spiritual alertness of the most vital description." He wrote his wife that :

"The influence of Nature, the wholesomeness of the people round me,... It seemed as if the Gods of all the nature-mythologies were holding an indescribable meeting in my breast with the moral Gods of the inner life. The two kinds of Gods have nothing in common-the Edinburgh lectures made quite a hitch ahead. The intense significance of some sort, of the whole scene, if one could only tell



the significance; the intense in human remoteness of its inner life, and yet the intense appeal of it; its everlasting freshness and its immemorial antiquity and decay; its utter Americanism, and every sort of patriotic suggestiveness, and you, and my relation to you part and parcel of it all, and beaten up with it, so that memory and sensation all whirled inexplicably together; it was indeed worth coming for, and worth repeating year by year, if repetition could only procure what in its nature I supposed must be all unplanned for and unexpected" (James, 1920c, pp. 76-77).

These are examples of what James called the human natural imagination, in which unpicturable beings are realized (James, 1958, p. 72). These encounters haunted those who had them as a lover is haunted by his lady: even when he cannot picture her, he cannot forget her.

My argument is that the belief in existence of Divine is inspired by: the particular (as opposed to the general and universal), the personal (as opposed to the impersonal), and the "unwholesome" and the imperfect (as opposed to the "pure" and the perfect). For me, the particulars of existence, the personal data of life, and the very imperfections of reality create an evidence which seems to sweep us strongly towards the belief in forms of superhuman life or divinity.

The corrections suggested by James in connection with the theistic views about the nature of Divine involved a rejection of much of the traditional theism: "The theological machinery that spoke so lovingly to our ancestors, with its finite

age of the world, its creation out of nothing, its juridical morality and eschatology, its relish for rewards and punishments, its treatment of God as an external contriver, and intelligent and moral governor, sounds as odd to most of us as if it were some outlandish savage religion" (James,1977,p.29).

Divine's involvement in man's life, for James is so intimate that his views have kinship to "pantheism," seeing God as "the indwelling divine rather than external creator, and of human life as part and parcel of that deep reality." Nevertheless, James argues for another form of pantheism in its pluralistic form. As he mentioned that pantheistic belief could be held in two forms, a monistic form which he called the philosophy of the absolute, and a pluralistic form (James,1904a,p.487).

The monistic conception of the divine exists authentically only when the world is experienced all at once in its absolute totality, whereas the pluralistic allows that the absolute as the sum-total of things (James,1977,p.44). Concern for establishing God as being immanent rather than transcendent led James to speak of his viewpoint as a kind of pluralistic pantheism.

Pluralistic pantheism is not at all a final point of view in itself. It is rather another instrument produced to purify traditional theism from the effects of dualism. In his purified theism, James expresses his preferred, personal point of view regarding the nature of Divine. His pluralistic pantheism is a device to assert divine immanence against traditional insistence on divine transcendence.

As we can see that Dualistic theism separates Divine from man. The human being is considered as an outsider and a mere subject of Divine, not his intimate partner. But the pluralistic pantheism restores the union of Divine and man and respects the personalities of Divinity and humanity. At the same time, it transforms the universe from a dead mass into a being with whom the whole man may have dealings.

My point is that in affirming belief in Divine's existence, most religious men are testifying to their conviction that not only they themselves, but the whole universe of beings to whom Divine is present, are secure in His parental hands. Divine's existence is the guarantee of an ideal order that shall be permanently preserved. The belief that "Divine exists," when translated into its pragmatic meaning, says that the permanent preservation of an ideal order is guaranteed and that where Divine is, "tragedy is only provisional and partial, and shipwreck and dissolution are not the absolutely final things" (James, 1975, p. 77).

## CHAPTER V

### CRITICISMS OF JAMES ON THE NATURE OF RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCE

In this chapter, I present criticisms directed against James on the nature of religious experience by others. These criticisms center on three areas : (1) The nature of mysticism, (2) Religious experience and supernaturalism, (3) Divinity is experienced within.

#### 5.1 Argument Against James's Nature of Mysticism

James characterizes the mystic as a man of immovable faith. Mystics based their opinions on their own witness and on the authority of their own books reporting revelation. Tunerlty (1998) criticizes James as he asserts that mystics claim to know something intuitively. According to mystics, they know intuitive since their deliverances are intuitive, they are not open to dispute. They are declarations based on evidence, but privileged evidence, evidence shared by the mystic and God alone (Tunerlty,1998,p.59). Levinson (1981) also argues against James in this point that mystics do not mean that they have merely inferred what they claim to know from other things that they know. Nor are they simply claiming to have a hunch about something. They are claiming to know something indubitably that cannot possibly be inferred from other things they knew (Levinson,1981,p.216).

Tunerlty (1998) continues that as James characterizes mystics this way, mysticism is in direct competition with scientific inquiry as a way of thinking.

Although inquiry and mysticism share a claim to cognitivity, they are at odds in almost every other respect when the fact of a mystical experience is used to justify a doctrine of criticism (Turner, 1998, p. 69).

My objection is that mystical states are not states in which reasoning takes the leading role, but these determine attitudes and open regions of experience not accessible to ordinary modes of thought. They signal something about the meaning of experience that is not discovered in any other way. When mysticism is taken as intellectually authoritative, it becomes a hindrance to persuasive order. Mystics are honest in their own mystical experiences, even when these declarations are based on their privileged evidence. This process of persuasion is suited only to people who actively seek opinions in an ordered way and help themselves to decide what to believe.

Levinson (1981) accuses James that he is struck by the references practically in to experiences of deliverance investigated by contemporary mystical literature. The question is whether this revelation is a cultural derivative of natural supernaturalism or some independent warrant for it. Many Romantics, for example, Wordsworth, place the "illuminated moment" at the center of their imagination. They seek visions that efface personal consciousness and render it cosmic and bestowed, a selfless perspective from which they can view the world of impersonal worth (Levinson, 1981, p. 168).

My argument is that mysticism is not a marginal religious phenomenon as in James's views. Reports of illumination dotted both religious and secular histories.

The most rudimentary sort of illumination occurs whenever some deepen sense of the significance of something sweep over one. Certain experiences and trance states are more complex forms of the same phenomenon. In each of these instances the religious person's rational, is suspended as they find themselves being transported from some sort of disturbance to a sense of mental ease, peace, and rest. I believe that the mystics who deliver their illuminations assert that their claims are indubitable.

Crosby (1996) asserts that when James turns to the practical consequences of mystical consciousness, he finds that they recapitulate the range of results from religious experience more broadly conceived. They run the gamut from utterly passive to utterly energetic sorts of behavior. They are sometimes informed by close-mindedness, sometimes by synoptic vision. Thus, he argues that the possibility of appreciating mystical consciousness in general is as hopeless as treating any other part of religious life that way (Crosby, 1996, p.136).

Levinson (1981) also argues against James that the mystic cannot participate in religious investigation and have no procedure to overcome the doubts of people who dispute his declarations. No reasons could change his mind about men, gods, and the world. If others accepted the mystic's claims on mystical grounds, they did so not from force of persuasion but from some sort of purportedly divine coercion that they felt as mystics. Therefore, whether mystical experience lead to presumptive truths or not, the mystic present no infallible credential (Levinson, 1981, p.323).



Levinson (1978) continues that mystics try to evaluate religions by the veracity of their beliefs. But they have no way of convincing those who stand in need of it. So their strategy for appreciating religions fail. He keeps on attacking that mystics do not offer effective arguments that may overcome intellectual impasse, but this failure does not undercut their interpretation of the causes of their beliefs (Levinson,1978,p.216).

In response to this claim, my argument is that the beliefs that mystics thoughts are true and justified in some sense. Just as an individual is warranted to claim that he is in pain once he believes he is. Since his feelings of pain are things to which he has privileged access. Thus, mystics are justified in making their own claims. As James asserts that rationalists could throw a mystic into a prison or a madhouse, but they "cannot change his mind-we commonly attach it the more stubbornly to its beliefs" (James,1958,p.423).

I believe that our own rational beliefs are based on evidence exactly similar in nature to that which mystics quote for theirs. Just as investigators rely on perceptions for their claims, so mystics rely on face to face presentations of what seems immediately to exist. The only motive for investigation is to overturn doubt and settle belief.

Levinson (1978) argues that if the illumination of mystical experience brings real and living doubt to an end for someone, he simply has no motive for further investigation, no demand for a change of mind. The mystic simply asserts that his claims are not governed by the logic of inquiry. His experiences result in

confession, not profession. Indeed, because the mystic's beliefs are confessional, so he cannot help believing what he does, he is invulnerable to criticism (Levinson,1978,p.212).

Fer (1995) argues for Levinson that mystics do not typically deal in reasons. Mystics reveal things. They do not try to convince themselves or others that their beliefs are more adequate than competing ones according to normal rules of inference. Thus, the utmost that they can ask investigators to do is to admit that they establish a presumption. Mystics tend to form a consensus, and their revelations displays a certain unanimity. However, unanimity appeals only to numbers, and an appeal to numbers has no logical force. If we acknowledge it, it is for suggestive reason, not for logical reasons (Fer,1995,p.35).

Levinson continues that mystics are not legitimately authoritative for anybody else. Indeed, his declaration of the mystic's right to believe is a back handed denial of his right to participate in religious investigation. Mystical states might put out the burning doubts of particular individuals, but that do not make mystical claims true. In fact, if mystical claims are confessional, they are not warranted at all. Reasons warrant beliefs, but reasons play no role in confession. Reasons play a role only in cases in which people do not confess but have to decide which to believe (Levinson,1978,p.214).

My argument is that mystical states open up the possibility of other orders of truth distant from those accessible by ordinary means. Mystical experiences may represent just such a form of human consciousness. Usually our minds are an

enormously complex stew of thoughts, feelings, sensations, wants, pains, drives, daydreams and consciousness itself more or less aware of it all. To understand mystical consciousness in itself, the obvious thing would be to clear away as much of this internal detritus and noise as possible. It turns out that mystics seem to be doing precisely that.

The technique that most mystics use is some form of meditation or contemplation. These are procedures that, often by recycling a mental subroutine, systematically reduce mental activity. During meditation, one begins to slow down the thinking process, and have fewer or less intense thoughts. One's thoughts become as if more distant, vague, or less preoccupying; one stops paying as much attention to bodily sensations; one has fewer or less intense fantasies and daydreams.

Thus, by reducing the intensity or compelling quality of outward perception and inward thoughts, one may come to a time of greater stillness. Ultimately one may become utterly silent inside, as though in a gap between thoughts, where one becomes completely thought-free. One neither thinks nor perceives any sensory content. Yet, despite this suspension of content, one emerges from such events confident that one had remained awake inside, fully conscious. This experience has been called the pure consciousness event.

I propose that the mystical experience's claims must not be accepted uncritically. My point is that mystical experiences be subjected to the same tests applied to rational beliefs. Our own rational beliefs are based on evidence exactly similar in nature to that which mystics quote for. Our senses have assured us of

certain states of fact. But mystical experiences are as direct perceptions of fact for those who have them. The records show that even though the five senses be in abeyance in them, they are face to face presentations of what seems immediately to exist.

I argue that the experiences offered to mankind through mystical phenomena require selection and subordination just as the experiences which come in the ordinary naturalistic world. Possibilities of error and deception occur in dealing with mystical experiences just as they do with the more ordinary ones. But in testing the validity of mystical data, one must not impose upon them the same requirements imposed upon knowledge coming from "rational" sources. To do so would automatically eliminate all mystical experiences from the very start because they are so different from the experiences found in man's normal range of consciousness.

## 5.2 Arguments Against James's Supernaturalism of Religious Experience

James is attacked from various quarters that he makes no ontological truth to defend his supernatural. As James assumes that if he discovers the sort of experiences "which furnishes the notion of an ever-present God" (James, 1975, p. 266) then his crass supernaturalism is rendered evident.

My argument is that this description accurately accounts for the divided self and its struggles, the change of personal center and a disavowal of the lower self, the appearance both of the exteriority of the helping power and of union with it, and religious feelings both of security and strenuous. In any case, religious originals

give testimony to this effect, testimony rendered plausible by conduct to religious experience. James realizes that deception and self-deception are possible in any particular report of religious experience. But he argued that only in case nothing is actually transacted.

Levinson (1978) argues against James that he has never intended to execute any historiography vindication of any particular case of religious experience. In no case does he check religious testimony against particular eyewitnesses or more general character witnesses or critical historical evaluation of all this relevant material. Levinson claims that James relies much on biographies that are received as indisputably saintly in character by educated men. Whatever elements of delusion such biographies contain, they are not rooted in delusion altogether, in as much as everyone admits the requisite self-transformation in them.

Tunerlty (1998) criticizes James regarding his mechanism for transforming the subsequent relation between religious feeling and religious conduct into a consequent relation. Just as psychologists could point to mechanisms that make people irritable when they have headaches (Tunerlty,1998,p.88).

My objection is that James could point to mechanism that make people faithful and saintly when they have religious experiences. The process of self-transformation articulated in his chapters on the divided self and conversion make faithfulness and saintliness consequent upon divine encounter. This encounter has the same quality with which our own higher self appears in the experience and is

into harmonious working relation with our life. This implies that James thinks he is transforming testimony into evidence in a specific sense.

At this point, Levinson (1978) also criticises James that he is showing how religious conduct is consequentially related to religious feeling in a way that rendered the religious original's account of his divine encounter plausible. Nevertheless, he is not demonstrating the actuality of any particular divine encounter *per se*. The most he could do, Levinson argues, is to offer an hypothesis about the process of religious self-transformation that may fit the facts so easily that your scientific logic will find no plausible pretext for vetoing your impulse to welcome it as true.

James is attacked that his task is to give a definite description of “*the more*,” and of personal “*union*” with it, without taking sides in any particular theological debate. He says that all theologies agree that the “*more*” really exists and acts in ways that make life better. Showing psychologists, definite facts for which the “*more*” and “*union*” stands for will lay the groundwork for reunion between science and theology. From this angle, the task is to establish connections between spontaneous religious constructions and psychology, on the one hand, and theology, on the other (Turnerly, 1998, p.88).

My objection is that the practical needs and experiences of religion are sufficiently met by the belief that beyond each individual, there exists a larger power that is friendly to him and his ideals. As James's “mystical germ”, it is a very common germ; it creates the rank and file of believers. His religious doctrine is



well described by Ralph Barton Perry (1935) as “a radical departure: a pluralistic mysticism, and an experimental supernaturalism” (James,1920,p.211). This seems to me that the supernatural power might conceivably be only a larger and more godlike self.

My synthesis is consistent with the metaphysics of James radical empiricism, which assumes the world to have existed from its origin in pluralistic form, as an aggregate or collection of higher and lower things and principles in which unity is in process of evolution. The outlines of the supernatural, James acknowledged, must remain very vague, and the number of functionally distinct selves which it carries, has to be left entirely problematic. Thus it may be conceived of either polytheistically or monotheistically. But James feels the imperative need to assume that “the supernatural, however vast it may be, has itself an external environment and consequently is finite” (James,1958,p.387). His philosophy of religion accepts along with the supernatural, the notion that it is not all-embracing, the notion in other words, that there is a Divine, but that He is finite, either in power, or in knowledge, or in both at once.

At this point, Levinson (1978) argues against James that if this is so, then the reports of religious originals about their own encounters become plausible: their testimony is not self-evident, but it was rendered evident by a psychological entity that most of them is never heard of (Levinson,1978,p.250).

I propose that James’s hypothesis is only a doorway into the subject. Theoretical difficulties abound as soon as investigators step through it and asked

“how far our transmarginal consciousness carry us if we follow it on its remoter side” (James,1958,p.513). However, the difficulties invites religious scientists to pursue their investigations and to connect them with metaphysical or theological enterprises.

On the issue of ‘wider selves,’ Levinson (1978) argues against James that religion has to be more than to make the chance of salvation. If there are wider selves that experienced things for themselves and are not reducible to experiences for us, then the world must be such that different events can be expected from it, different conduct must be required. If divine miracles are interpolated into the field of nature, things not only look rosier; events over people has no arbitrary control, and therefore make them look rosier. The point of further religious investigation is to specify the sorts of events that would tend to confirm the chance of salvation, and then to discover whether these occurred (Levinson,1978,p.251).

My argument for James is that it is a thoroughly pragmatic view of religion, a view that demanded discovery of characteristically divine facts through the faith-state and the prayer-state.

Levinson (1978) disagrees with James by pointing out that apart from the actual inflow of energy in the faith-state and in the prayer-state, James does not know. So how can he commends his audience to accept the possibility that their own poor over-beliefs may help Divinity in turn to be more effectively faithful to his own greater tasks (Levinson,1978,p.519).

James commends investigators to probe the notion that humanity and Divinity have business with each other; and in opening ourselves to his influence our deepest destiny is fulfilled. I agree with James that humanity and Divinity are not necessarily continuous in the sense of consubstantial or numerically identical, but are continuous at certain points in the sense of sharing certain objectives and acting in concert to bring them about.

I defend James's claim that if Divinity and humanity have business with one another, and that men attain our highest destiny. The course of the universe is modified where our personalities come in contact with it; and it goes well or ill according as each one of us fulfills or neglects what God requires of him. In fine, Divinity is real since he produces real effects.

These special and particular irruptions of a higher universe into the course of the natural world are, it goes without saying, inadmissible to so-called scientific naturalism, and even to the supernaturalism. For philosophers who argue against James, an Absolute which is its first cause and ultimate significance they do not allow this species of constitutional monarch to participate in any concrete events. All phenomena, according to these philosophers, equally and indifferently emanate from the Absolute which is revealed as a whole in the block - universe, but could not manifest itself in one event any more than in any other. James repudiates categorically this refined or universalistic supernaturalism of the idealistic philosophers (Cotkin, 1994, p. 130).

My point is that if theists see well-being achieved solely by divinity, not cooperatively, they differ from James. Thus, pantheists argue that no particular transaction between a person and Divine bring about well-being. When moralists argue that well-being depended solely on the works of human beings alone, they also differ from James. James pictures well-being as the outcome neither of divine action alone nor of human action alone but of business between them-particular business.

### 5.3 Arguments Against James's Divinity is Experienced as Within

In the experience of divinity, James claimed that "all our attitudes, moral, practical, or emotional, as well as religious, are due to the 'objects' of our consciousness, the things which we believe to exist, whether really or ideally, along with ourselves" (James, 1958, p.53). People's attitudes do not emerge as news from nowhere; they are responded to their perceptions of reality. But what is real? Since James argues that "the reality of a thought is proportionate to the way it grasps us." (James, 1978, p.21). If the only objective criterion of reality is in the long-run is coerciveness over thought, then reality varies according to one's belief.

There is no simple way to associate reality with the 'objective world' or unreality with the 'subjective world.' Thoughts are determined by attitudes. Indeed, thoughts determine the way people perceive things. However, it is one thing to defend the reality of the unseen and another to defend a perception of such reality.

Instances of hallucination collected by members of the Society for Psychical Research stand as curious proofs for the hypothesis that persons have “an undifferentiated sense of reality” Some individuals, for instance, feel something come into their rooms, but nothing in particular. Oftentimes, these feelings provoke definite attitudes, for example, happiness or fear (James, 1978, pp. 447-8).

My argument is that human’s experiences with the Divine is different from all other types of experiences that truly religious experiences cannot be anticipated in advance of their actual coming. We could not suspect their existence because they are discontinuous with the natural experiences they succeed upon and invert their values.

Divine is revealed especially through man’s emotional and volitional needs, which function in a broadly rational sense to establish living connections with the divine. It seems to me that he positively determines fear and hope and expectation. Divine’s holiness, for example: being holy, Divine can will nothing but the good. Sometimes if we feel fear and insecure, we can count on him which causes us to feel safe and secure. These qualities enter into connection with our life, it is highly important that we should be informed concerning them. These can be experienced within individual hearts.

Levinson (1978) argues that some of these perceptions of residual presence has no connection with religious life. He cites that in one case of hallucination, for instance, an individual feels “the close presence of a mighty person, and after it has

gone, the memory persists as the one perception of reality. Everything else may be a dream, but not that" (Levinson,1978,p.203).

My objection is that Divinity in the religious life of ordinary men, is the name not of the whole of the experiences. It is only the ideal tendency in things that believes in as a super-human person who calls us to co-operate in his purposes. Therefore, he works in an external environment. Having an environment, being in time, and working out a history, just like ourselves, he escapes the foreignness from all that is human. Thus, whether experiences like this are hallucinations or not, we cannot determine, as outsiders we see the individuals undergoing experiences intensely that they believe, in spite of criticism. In light of their sifting of testimony, James is willing to claim that "in the distinctively religious sphere of experience, many persons possess the objects of their belief, not in the form of mere conceptions which their intellect accepts as true, but rather in the form of quasi-sensible realities directly apprehended" (James,1958,p.61).

Some encounters with divinity cannot be classified without distortion as subjective (conceptual) or objective (sensible). No matter what other classifications they receive, they stimulate strong and specifiable patterns of conduct. Their effects are durable, not fleeting; discernible, not vague; tangible, not simply visible. I confidently believe that they make change in individual belief itself.

Levinson (1981) argues against James that even when an investigator clarifies what he means by divinity, the definition remains a problem because as James said, 'we are dealing with a field of experience where there is not a single



conception that can be sharply drawn.’ In the science of religion, ‘the boundaries are always misty, and it is everywhere a question of amount and degree’ (James,1958,p.61). This is the case as much because the events investigated are human and are religious. The way to manage this difficulty so far as definition is to initiate investigation by looking at the most exaggerated cases (Levinson,1981,p.91).

In my opinion, the question of Divine’s existence and problems about defining must be resolved in terms of the specific, concrete experiences which are to be expected as a result of the existence of a being of such a nature. All facts are particular facts, and the whole question of Divine’s existence seems to James to lie in the consequences that particular experience expected to entail.

James is criticised when he asserts, “your whole subconscious life, your impulses, your faiths, your needs, your divinations, have prepared the premises, of which your consciousness now feels the weight of the result; and something in you absolutely knows that the result must be truer than any logic” (James,1958,p.72).

At this point, Levinson argues against James that religious attitudes emerge out of encounters that provided a compact symbol for “your whole subconscious life, your impulses, your faiths, your needs, your divination.” They do not emerge from logically regimented arguments based on observations or on the meaning of terms about the order of things in general (Levinson,1981,p.106).

My objection is that we should not care whether beliefs originate from philosophical or even logical processes of thought. Religious conviction is personal and it should not be suspected because it emerges from a kind of vague experience

but insofar as it is found unsuited to the management of difficulties and the solution of problems.

It seems to me that persons are born into webs of belief. They cannot build their beliefs from foundations up, because they never start from scratch and cannot decide to do so with any effectiveness. As James states that the epistemological search for incorrigible foundations of belief is fruitless from natural history point of view because no matter what epistemology achieve, "It will fail to convince or convert you all the same, if your dumb intuitions are opposed to its conclusions" (James,1958,p.73).

Finally, James is criticized that the sort of Divine experience that he notes is a commonplace among contemporary religious persons. Russell (1910) said that he clearly felt the spirit of God in me and around me one time when he saw the whole system of the universe rise up before him in a way that evoked calm and clear prophecy on his part. Others enjoyed communication with God in more conventional ways, either by enduring the magnificent beauty of the world or by engaging in or witnessing suffering service. Still others felt the loss of divinity on occasions (Russell,1910,p.94).

On this question, the speculations of dogmatic theology be allowed to stand or fall: Just what are the concrete consequences of such and such a doctrine in terms of human experiences? If the answer be "none," or if the consequences be entirely academic, then that doctrine is unworthy of belief, since belief has no significance apart from the conduct to which it leads.

If we turn to logic, to say that Divine's essence is "to be" is to present a pragmatically meaningless statement. It is, in effect, saying nothing at all. But to say that Divine is a personal being (with whom man can at least hope to have interpersonal communion) is to make a genuine affirmation, whether it be true or false. To make a statement about Divine's nature which leads to good effects in human life is, in turn, to affirm a genuine truth. Thus, the affirmation that Divine is a personal being with whom men may commune (so that Divine and men "both have purposes for which they care, and each can hear the other's call") leads to the profoundest improvements in man's conduct and is verified accordingly in morally good deeds.

I argue for James that to know truths about Divine is, therefore, not an intellectualistic process or product. Furthermore, man's destiny does not consist in enjoying a purely speculative knowledge of Divine. In harmony with the teachings of every religion, human beings are said to be saved not by their own words but by their Divine-inspired deeds.

Therefore, Divinity is not known by abstract statements, but is revealed truly in man's godlike actions, thoughts and insights felling as James cites "to co-operate with his creation by the best and rightist responses seems all he wants of us. In such co-operation with his purposes, not in any chimerical speculative conquest of him, not in any theoretical thinking him up, must lie the real meaning of our destiny" (James, 1958, p.141). Apart from vital responses called for by Divine's presence, His existence would have no meaning (and therefore no truth) for mankind.

## CHAPTER VI

### CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

In this last chapter, I summarize what has been discussed so far and come to the conclusion that, the end of mystical experiences in the experience of the Divine who is the indweller of human heart.

#### 6.1 Summary of William James On the Nature of Religious Experience

James's views on the nature of religious experience make important differences for his own religious investigation, which is as follows:

1. He demonstrates to his own satisfaction that pragmatism is an effective method for setting issues and settling disputes in.
2. He suggests mechanisms for the solution of his problem of religion by analyzing its functions and relations to religious experience as well as religious philosophy.
3. He challenges the rationalism and presents evidence for events that materialists could not readily account for.
4. He demonstrates that disconsolate persons are transformed themselves through personal religious experience.
5. He argues persuasively that which conversions could not be accounted for without reference to selves that are "wider," because they elude consciousness, and that are "super," because they accomplish things that rational and responsible behavior has failed to accomplish.

6. He suggests that such evidence improved the chance of salvation.

7. Finally, he refines his thought on divinity.

I defend for James's pragmatism which is characterized by two intimately connected traits that are individualability and practicalability.

(1) *Individualability*: it is empirical and always eager to take account of actually experienced facts, whatever they may be; for reality is far too rich and complex to be comprehended by a single individual, so that we can never expect every one to have the same religious experience or the same faith; and such diversity must be respected.

(2) *Practicalability*: His philosophy is pragmatism. It maintains that all belief is but a rule for action, and that its significance is consequently measured by the difference it makes in our conduct.

James uses empirical method in its purity. A genuine experience of religion incomparably enriches the individual himself, and enlarges his vision and gives him strength, peace, and happiness. That is it accelerates the evolution of humanity. The divinities have indeed been the initiators of all moral progress, the sign of a perfected state of society. This empirical justification of religion, as James did, remains the problem of its ontological value, and it is to this critical question that the researcher devotes these chapters.

All religions suppose that the visible world forms a part of a more spiritual universe and derives its deepest significance from it. Human's real duty is to adjust themselves to this higher universe. A prayer communion is a real means to that end, a truly efficacious act by which the spiritual energy of this other universe is brought

to bear in our phenomenal world. But what are such beliefs worth? Are they anything else but a subjective impression or someone might state that a pure illusion? Do they correspond to an objective reality?

The affirmative response to this question can be along two lines mysticism and rationalism. The first involves the religious experience as personally lived and attested, and this habitually brings conviction to the individual who practices it. However, it carries no weight with the individual who has not been privileged to have this personal experience. The second line, that of intellectual reasoning, has been followed by theologians and idealistic philosophers of every shade. Like all intellectual processes, it would have the great advantage of giving universally valid results.

Nevertheless, one has only to take a glance at history to see that the rational arguments of the ablest theologians and philosophers have seldom convinced anybody. Inevitably, those have appealed only to those who were already convinced by personal mystical experience. One must acknowledge the plain fact that there is no means of establishing rationally the objective validity of religious experiences. Also its accompanying beliefs notwithstanding neither is there any means of refuting them, nor of proving that mystical phenomena do put the individual in contact with a divinity or a higher reality.

Does this mean the understanding has no further place in this domain, and that thinking will not assist in clarifying religious experience? Certainly not, but one must assign this work of the intellect to its proper place which is only secondary, being a subsequent reflection upon the immediate data of experience. Religious



philosophy must start from religious phenomena accepted as such, and be content with classifying and analyzing their contents.

My argument is that in the nature of religious experience, it must become a critical and inductive science of religions. On such ground, it may hope some day to gain acceptance even by non-religious people, just as the facts of optics are acknowledged by those who are born blind. But just as optics would not exist were it not for the experiences of seeing individuals, in the same way the science of religions is based on the evidence afforded by religious persons; and it will never be in a position to decide whether in the end these experiences themselves are illusory or not. This last question of the objective and absolute significance of religious phenomena will be impossible to solve scientifically, and it will always be for the individual either to leave it open to settle it by an act of personal experience or faith.

James is among those who stand for the natural value of religious experience. If you should object that in so doing he would go to the individual or personal experience of divinity. As he declares that the religious man stands on the ground of actual experience and the scientific philosopher upon that of theory and prejudice.

In religious experience the personal relations to a higher spiritual world and its destiny are at stake. However, our modern science tends precisely to suppress the Ego, to "de-personalize" and to make of him nothing but an ephemeral aggregate of sensations, a bubble of air, as it were, rising to burst at the surface of the cosmic whirlpool. And it is easy to perceive that from this point of view religion can be nothing but an anachronism. James recognized that at first glance, there is a certain appearance of grandeur and generosity in this impersonalism of the scientific attitude; but this illusion is soon destroyed with a single penetrating observation,---

that the general ideas and cosmic conceptions upon which science and *symbols* of reality, whereas the concrete events and personal facts which make us what we are, are *realities* in the proper and most complete sense of the term.

In considering "objects," apart from the individual consciousness which thinks them, science makes use of an artifice which may for science have its special and momentary utility, but which none the less destroys that concrete and living status which is their only real one. A conscious field plus its object as felt or thought of plus an attitude toward the object plus the sense of a self to whom the attitude belongs constitutes, at least while it lasts, a solid piece of reality, and an authentic fragment of what is.

It is only from this sort of fragment, that is to say, from personal states of consciousness, that we can form a conception as to what the elements of all real existence are. To imagine, as do the adepts of modern "science," that we have reality in the general laws and impersonal formulae of cosmic evolution, is like thinking that the photograph of an express train contains the energy and speed of the train, or like being content, in place of dinner, with the reading of the menu. Religion itself is deceived in no such manner; it the shape of our poor little personal experiences, but they are at least real crumbs, the beginnings of a real repast, a substantial fragment of being. That is why it is not deserting experience, but rather holding on to experience.

However, James is criticized that his philosophical account of divine encounter makes divinity too intimate to suit the claims of Old Christianities. His emphasis on the interpolation of divinity in the natural world makes divinity too refined for natural supernaturalisms.

## 6.2 Conclusion

Since the time of William James, philosophy of religion has been focused more on religious experience. This area is the widest range of experiences that individuals claim to be religious or to have religious importance. On the positive side, a variety of methodological perspectives have shown that individuals with a devout orientation derive specific experiential awareness of Divinity from their religious commitments. Not only do they interpret religious experience within the concept derived from their religious traditions, but also interpret the world from their religious experience.

Particularly within the hermeneutical methodologies, religious experience is identified as having a transcendent meaning within experience that causal investigations can only identify in terms of proximate origin. In the latter case, mystical experience is often cited as a human experience that suggests the validity of language and concepts protected within religious traditions. Among specifically religious practices, some forms of prayer have been investigated as producing a unique experiential awareness of the world that is both meaningful and productive of personal contentment. The availability of a religious language has been shown to facilitate the report of religious experience, and for some theorists, to be necessary for the experience to occur. Others have provided data and argument to show that both religious persons and not religiously committed persons may have similar experiences which they simply differentially interpret. The widest variety of religious experiences are documented to be common in modern cultures for human beings.

William James had always been interested in the problems of philosophy of religion. He had been concerned with religion from an empirical point of view as early as 1869. James himself experienced and researched psychological states arising from mystical experiences like faith healing, drugs, alcohol, and personal crisis.

James defends the right to affirm religious propositions solely on the basis of emotional predilection but only when three conditions hold. The choice confronting a person must be forced or inescapable, so that not choosing becomes itself a choice. The alternatives must be living, that is, they must be appealing options that can be genuinely embraced. Finally, the decision must be momentous, providing a unique opportunity that will make a significant difference in a person's life. It is assumed that the evidence is insufficient for making the choice on intellectual grounds.

The theme springs from the claim that where belief transcends evidence, the only empirical approach is to examine the effects of belief upon the integration of men's lives. James claims that religion can be 'justified' by its tendency to organise and energise men's lives. James incorporates his philosophy that the decision enabled him to surmount the period of acute melancholy and depression in his life. His argument for this is threefold :

a. There are forced options in intellectual life. By this he means that there are certain questions on which one must make up one's mind either for or against an urgent and important idea. There is no middle course. Thus, one must either believe that one is free or believe that one is not free; one must either believe that there is God or believe that there is not a God. In either case, according to James, the attempt to straddle the fence and not commit oneself, is pragmatically the equivalent of the negative option.

b. In such cases, when the decision transcends the evidence – that is to say, where in the nature of things evidence cannot settle the matter one way or the other – the only truly empirical approach is to recognise the need to transcend the evidence. To maintain a consistent empirical attitude one must look as if it were for evidence; and this one does by examining the effects on the integrity and power of one's life which follow selection of one option rather than the other.

c. James makes the startling claim that in cases of this sort the very act of believing tends to make what is believed more true. Thus if I seriously believe that I am free I will in fact act as a free agent; whereas if I seriously believe that I am completely determined in all that I do I will act accordingly.

In *the Varieties*, James introduces the single most important principle that is the major theme not only of James's discussion in religion, but also of his entire philosophy—that the value of something is to be judged by its effects, not by its origin, or, in James's phrase, by your fruits you shall know them, not by their roots. It becomes apparent here that James is a radical empiricist. For him all questions of value have to meet the test of experience. And by experience he does not mean something with a capital E. He means experiences, the active consequences, which occur in the lives of particular individuals.

As an empiricist, James denies to the word "religion" any single principle or essence. The name is a collective word for a huge number of different experiences, and the proper job of investigating religion must be to consider very specific examples of all the different manifestations of human experiences. His approach is thus at the opposite end of the philosophical spectrum from anyone who seeks a priority definition of "religion" and then deduce its characteristics in some

logically systematic manner which will then enable him to judge what is religion and what is not.

James's methodology is taken up with explaining the criteria for inclusion in the 'category of religious experiences. Obviously, James has to establish some of these, and he does so on the basis of numerous, often very lengthy examples. This is not an attempt to arrive at a single clear definition of religion but simply to impose some limits on what will count as a religious experience.

From the description of religious experience, one is invariably led to its appraisal; to the problem of the value and significance of religion, whether from the empirical and biological or from the metaphysical and ontological point of view. It is not by its roots and origins (whether one assigns them to the pathological condition of the organism or to revelation from on high) that one can judge the value of religion in general, or a given religion in the moral life of the individual and of humanity. This entirely practical and utilitarian valuation of the religious life is emphasized by James.

Even though James's *Varieties* and his philosophy have been criticized for their very Protestant Christian emphasis, but that criticism does not hurt the heart of James's argument. Since, for him all experiences are radically individualistic—our life is made up of our experiences as individuals—the emphasis on the privacy of religious experience naturally follows. It consists of a catalogue of personal accounts of private religious experiences. His methodology commits him to survey which provides an interesting way of organizing his data.

James displays a distinct preference for certain form of religious experience over others. For James, Pragmatism is not primarily a philosophical method. It is, by



contrast a system of judging whether our ideas and beliefs are true and valuable. In his analysis of this thinking “loop” that begins and ends in experience, James gives an important emphasis in *The Varieties of Religious Experience* to the unconscious. He stresses that the choices for action and the ideas we adopt to suit our purposes arise out of our unconscious needs.

Religious ideas in other words like all ideas, do not exist for us to contemplate or argue abstractly about. They exist for us to use. They are, in effect, to use favorite metaphor of many later pragmatists, tools which we use to achieve our human purposes. If they work for us, they are good (just like tools); if they serve no purpose, they are without value and truth for us, anything which has no connection with the practical experiences of our action is irrelevant. This view of religion enables James strongly to endorse religious experience as essential for it provides us with practical benefits in way that no other form of experience, least of all science, can. His justification of religious truth is therefore practical pluralistic, individualistic, and undogmatic. Thus, we must value religious experience as a magnificent contribution to human life. Its truth manifests itself in wonderful ways in which it enriches human conduct and feeling.

The validity of man’s beliefs about Divinity is to be determined, like the validity of all other kinds of knowledge, by the practical, concrete consequences, which a particular belief has in human life. For most people it is “necessary” to conceive of “divinity” as a personal being, and its fruits in human experiences abundantly verify this image. Man’s spiritual life and the hardships of the moral order call for help and guidance, which only a divine thinker and co-worker can provide. The human desire, for example, for a “stable and systematic moral

universe” is fully possible only in a world “where there is a divine thinker with all-enveloping demands.” In addition, the religious view not only incites man’s strenuous moral activities but also takes “our joyous, careless trustful moments, and it justifies them.”

James believes that many of the older images of God as an external judge, as a great architect, as a majestic king were useful and appropriate in the ages, which originated them. However, having advanced morally and intellectually to a point where these concepts cloud the improved images of God available at this stage of history, man must work vigorously to free himself from their influences and to develop concepts that are more worthy of God and more fruitful in human lives. For example, God must not be pictured as a “gentleman” but rather as a co-worker with man, fitted for menial services; man is not to be conceived as God’s valet but rather God and men are to be understood as collaborators in the vast task of building a moral universe.

According to James, man can experience union with “Divinity” through “spiritual emotions” which are the habitual center of the personal energy. Divinity must also be subjected to the pragmatic test the fruits of character determine the genuineness of holy lives. James uses human standards to decide how far the religious life commends itself as an ideal kind of human activity. If it commends itself, then, any theological beliefs that may inspire it, in so far they will stand accredited. If not, then they will be discredited, and all without reference to any thing but human working principles.

Divinity’s collaboration with mankind (personal religious experience) brings its greatest effectiveness from within. His inspiration and power flood the individual

who waits on the divine will. The unseen world, with which the divine seeks to conform his life, provides beatific bliss, which at the same time most often also brings the power to make extensive, practical changes.

### 6.3 Recommendations for Further Research

In this dissertation, I focus on James's nature of religious experience. I attempt to explore James's philosophical ideas towards philosophy of religion which acts as the originality of this dissertation. Nevertheless, there are other areas that are equally important fields for further research:

(1) As a Thai, we can see that Jamesian philosophy shares some linkages to Thai Buddhism, especially in the point of pragmatism. Both declare that knowledge will grow only when individual takes into account the full range of personal experience.

(2) The philosophy that affirms Jamesian concepts is the process philosophy of Alfred North Whitehead. Since Whitehead developed his philosophy independently of James, it is interesting to make a comparison between these two philosophers.

These areas are of particular interest for further research. As we can see, James's philosophy of religion is challenging not only to the West but also to the East and the philosophical world as a whole.

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