

# William James on Religion

Edited by

Henrik Rydenfelt and Sami Pihlström  
*University of Helsinki, Finland*

## 8

### Possibility and Permission? Intellectual Character, Inquiry, and the Ethics of Belief

*Guy Axtell*

In detail all the religious beliefs are illusory or absurd. How hold the dignity of the general function upright in this state of things? ... It is a question of *life*, of living in these gifts or not living, etc. There is a chance to do something strong here, but it is extremely difficult.

—James, *Manuscript and Essay Notes*<sup>1</sup>

David Hollinger points out that

[C]laims about the continuity between [William] James' 'The Will to Believe' [1896] and *Varieties of Religious Experience* [1902] ... are rarely engaged critically because many of the philosophers who address 'The Will to Believe' are not much interested in *Varieties*, and many of the religious studies scholars for whom *Varieties* is a vital text have relatively little invested in the agendas that drive philosophers' interpretation of 'The Will to Believe'.<sup>2</sup>

This already serious problem is compounded if we are specifically trying to understand and evaluate James' ethics of belief, for as Gregory Pappas rightly notes, 'the difficulty in reconstructing James' position in the ethics of belief stems from the fact that there is no place where he explicitly presents it in a comprehensive and systematic way. Rather, it seems, a significant portion of his extensive writing is relevant to its unraveling.'<sup>3</sup>

These points about James' interpreters and James' own writings warn us of some major roadblocks to delineating a self-consistent and viable Jamesian ethics of belief. In order to overcome these impediments the first half of this chapter investigates claims that have been made

palgrave  
macmillan  
2013

about the 'trajectory' of James' philosophy of religion from his early 'subjective method' through his post-1900 writings, including *Varieties* and his several 'faith-ladder' papers. It will attempt to clarify James' transition towards sounder strategies for defending what he called religious 'faith ventures', or 'overbeliefs', which John Stuart Mill earlier called *experiments of living*.<sup>4</sup>

It is obvious enough that James was a conflicted thinker in numerous ways, always struggling with issues of religious diversity, science and faith, intellectualism and fideism, etc. These remain difficult but important issues, and James' own discussions of the 'divided self' of the 'twice-born' character shows his awareness of discordancy in himself as well as others. But I want to allege that there is also hidden unity or deeper internal consistency in James' approach to the ethics of belief, a unity which I believe other commentators have missed for the reasons that Hollinger and Pappas point out to us. To make good on this thesis we will relate James' multiple defenses of the right to believe to later developments in the science/religion literature and in philosophy of science proper, developments that I see James perceptively anticipating, yet providing a less-than clear exposition of. The constructive second part of the chapter will sketch ways to capitalize on this hidden unity in the construction of our virtue theoretic but also neo-Jamesian account of doxastic responsibility. The *Hidden Unity Thesis* (hereafter *HUT*) consists of two claims:

- (a) William James develops his philosophical defense of an individual's ethical and intellectual right to their responsibly-held religious faith ventures in terms of what the contemporary religion/science literature refers to as the *Dialogue Model* of the relationship between science and religion, and
- (b) James' writings support what is common to and what is most advantageous in the *Dialogue Model*; but at the same time his writings reflect the substantial *tensions* between its two distinct versions, due to their diverging fideistic/intellectualistic orientation.

The terminology we have just used is drawn from Ian Barbour's influential taxonomy of views about the relationship between science and religion, which is also employed in much of the best theoretical work in the science/religion literature. It may be possible to surpass Barbour's taxonomy of *Conflict*, *Independence*, *Dialogue* and *Integration* Models, but this straightforward and easily-applicable model is developed in Barbour's writings in ways that support our project by explicitly

recognizing how divergent motivations can nevertheless lead to adoption of the same model.

Two sub-versions of the *Dialogue Model* as Barbour describes them are:

- I. Presuppositions and Limit-Questions (hereafter *LQ*)
- II. Conceptual and Methodological Parallels (hereafter *MP*)

'Limit questions' (*LQ*) and 'methodological parallels' (*MP*) are distinct ways of arguing for a potential if not yet actual two-way conversation where there are things to be learned on both sides. Their connections with the ethics of belief are likely to appear vague to readers at first, but will be our direct focus later, after we properly explicate them. James was constantly debating faith ventures (fideism, moderate and radical) and intellectualism (including what contemporary literature refers to as religious and skeptical rationalism or intellectualism). It is significant that those who find *LQ* appealing typically do not find *MP* appealing, and vice versa. I will show that James was arguing for and continuing to develop *both* versions of *Dialogue* concurrently even in his last works, despite the evident tensions between them. That he should do so allows us to straightforwardly explain many surface tensions between things he says both about and in defense of religious 'overbeliefs'.

James, most of whose books of philosophy derive directly from high-profile public lecture series, was well aware of the need to address distinct audiences when speaking on issues of religion and science, reason and faith, etc. This strategic or audience-specific approach is all the more useful when the audiences see little merit in the dialogue one is proposing. Models of faith and of faith's relationship with secular reasoning are plural, and *Dialogue* requires listening to all of these voices. So although it may indeed seem odd that James should want to develop both an *LQ* and a *MP* defense, I argue that there is no logical inconsistency in trying to give both versions, one more fideistic, the other more intellectualistic, its best articulation. It was the pragmatic thing to do. If this is correct *and* we can show textual evidence of our interpretation then we should accept *HUT*, acknowledging a significant degree of previously unrecognized unity to James' account.

On the one hand, both allegations of tensions and certain claims about the 'trajectory' of James' thinking about the ethics of belief can be shown to be as much a matter of one-sidedness in our interpretations, as of James himself. On the other hand it will be argued that our own contentions have implications for how we understand the self-consistency and viability of the Jamesian ethics of belief. Our contention will be

that what connects *LQ* an *MP* to issues of doxastic responsibility and the ethics of belief is what Gregory Pappas, in 'William James' Virtuous Religious Believer', calls 'the character issue' in James' thought.

## 1 Motivating the Dialogue Model

Thus far the thesis has been rather 'thin' and formal: we can find substantially greater coherence, strength and contemporary relevance in James' thought if we read him as supporting not a single but rather two distinct versions of *Dialogue* that sometimes run in tension with one another. But let us put a little more meat on these bones in order to clarify exactly what this claim amounts to. Then we can move to identify those threads in James' writings that may plausibly be interpreted as intending to develop philosophical arguments along the lines of *LQ* or *MP*. Here is Barbour's introduction to the *Dialogue Model* and its sub-versions:

*Dialogue* portrays more constructive relationships between science and religion than does either the *Conflict* or the *Independence* view, but it does not offer the degree of conceptual unity claimed by advocates of *Integration*. *Dialogue* may arise from considering the *presuppositions* of the scientific enterprise, or from exploring similarities between the *methods* of science and those of religion, or from analyzing *concepts* in one field that are analogous to those in another. In comparing science and religion, *Dialogue* emphasizes similarities in presuppositions, methods, and concepts, whereas *Independence* emphasizes differences.<sup>5</sup>

An *LQ* defense needs to be developed as befits the *Dialogue* model, and will be weaker otherwise. But in his early works James refers to 'a certain class of truths' in regard to which 'faith' is appropriate, being undetermined by or outside the purview of scientific evidence. Hollinger interprets WTB as reflecting an early *Independence* or 'separate spheres' response to the science and religion relationship, and he reads *Varieties* 'as a product of the particular phase in James' career when he was shifting from one strategy to another' in his multi-edged fight against moral evidentialism and aggressive secularizers on the one hand, and religious dogmatism and intolerance on the other. James was showing himself less enamored with his earlier exception-case approach that depended upon trans-empirical concepts and the underdetermination-based argument with respect especially to them. This came in response to critics of his earlier approach, including some of his more scientifically oriented

friends like C. S. Peirce. But James wasn't yet confident in this strategy of submitting religious beliefs to the tribunal of reason, and also wasn't quite sure what he wanted to vindicate scientifically under the sign of 'religion'. James' *Pragmatism*<sup>6</sup> places a greater emphasis on holistic desiderata of theory choice *across* disciplines, as against what Hollinger and numerous others view as WTB's 'very unpragmatic' distinction of a class of questions—the exception case:<sup>7</sup>

*Pragmatism* was the point in James's career at which he consolidated his defense of religious belief so that it could more easily operate within, rather than outside of, scientific inquiry. He downplayed the distinction [between spheres or between decidable and undecidable] that had been central to *The Will to Believe*. In *Pragmatism*, religious beliefs were to be put at risk in conscientious investigation, the better to maximize the chances of their being proven true.<sup>8</sup>

In comparison with WTB which is often criticized from both sides for confusing faith-based commitments and hypotheses, Hollinger views James' last works as more internally-consistent expressions of the pragmatic perspective.<sup>9</sup> The fideistic line is thus the earlier of James' two basic lines of argumentation, and it certainly gets greatly qualified and reworked. But there are no good textual grounds for reading James as giving up or moving 'away from' *LQ* or *MP*. I want to show that James' later writings show that both *LQ*- and *MP*-based defenses of religious overbeliefs are concurrently developed through to the end of his life.

### 1.1 Presuppositions and Limit Questions

Hollinger's reading of James is largely amenable to our own in that he articulates James' growing concern to develop an *MP* version of the *Dialogue Model*. But his reading of James' uni-directional trajectory cannot explain his continued interest in the more fideistic defense of the faith-ladder and his concurrent development of the *LQ* version. Questions that arise at the horizons, borders, or natural limits of empirical evidence and scientific reasoning are 'limit questions'. The fideistic side of James' thinking stemmed from concern with the personal value of religious commitments and the social benefits of what John Stuart Mill called a marketplace of ideas. This active advocacy was also supported by his empirical and comparative study of religious experience, and by what we'll later develop as his *descriptive* fideism. Two of the abiding philosophical views of James, from very early to very late, were the need for recognition of the imprint of character and personality over

our whole cognitive ecology, and the subsequent demand for toleration and respect for what Mill called *experiments of living*:

[T]here should be different experiments of living; that free scope should be given to varieties of character, short of injury to others; and that the worth of different modes of life should be proved practically, when anyone thinks fit to try them.<sup>10</sup>

One of the earliest and most radical examples of James' fideism is the 'subjective method' of his first published philosophical essays. This was a method of affirming or rejecting metaphysical and spiritual claims on 'subjective' grounds, e.g. our desires and preferences. Perhaps the most radical statement of the subjective method is this:

If a certain formula for expressing the nature of the world violates my moral demand, I shall feel as free to throw it overboard, or at least to doubt it, as if it disappointed my demand for uniformity of sequence, for example; the one demand being, so far as I can see, quite as subjective and emotional as the other is.

Here, in the early (1884) paper 'The Dilemma of Determinism', James even claims about overbeliefs, religious or over perennial philosophical divides like free will and determinism, that 'facts practically have hardly anything to do' with their justification.<sup>11</sup> James is too willing here, as in 'The Sentiment of Rationality', to treat theoretical claims of various sorts as fairing equally well in regards to empirical adequacy or ability to capture shared facts. This undermines the sense in which they are supposed to be intellectual competitors, or else reduces 'competition' to personal standards. The language of 'hypothesis' also seems ill-fitted with 'formulas for expressing the nature of the world', and what it means to accept or affirm them. No wonder, then, that despite James' reference to the scientific language of 'hypotheses', Hollinger takes the subjective method to manifest an *Independence* model.

The subjective method reflects a pretty radical fideism and seems committed to an *Independence* rather than a *Dialogue* model. This seems to hold through the writing of his *Will to Believe* lecture, where he argues that while Clifford's evidentialist norm of belief should be adhered to for truths of an everyday kind, 'it is utterly worthless, it is absurd indeed, in the search for truth of a different kind'.<sup>12</sup>

This appeal to different kinds of truth appears a doubtful strategy to both Hollinger and Pappas; the individual is not the *only*, although she

may be the primary and the 'default' chooser of her risk. Pragmatists today are generally critical of the exception-case strategy and this division in WTB of intellectually undecided and undecidable options, which runs in tension with and tends to obscure his psychological, descriptive claim that preferences are always operative, and don't come into play just when intellectually underdetermined 'options' for belief arise. It appears to be both an inconsistency and a mistake for the pragmatist to leave 'epistemic rationality' entirely to their evidentialist opponents and argue simply that prudential rationality in some cases effects what one ought to believe, all things considered.

There are, to be sure, some interesting interpretations comparing James' subjective method and Kierkegaard's notion of truth as subjectivity. Both clearly hold faith to be the kind of commitment one can subjectively have in the face of a situation recognized as objectively uncertain. By the time he writes the 'Preface' for *The Will to Believe and Other Essays*, James already has critics believing that his right to believe would run cover for religious extremism. There he responds directly to the concern that he is 'preaching reckless faith' and opening the floodgates to wishful thinking. While his 'tests' of overbeliefs are still largely subjective or personal, his response involves an explicitly Darwinian image of robust competition, adaptation, and survival only of the fittest: 'Meanwhile the freest competition of the various faiths with one another, and their openest application to life by their several champions, are the most favorable conditions under which the survival of the fittest can proceed.'<sup>13</sup>

Wernham points out that the term 'faith-ladder' does not occur in James' work before 1906, but that there are multiple instances of it between then and his death in 1910. In 'Faith and the Right to Believe' James defines faith tendencies, for the purposes of his empirical method, as 'extremely active psychological forces, constantly outstripping evidence'.<sup>14</sup> Let's call this James' *descriptive fideism*; it is his claim that the psychological dynamics of religious faith as studied through its 'characters' and 'varieties' integrally involve the will or the passionate nature of human agents. This descriptive fideism is best illustrated in what James termed the 'faith-ladder' and its progressive rungs or steps:

1. There is nothing absurd in a certain view of the world being true, nothing self-contradictory;
2. It *might* have been true under certain conditions;
3. It *may* be true, even now;
4. It is *fit* to be true;

5. It *ought* to be true;
6. It *must* be true;
7. It *shall* be true, at any rate true for *me*.

Descriptive fideism should be distinguished from any religious apologetic strategy or philosophical thesis; a skeptic could accept it as well as a theist. Evangelical Protestant religious apologetics often try to 'sink' the fideistic character or their own tradition. But how could James, a forger of the fields of empirical psychology and of East/West comparative philosophy of religion, not acknowledge religious characters habitually living upon the faith-ladder? It was quite evident to James that faith tendencies are value-charged schemes of thought. The faith-ladder is obviously 'no intellectual chain of inferences', but rather reveals 'leaps' from ought-to-be to is, and from might be true to is true. 'These faith tendencies in turn are but expressions of our good-will towards certain forms of result';<sup>15</sup> they constitute a 'slope of good-will on which in the larger questions of life men habitually live'. One can't properly address the question of one's 'right' to believe (or the limits to that right), without accepting something like the faith-ladder's psychological descriptions of how the believer typically reasons.<sup>16</sup>

James' LQ-type defense of the right to believe is still present but far more qualified where it appears in the 'Philosophy' and 'Conclusions' sections of *Varieties*. So to return to our main line of argument, it is supportive of HUT that at the very end of his life James is still utilizing the 'faith-ladder' and detailed descriptions of the religious character-types studied in *Varieties*, to support his philosophical LQ-type defense of the right to indulge in religious overbeliefs. James' philosophical response to psychological fideism is complex, but is plausibly interpreted as a defense of overbeliefs as personal answers to one's own demands for intelligibility and meaning: 'the greeting of our whole nature to a kind of world conceived as well adapted to that nature'. The LQ argument as a *philosophic* defense of a faith venture is supported by, but distinct from, *psychological fideism*.

Barbour thinks the Methodological Parallels version of *Dialogue* is the strongest, but he also argues that unless we are biased by scientism we will recognize 'limit situations' of human experience, and questions that science may itself suggest but are not science's or science's alone to answer:

Advocates of Dialogue hold that science has presuppositions and raises limit-questions that science itself cannot answer. Religious

traditions can suggest possible answers to such questions, these thinkers assert, without violating the integrity of science. The distinction between the disciplines is maintained, but thoughtful dialogue can occur.<sup>17</sup>

Even in *Varieties* James maintains that reason's role is to 'indicate the opening', allowing faith to 'jump in'. Any proponent of *Dialogue* should have an account of what distinguishes them from crass forms of god-of-the-gaps reasoning. But arguably, only scientific thinking would prevent recognition of meaningful questions and propositions of a philosophical, theological, esthetic, ethical, etc. nature that aren't directly amenable to scientific method. But the *kinds* of beliefs defensible in this way will vary in their epistemic status. To be deemed socially and ethically reasonable, they must not be intolerant, and to be personally valuable they must show their personal fruits.

While *Dialogue* holds that scientists should recognize the limits of science and avoid confusing scientific practices with metaphysical or philosophic interpretations of science, it also holds that religionists should recognize the mood of faith in their own search for 'ultimate explanations' and acknowledge as well that the riskiness of, and disagreement over, such answers that we give ourselves calls for intellectual humility. Religious traditions and personal experiences often 'suggest possible answers', but the proponent of the LQ sub-version of *Dialogue* demands that responsible overbeliefs avoid conflating 'God may be the answer' (for me, at any rate)—a value-charged step up the faith-ladder—with 'Science *needs* God as the answer.' A 'God-hypothesis' framed as the latter kind of claim seems to me patently fallacious, but it should not be confused with the Jamesian use of the religious hypothesis, which is geared towards the former idea—to possibilities and permissions.

Speculative personal and communal answers to boundary situations/limit questions is one (but as we'll see, only one) way of understanding why James so often notes the tenuous evidential status of overbeliefs. Their 'grounds' are only partly found in 'evidence', especially evidence of a kind apt for empirical or naturalistic study. The answer our total experience suggests to us is typically of great personal value, unless it cuts off inquiry. Social psychology shows us that group and individual identity are often associated with risk-taking, including cognitive risk-taking. At any rate our diverse experiments of living, whether we acknowledge it or not, are, in more and less healthy ways, 'congruous

with our personal susceptibilities' and passionate needs; they are also a reflection of the intellectual strategies a person uses to counter-balance the two ways we constantly risk losing the truth: by believing too much or too little; too brashly or too cautiously; by unwisely issuing an 'unhedged license' or a general 'faith veto'.

James held that overbeliefs are for all of these reasons to be tolerated as normal functions so long as they are not intolerant themselves. 'Ultimate explanations' in terms of answers we give ourselves or that a religious tradition typically supplies are, as overbeliefs to James, largely matters of *possibility and permission*, and not of intellectual necessity. James writes, '[L]et it be distinctly recognized for what it is—the mood of Faith, not Science'.<sup>18</sup> In what I see as the penultimate conclusion of *Varieties*, the defense of the psychological 'indispensability' of religious overbeliefs for many people is crucially limited in James' claim, 'It may be that possibility and permission of this sort are all that the religious consciousness requires to live on ... No fact of human nature is more characteristic than its willingness to live on a chance.'<sup>19</sup>

## 1.2 Conceptual and Methodological Parallels

*HUT* describes James as developing not only a moderately fideistic *LQ* version of *Dialogue*, but also a more intellectualistic *MP* version. So let's see how Barbour describes the *MP* version, and then look at the concluding sections of *Varieties* as a place where James gives such an approach its fullest development.

Barbour writes that for proponents of the Conceptual and Methodological Parallels (*MP*) sub-version of the *Dialogue* model, 'science is not as objective nor religion as subjective as had been assumed ... Scientific data are theory-laden, not theory-free. Theoretical assumptions enter the selection, reporting, and interpretation of what are taken to be data ... analogies and models often play a role'.<sup>20</sup> *Dialogue*, however, does not hide the fact that science is clearly more objective than religion, or that the kinds of evidence religion draws from are sometimes radically different from those in science, that adjustments are often far more ad hoc, and that the possibility of testing is much more limited. Proponents of *Dialogue* are fully aware that 'religion is more than an intellectual system, because its goal is personal transformation and a way of life'.<sup>21</sup>

As we saw Hollinger argue, James' late work extends WTB's earlier but vaguer analogies between naturalistically and religiously-oriented research programs, and shows a greater concern with doxastic responsibility

by placing the shared religious hypothesis and a person's doxastic and sub-doxastic ventures 'more at risk in conscientious investigation'. In the Preface to *The Will to Believe and Other Essays*, when trying to respond to critics, especially those who say James confuses faith and hypothesis, James expounds his distinction between commitment to a generic or inter-faith religious hypothesis and particular 'active faith' commitments: 'If religious hypotheses about the universe be in order at all, then the active faiths of individuals in them, freely expressing themselves in life, are the experimental tests by which they are verified, and the only means by which their truth or falsehood can be brought out.'<sup>22</sup>

This distinction gets further development in the final chapters of *Varieties*, where 'overbeliefs' are presented as different, sometime idiosyncratic ways of 'building out' a more generic but also more rationally-defensible religious hypothesis. In *Varieties* James still holds that focusing on intellectual constructions, including theologies and creeds, is an inversion of the natural order of religious life, where feelings and conduct are the primary and constant elements. He asserts again that 'the theories which Religion generates, being thus variable, are secondary'.

There is no contradiction between taking intellectual constructions as secondary to feelings in action, and still finding important roles for philosophy, especially where a mediator and moderator of cultural politics is so obviously need. But it does lead James to substantially qualify his long-standing anti-intellectualism. In writings prior to 1900 James had often been a severe critic of intellectualism. It marks an important qualification in James' thought that in *Varieties* he makes a distinction between two *kinds* of intellectualism: the one kind is still that of his older targets (philosophical and theological), and the other kind the intellectualism that studies religion scientifically and phenomenologically, applying 'constructive or comparative and critical' reason to them. This latter is his so-called 'science of religions'.<sup>23</sup> Hollinger says James wasn't quite sure what he wanted to vindicate scientifically under the sign of science of religions but that as 'criticism and induction', he still marks its off sharply from the 'metaphysics and deduction' of the idealist metaphysicians including Royce, Caird, and Cardinal Newman.<sup>24</sup>

The 'Philosophy' and 'Conclusion' sections of *Varieties* 'were meant to deal with the theoretical dimension of religion'.<sup>25</sup> There James calls for 'pass[ing] beyond the view of merely subjective utility, and mak[ing] inquiry into the intellectual content itself'.<sup>26</sup> Experiences are private, but hypotheses are public. Comparative religious studies invites the formulation of hypotheses that may be realist or anti-realist,

supernaturalistic or realist, etc. James (controversially) described a 'science of religions' that sought to formulate hypotheses by 'discriminat[ing] the common and essential form the individual and local elements of religious belief'.<sup>27</sup> What had been the 'religious hypothesis' in WTB is now the 'common nucleus' of an inter-faith research program. It is still confined to what is 'common and generic' but overbeliefs 'build out' this cognitive core in one or another way by associating it with other beliefs, values, and practices.

James sums up what he calls the 'nucleus' of the religious life (and what Lakatos calls the 'core' of a research program), at the beginning of the 'Conclusions' section (Lecture XX). James allows that 'the faith-state may hold a very minimum of intellectual content', but he is also more careful than in WTB to frame what he takes to be the three claims at the core of religious life as assertions and without resort to metaphor, the better to establish the initial plausibility of the religious believer's realist understanding of their own use of language. He says he has tried to 'reduce religion to its lowest admissible terms, to that minimum, free from individualistic excrescences, which all religions contain as their nucleus, and which it may be hoped that all religious persons may agree'. A few pages later he transitions into speaking about what he calls overbeliefs, or 'buildings-out' of such a hypothesis (or what on Lakatos' understanding of research programs is called the 'belt', with its positive heuristic):

[R]ound it [the nucleus or hard core] the ruddier additional beliefs in which the different individuals make their venture might be grafted, and flourishing as richly as you please ... And we shall soon be in the varied world of concrete religious constructions once more.<sup>28</sup>

If we follow any one of them, or if we follow philosophical theory and embrace monistic pantheism on non-mystical grounds, we do so in the exercise of our individual freedom, and build out our religion in the way most congruous with our personal susceptibilities.<sup>29</sup>

While it is these overbeliefs as enablers of a religious life that excite James and that he primarily sought to defend, it is noteworthy that he excuses himself to his audience 'to let me dryly pursue the analytic part of the task'. James has made his amends with the form of 'intellectualism' he endorses through the positive roles he assigns to psychology, philosophy, and a science of religions. Much of what was prescriptive in the subjective method of his early writings is now presented (as it

should be) as descriptive psychology of religious character-types; the advocacy of the right to one's overbeliefs is premised pragmatically on their fruits in vitalizing a religious life (as in *LQ*), but also intellectually on this now-clearer development of the philosophical work performed by a core/overbelief distinction within an interfaith religious research program.

Many interpreters have noticed and built upon the anticipations James seems to be making in his *MP* version of *Dialogue*, of developments in post-positivist philosophy of science, and more specifically of Imre Lakatos' MSRP, or 'methodology of scientific research programs'. Some other contemporary philosophies of religion, including John Hick's argument for religious pluralism, are substantially similar to the approach James pioneered in *Varieties* (a point often obscured by Hick's almost vehement rejection of James for the fideistic strategy of WTB). Lakatos' work has been influential across multiple fields through its plausible description of theoretical research programs as composed of a thin but fact-asserting 'core', and a more varied and readily revisable group of auxiliary or 'belt' assumptions that might include axiological and methodological assumptions.

The holistic relationship between theories and their grounds is one important further connection to Lakatos, who describes research programs as needing to be assessed historically rather than synchronically, a 'progressive' or 'degenerative' program distinguishing itself by the manner in which it responds to problems with the phenomena it studies and the explanations it offers.<sup>30</sup> Lakatos insists that the refutability of a scientific research program's 'core' claim or claims must in principle be acknowledged; but within the program in which it is embedded, it is tenaciously protected from refutation by a vast 'protective belt' of auxiliary hypotheses.<sup>31</sup> The belt, being more directly exposed to empirical problems and potential refutation, 'is constantly modified, increased, complicated, while the hard core remains intact'<sup>32</sup>; this clearly matches much of the argument in *Varieties* for the lower epistemic status James assigns to overbeliefs *vis-à-vis* the formal hypothesis or 'common nucleus' of the program.

Our comparisons between James and Lakatos' MSRP are by no means perfect, but neither do we need them to be perfect in order to support *Dialogue*. That there should be such clear connections between James' *MP* version of *Dialogue* in *Varieties* and Lakatos' MSRP is unsurprising, given the holistic character of reasoning that both authors assert in their respective fields. Nor was James unfamiliar with the work of his French contemporary Pierre Duhem, whose philosophy of science

Lakatos and other post-positivists drew upon.<sup>33</sup> While both Duhem and Lakatos wrote directly only about science, the applicability of MSRP to non-scientific theories is clearly supported in a footnote: 'The concepts of "progressive" and "degenerating" problem-shifts, [and] the idea of proliferation of theories can be generalized to any sort of rational discussion and thus serve as tools for a general theory of criticism.'<sup>34</sup>

### 1.3 Conclusion of Part 1

It is clear that James was working towards making his defense of religious overbelief more intellectually acceptable, and we have seen how shifting away from his earlier *Independence* model to a *Dialogue* model serves this purpose. The development of the LQ sub-version of *Dialogue* brings only some qualifications to the fideistic tenor of his thought, but the development of the MP sub-version drove his newly dubbed science of religions, with its crucial distinction between the epistemic merits of the 'nucleus' of a religious hypothesis and the (still 'indispensable' but) easily criticizable overbeliefs. But while our *Hidden Unity Thesis (HUT)* allows us to acknowledge such a 'trajectory' in James' thinking, it still runs counter-point to the many interpretations that take James' trajectory to be *uni-directional* (possibly including Hollinger's own claim that James was 'shifting from *one* strategy to another' (emphasis added)). For *HUT* maintains a *bi-directional* trajectory in James' philosophical maturity, where two distinctly different (which is not of course to say unconnected) defenses of religious overbelief are mounted.

For one group of James' interpreters, 'science of religions' sounds far too intellectualist to be 'in character' for James or a realistic possibility. For another group, James' 'faith-ladder' immediately sets off fears of being intellectually irresponsible and irrational. So Richard Rorty, as an example of the first group, in 'Religious Faith, Intellectual Responsibility and Romance' argues both that James erred gravely in pursuing his intellectual defense of overbeliefs in *Varieties*, but also that so long as they remain private beliefs and admirably 'fuzzy' in content, one is perfectly entitled and the kinds of 'irrationality' that might be pointed out in such beliefs are nothing unusual or to get worked up about. So James' should have stayed with his early *Independence Model*, and supported it simply on liberal political principles to the extent that theists and atheists can both respect 'the priority of democracy to philosophy': 'James should have rested content with the argument of *The Will to Believe*, and never pressed the question of "the religious hypothesis".'<sup>35</sup> The other group thinks like Barbour that an MP defense is in many cases possible, and where it is, also much to be preferred.

John Hick is most unsympathetic in his comments on the argument of WTB, happy to saddle James with the crassest interpretation of a 'pragmatic defense' of religious belief and to dismiss it quickly on this basis. Yet his own philosophy of religion, like *Varieties'* MP strain, is based upon a 'realistically' interpreted core religious 'hypothesis' and a secondary tier of further beliefs recognized a culturally conditioned intellectual constructs. Any major tradition provides a potentially valid way of approaching Godhead so long as it is taken with an appropriate measure of epistemic humility.

Both groups of James' interpreters are right in a way, but Hollinger's thesis seems confirmed: their own preferences for how the relationship between reason and faith should be understood shape what they think James' argument *was*, and what they think James' argument *should have been*. What the one-sided or uni-directional interpretations never admit is that James made both these points explicitly himself. He said let's talk about the ethically and intellectually proper weight of caution and how that may constrain theistic commitments and related risk-taking; let's find out about how criticism proceeds once religion is tied to a 'some characteristic realm of fact'<sup>36</sup> such that science and serious thought-experiments can bear upon it. Let's find out whether neuroscience, etc. may support or be adverse to the claim that the essence of religion is true.<sup>37</sup> The truth of the matter, *HUT* maintains, is that these challenging questions are among those that promote the deeper and more inter-disciplinary study of religion that James want to see, and that a deeper unity in James' philosophy of religion is that he was developing both LQ and MP arguments concurrently. He was trying to promote dialogue to different audiences or readerships, and so found it appealing to argumentatively support *all* of the ways we have seen associated with *Dialogue*, and despite, but certainly not in a manner oblivious to, the tensions between them.

## 2 A Neo-Jamesian Ethics of Belief

What are the sources of the normativity we attach to this odd phrase, 'ethics of belief'? What doxastic norms and what account of intellectual responsibility and culpability are most suiting? These are difficult questions. James' ethics of belief is often taken to be primarily negative, in the sense of resisting the rigorously universalizing account of doxastic norms as represented through William Clifford. It is true, of course, that James' writings are overwhelmingly balanced on the side of defending a right to believe rather than articulating proper *limits* of the right. But



as Pappas argues in 'William James' Virtuous Religious Believer', 'James does have a more positive position ... an answer to the question of how we ought to lead our doxastic life, i.e., the character issue'.<sup>38</sup>

Proper motivations and good intellectual habits are central to how James intended to handle questions about ethical and doxastic responsibility. Indeed, Pappas shows Dewey and the broader pragmatist tradition to be sympathetic to a character-based approach in the ethics of belief, especially as it brings critical intelligence to bear on these questions. 'What is intriguing is that neither James nor Dewey in their extensive works have provided a comparable pragmatic analysis and defense of those traits of character which are assumed in their conception of a good believer.' To complete this task, Pappas thinks, 'would be to fully provide a pragmatist ethics of belief'.<sup>39</sup>

This part of the chapter will try to push forward the project Pappas describes, by sketching a neo-Jamesian ethics of belief along virtue-theoretic lines. What classical American pragmatism and my character epistemology have primarily in common is the centrality of *inquiry* and of *practices/norms* of communities of inquiry to the evaluation of agents and their beliefs. Inquiry-centered and agent-focused epistemology contrasts with cognitive-state-centered and belief-focused approaches. Myself and others have argued for its advantages over much mainstream epistemological internalism and externalism. As Roger Pouivet aptly notes: 'Virtue epistemologists generally agree that, more than anything, good intellectual habits ground our pretensions to warranted beliefs, and to knowledge. And habits are properties of persons, not of beliefs.'<sup>40</sup> Stephen Napier puts it this way:

One theoretical fallout of [virtue] responsibilism is that it marks a shift away from analyzing epistemic concepts (e.g. knowledge) in terms of other epistemic concepts (e.g., justification) to analyzing epistemic concepts with reference to kinds of human *activity* ... Much of analytic epistemology focuses on epistemic *concepts*, whereas the responsibilist focus is on epistemic *activity*.<sup>41</sup>

The proposed approach to the ethics of belief through contemporary character (or virtue) epistemology I want to show responds more powerfully to internalist evidentialism, undercutting on sensible epistemic grounds the account of knowledge and justification that for the 'epistemic evidentialist' is supposed to provide rules of epistemic rationality. It also responds more powerfully to moral evidentialism by providing a principled account of how we restrict the proper

scope of the 'ethics of belief'.<sup>42</sup> More constructively, I want to show that it supports the possibility of reasonable disagreement (as epistemic evidentialism arguably cannot), and therefore also the Rawlsian conception of reasonable pluralism that goes together with the epistemology of democracy. Its effect is to offer an account of the ethics of belief more permissive than that of self-described evidentialists (moral or epistemological) from William Clifford to Sam Harris and Richard Feldman—yet an account better suited to explain what it means to take responsibility for how one acquires and modifies their beliefs. Invitations to 'indulge in private over-beliefs' are shown to be normal aspects of a person's identity, but the account should also be normative in a sense not just of *allowing*, but of *enabling* self- and peer-criticism and the belief maintenance or revision that ensues from it.<sup>43</sup> Let us simply organize our approach by first tying it further with Pappas' thesis and his supporting research on 'the character issue' as it pertains to James' ethics of belief; we can then extend this study to include what some other contemporary pragmatists and character epistemologists have written that we can use to support our task. We will look especially at Robert Audi's and Susan Haack's work on the ethics of belief. This should put us into position to say how the proposed neo-Jamesian ethics of belief supports but also sets constraints upon LQ- and MP-based defenses of religious belief.

## 2.1 Gregory Pappas

The concern for rules in the ethics of belief, Pappas suggests, arises out of thinking that if we do not fix rules, then we allow open doors to credulousness and self-deception. Pappas asserts that for James 'the remedy is not a rule but the cultivation of character in the right direction'.<sup>44</sup> For James, 'the problem for the man is less what act he shall now resolve to do than what being he shall now choose to become'.<sup>45</sup> Pappas thinks that

to remain faithful to the pragmatist spirit one cannot ground or even describe an ideal or virtues on such things as fixed ends, human nature, or *a priori* ground. Only by first providing the pragmatist analysis of these important terms can one construct an ethics of belief consistent with the pragmatist view.

Yet neither James nor Dewey, he rightly points out, have provided such a detailed pragmatic analysis of 'character-traits manifested by reasonable inquirers'.

Pappas argues more specifically that for James the 'character question' about how we ought to conduct our 'doxastic life' (i.e. that part of our life that has to do with the acquiring, holding, development, and revising of our beliefs)<sup>46</sup> is intimately connected both philosophically and in James' own thinking with a situational approach. 'James' situational approach assumes the importance of virtue in the ethics of belief.'<sup>47</sup>

The tools Pappas interprets James as saying best serve a sound ethics of belief are 'qualities of a good believer such as a willingness to be open to refutation, a generous attitude towards experience, and a willingness to work out a compromise between different demands'.<sup>48</sup> The Jamesian virtuous religious believer 'is a believer that in general is willing to be faithful to experience and faces the risks and responsibilities that this involves'.<sup>49</sup>

Holistic reasoning is something that is very strong in James, and in pragmatist philosophy more generally. We will need to look at various aspects of holism, since it is important to our view that holistic and ampliative (non-deductive) reasoning are central to both *LQ* and *MP* defenses of faith ventures, but apply in somewhat different ways. Pappas' main focus is on the way in which James presents the balancing work performed by holistic *character*. He shows us how James follows Mill in attributing philosophical differences to character types and in wanting to provide useful taxonomies in terms of character types. In *Varieties* James organizes several lectures around thick descriptions of 'divided selves', 'healthy' and 'sick' souled, 'once' and 'twice-born', etc. He writes that 'strong affections need a strong will; strong active powers need a strong intellect; strong intellect need strong sympathies, to keep life steady. If the balance exists, no one faculty can possibly be too strong—we only get the stronger all-around character.'<sup>50</sup> This is what Pappas describes as James' norm of *balanced-holistic* character.

## 2.2 Robert Audi

Pappas is approaching our topic by way of his reading of James, but tying it to the development of an account of balanced holistic character. Several others who have written as virtue theorists on the ethics of belief bring up other connections that we can relate back to James. Robert Audi holds that 'intellectual character is properly evaluated both on the basis of how well grounded a person's beliefs are and on the basis of what the person does to see to it that they are well grounded'.<sup>51</sup> Doxastic responsibility is primarily a liability to criticism, and criticism may bear upon either largely synchronic or largely diachronic concerns. Of course one needn't suppose in either case that people have direct doxastic control—direct

control over beliefs. 'For understanding the ethics of belief, however, it is important to see that indirect control of belief formation and revision, even just indirect *negative* control, is enough to ground *doxastic responsibility*'.<sup>52</sup> We can have some degree of indirect control of belief formation and belief elimination through what Audi calls *evidential conduct*, or what I have elsewhere called *zetetic* activities (motivations, habits, and strategies). 'Intellectual responsibility often requires our seeking evidence, or further evidence.'<sup>53</sup> As Clifford and James agreed, forward-looking doxastic norms are altogether central to the functions we expect an ethics of belief to serve. Contemporary epistemic evidentialism, ironically, allows no epistemic significance to norms other than synchronic fit. Their arguments that the evidentialist norm is simply 'belief's own ethics' are thus easily undercut when one rejects their internalist and deontological account of epistemic value maximization that reduces what matters epistemologically to a wholly synchronic affair.<sup>54</sup>

Pragmatists and character epistemologists do not presuppose a fact/value dichotomy or an always sharp distinction between intellectual and ethical evaluation. Indeed, both groups are likely to understand practical reason as significantly analogous to theoretical reason. But they do see doxastic norms as *diachronic* and not merely synchronic, and therefore recognize *prospective* evidential conduct as an important aspect of intellectual responsibility. Audi helpfully articulates five distinct kinds of standards governing prospective intellectual responsibility: 'They call for seeking evidence, for attempting to achieve a kind of reflective equilibrium, for focusing in a certain way on grounds of our beliefs, for making interpersonal comparisons in grounds and cognitions, and for rectifying certain disproportions in our own cognitive systems.'<sup>55</sup> Audi connects the ethics of belief directly with the epistemology of disagreement in arguing that 'intellectually responsible persons may justifiably avoid responding to disagreement with an apparent epistemic peer without skepticism that undermines their own convictions', but also that 'epistemic virtue embodies a kind of humility as an element in intellectual responsibility and tolerance as an element in moral character'.<sup>56</sup>

## 2.3 Rose Ann Christian and Susan Haack

Two other pragmatist philosophers besides Pappas whose reconstructions of the ethics of belief support our project are Rose Ann Christian and Susan Haack. As Christian envisions pragmatist ethics of belief, it functions such that James' ideal of an intellectually tolerant society may be furthered, while Clifford's worries about an intellectually vicious or degenerate society may be respected but also assuaged.<sup>57</sup> A key to the first

task is to clarify and restrict the proper scope of the 'ethics of belief', and to properly acknowledge the 'impurities' of epistemic agency and the many significant 'overlaps' or 'entanglements' between epistemic and ethical evaluation. This serves to contextualize the issue of intellectual rights and censure, and to make responsible inquiry (a diachronic concern) rather than an internalist conception of propositional epistemic *justification* (conceived as a wholly synchronic concern) the proper locus of praise and blame. It also allows, as evidentialism cannot, for some permissions or *invitations* to believe that are not merely reducible to obligations to either believe, disbelieve, or suspend belief in a target proposition based on fit with present evidence. It insists that not just 'fit' but how the evidence is got (or ill-got) can make a difference to the epistemic standing of a belief. James' model of faith rests on a *permissibility* thesis, under which varied and conflicting faith-commitments may equally have a place in the 'intellectual republic'.<sup>58</sup> 'Possibility and permission' (not 'compulsion' or coercive argument), James believed, are the touchstones of religious overbelief, and 'all that it requires to live on'. A key to the second task is for people to *take* responsibility for their doxastic habits and accept culpability for harmful treatment of others based upon religious beliefs.

Christian describes how she and Susan Haack both understand the complex interrelationships between ethical and intellectual evaluation:

Whereas Clifford seeks to establish that everyone always has an inalienable, moral responsibility to adhere to the most exacting of epistemic standards, Haack aims to identify the limits of such responsibility. She does this by restricting the domain in which instances of believing may be judged on ethical as well as epistemic grounds: by distinguishing role-specific responsibilities from those that are more generally appropriate; and by identifying circumstances that serve to exonerate individuals from unfortunate epistemic failures.<sup>59</sup>

Character epistemologists generally think that focusing on epistemic *agency* rather than just belief states problematizes any very sharp distinction between epistemic and intellectual evaluation. But Haack also argues that an ethics of belief can have more normative force when it maintains a distinction, and that a shared failure to distinguish doxastic from ethical responsibility on the part of Clifford and James continues to confound progress in the ethics of belief.

Haack however also provides a helpful taxonomy of five models of the relationship between ethical and epistemic evaluation. She argues

against the fact/value dichotomy and in favor of the *Overlap Thesis*: 'According to the position she advocates there is, not an invariable correlation, but partial overlap, where positive/negative epistemic appraisal is associated with positive/negative ethical appraisal.'<sup>60</sup> We can now develop some of these authors' ideas further as we turn to how our neo-Jamesian account allied with Haack's Overlap model will understand the LQ and MP defenses of religious faith ventures.

#### 2.4 LQ: Pragmatic Defense of Moderate Fideism

While taking issue with James on numerous points, I want to sketch an account supportive of Mill's and James' shared theme of the social epistemic benefits of cognitive diversity and the personal value of *experiments of living*. Mill famously argued in *On Liberty*, 'Mankind are greater gainers by suffering each other to live as seem good to themselves than by compelling each to live as seems good to the rest.'<sup>61</sup> Our account should make it easy to connect a defense of permissible faith venture to the epistemology of liberal democracy, as well as to questions about how serious peer disagreement should weigh upon the rational confidence a person can have in different kinds of belief. Yet while being substantially more permissive of faith ventures than pragmatism's evidentialist opponents allow for, our fusion of these two inquiry-focused approaches, pragmatism and character epistemology, should also offer a positive account of what individual and collective intellectual responsibility consists in, and how this relates to the *limits* of responsible faith ventures. We now have a character epistemology that can restrict, as Haack wants, the 'proper scope' of the ethics of belief, but we also want it to provide real normative force—to have 'real teeth', enabling the kinds of criticisms and 'eliminations' James speaks of, which could be for reasons of severe evidential, ethical or psychological inadequacy. The way that I want to suggest is a *stratified* defense, where beliefs with few evidential merits receive a 'pragmatic' defense as ventures tolerated so long as they are tolerant themselves (*LQ* defense), but where greater respect is due to agents whose overbeliefs are defensible as idiosyncronically and/or culturally conditioned 'buildings out' of the 'core' of a (James might say, 'live') interfaith research program (*MP* defense, à la *Varieties*).

To turn to our *LQ* argument first, since faith tendencies as Jamesian descriptive fideism has it 'constantly outstrip evidence', the censure that we should expect an ethics of belief to provide is primarily socio-political and ethical. One obvious reason is that *ethically-motivated* curtailment of a right-to-believe, or a social harm argument, is among the only kinds of argument likely to be persuasive where tenets of faith

might otherwise be taken as grounds for intolerance against those who aren't adherents of the 'home religion'. Rorty describes this as liberal society's tolerance towards personal beliefs that acknowledge 'the priority of democracy to philosophy'.

What character epistemology adds to this pragmatic and social approach is a (hopefully) sophisticated account of agency and responsibility in inquiry. Character epistemology as we have presented it ties fairly directly into the *LQ* defense through the support that it provides to the kind of normative account of public reason and associated 'deliberative virtues' that is appropriate in liberal society. It directly supports the Rawlsian 'burdens of reason' (or 'judgment'), which he defined as 'the sources of reasonable disagreement among reasonable persons, [that] are the many hazards involved in the correct (and conscientious) exercise of our powers of reason and judgment in the ordinary course of political life'.<sup>62</sup>

By refocusing the norms of doxastic responsibility that should inform an ethics of belief on diachronic, backwards, and forwards-looking norms and agent-focused assessments I think we can also provide a fuller account of the *limits* of responsible faith ventures. Like James and Rawls, the present account is holistic concerning the grounds that people actually appeal to in grounding those commitments Rawls identifies as 'comprehensive conceptions of the good'. Besides focusing on intellectual habits that make us good at inquiry, pragmatism also locates the type of reasoning most pertinent to comprehension conceptions of the good as holistic, rather than atomistic. Contextualism and holistic evidence are directly pertinent to the epistemic arguments John Rawls calls the 'burdens of judgment' with respect to comprehensive conceptions of the good. Both are directly pertinent to the grounds he offers for *reasonable pluralism*, which is also a central tenet of the contemporary theory of deliberative democracy: '[O]ur total experience, our whole course of life up to now, shapes the way we assess evidence and weigh moral and political values, and our total experiences surely differ'.<sup>63</sup> Philip Clayton further supports our view in arguing that *limit questions* draw attention to a 'crucial interplay between explanation and the broader quest for conceptual coherence—coherence within theories, among theories, and between theories and other nonscientific areas of experience'.<sup>64</sup>

Confirmation holism 'loosens up' the concept of an epistemic peer in a way that reflects the impurities of epistemic agency, and it better accommodates the possibility of reasonable disagreement among evidence-sharing peers, with all its advantages for the epistemology of liberal democracy. It helps us describe 'sources of the difficulties in arriving

at agreement in judgment, sources that are compatible with the full reasonableness of those judging'.<sup>65</sup>

James speaks often of risk and responsibility going together; of self-awareness and ownership of the 'riskiness' of faith ventures, whether secular or religious. His early work focuses defense of overbeliefs partly on the cognitive risk of losing the truth by accepting a set of norms that do not allow a realistic and satisfying balance between intellectual courage and caution. His later work on my ('post-9/11') view still inadequately acknowledges the ethical risks of intolerant and other kinds of potentially harmful overbeliefs, but does take significant steps in that direction.

Still, the kind of defense of permissible faith ventures that draws from social epistemology and from Mill's thesis of the social and epistemic benefits of diversity is the right kind to make where beliefs are generally non-culpable, tolerant and personally fruitful, yet lack positive epistemic status (evidential justification; reliable etiology or causal history). James is thoroughly familiar with Mill, and wrote that '[T]he singular moderation which now distinguishes social, political, and religious discussion in England, and contrasts so strongly with the bigotry and dogmatism of sixty years ago, is largely due to J. S. Mill's example'.<sup>66</sup> Holistic reasoning ties directly into the ethics of belief because, according to Rawls, 'if we are reasonable, we should conduct ourselves in view of the plain facts about the burdens of reason'. Citizens need toleration of ambiguity, and higher-level skills for assessing evidence comparatively, contextually and holistically, for 'as reasonable persons, we are fully aware of these burdens, and try to take them into account ... We expect deep differences of opinion, and accept this diversity as the normal state of the public culture of a democratic society'.<sup>67</sup> For Rawls, reasonable pluralism is, indeed, the expected outcome of free expression in a democracy!

Haack's direct use of her *Overlap Thesis* to help restrict conditions for proper ethical censure of religious belief also supports our *LQ* defense. She writes: 'Investigation will be motivated not by theoretical questions as to the rationality of religious believing or the integrity of religious believers, but by concerns about the threat, if not the reality, of recognizable harm'.<sup>68</sup> The implications Haack draws from her ethics of belief further support our *LQ* or Millian/Rawlsian defense of what James called the 'the spirit of inner toleration, which is empiricism's glory' is summed up in three points:

1. First and foremost, in distinguishing epistemic from ethical appraisal, she discourages moral prohibition of others' unjustified opinions.

2. Second, in recognizing that assessments of the grounds for belief vary with cognitive ability and cultural location, she encourages healthy respect for differing epistemic perspectives.
3. Finally, in attending to 'the perspectival character of judgments of justification, and their dependence on background beliefs', she reminds us that our own judgments regarding the beliefs of others are 'thoroughly fallible'.<sup>69</sup> Epistemic appraisal of what others believe is not to be conducted with a heavy hand, therefore, but is to be leavened with a good measure of humility.<sup>70</sup>

So holistic reasoning is central to the defense of reasonable pluralism in Rawls' political theory, and should also be so for us in the *LQ* defense.

Perhaps this Millian/Rawlsian approach is all the defense they need (or can plausibly be given, as Rorty thought). But there are still important epistemological concerns this doesn't address. We can move towards identifying them by shifting from the *LQ*- to *MP*-based arguments in defense of overbeliefs. But in summary of the *LQ* argument, it highlights the 'mood of faith' and the speculative nature of Swinburnean 'ultimate explanations' and other personal answers to limit questions beyond the purview of science. An *LQ* defense of moderate fideism of this sort—what John Bishop refers to as Jamesian 'modest *supra-evidential fideism*'—is far stronger than simple tolerance of beliefs that are tolerant themselves, and so our ethics of belief is already more permissive than evidentialism's to that extent. But what are its limits, short of a right to believe whatever is not self-contradictory, which would surely be a lax standard? Certainly inter and intra-religious diversity have implications for the ethics of belief. When are or aren't we justified all-things-considered in maintaining a standing belief, philosophical, political, or religious, in the face of disagreement? This is a complex and, according to the pragmatists, a contextual issue. While epistemological evidentialism fails on epistemological grounds, *moral* evidentialism remains a perennial concern, even if Clifford overstated the collective demands on individual doxastic responsibility. There are certainly moral concerns to be addressed and pragmatists are themselves prone to take them seriously since they see doxastic norms as constituted on a partly social basis. But the moral evidentialist's arguments simply cannot lead us to anything as rigorous and austere (or as neat and tidy) as Clifford's dictum that 'It is wrong, always, anywhere, and for anyone, to believe anything on insufficient evidence.' Nor can they lead us, to use a contemporary example, to Sam Harris' prescription for secular intolerance of all that smacks of supernatural religious faith.<sup>71</sup>

## 2.5 MP: Intellectual Defenses of Permissible Faith Ventures

The higher gradation recognized in our *stratified* ethics of belief is belief that is candidate for an *MP* defense. Our *MP* defense of religious overbeliefs engages with *intellectual* demands and with virtue-relevant concerns of reliability and intellectually responsible inquiry. Few people are intellectually satisfied with overbeliefs simply described as 'basic', and for which they can give no non-question-begging account of grounds. Religious faith would not be faith without some kind of fideistic minimum. But most religious people see a complementarity of faith and reason, and desire to meet a properly understood 'Enlightenment challenge' to the reasonableness of belief. Neither a 'subjective method' nor personal answer to desire for ultimate explanation will do; they want to appeal to evidence and argument, even if to defend ideas to which their passions originally drew them. Our *stratified* account holds that these cases lead from *LQ* defenses to ones based more squarely on epistemic values and virtues.

Intellectually virtuous inquirers open their beliefs to criticism and thus to potential further confirmation or revision; they recognize failed experiments when they see them or live them. But they are also entitled to 'build out' a thin 'core' belief of a religious nature into a broader world-view in a manner consistent with their own sensibilities and notions of intelligibility. Lakatos' MSRP with its core/belt distinction helps us model not just 'research programs' and not just religious 'comprehensive conceptions of the good', but also contested philosophical 'isms'. It draws from his study of scientific theory-choice proceeding under conditions of evidential ambiguity, where evidential adequacy does not tell the difference and scientists have recourse to their own *bon sens* or at least to ampliative epistemic virtues or 'cognitive values'. So let us use the Millian expression *experiments of living* to describe what James calls overbeliefs, and *living experiments* to describe the cognitive risk-taking involved in holding to a particular political philosophy, view about human nature, or a naturalistic or supernatural world-view, etc. An ethics of belief will need to address responsibility with respect to both *living experiments* and *experiments of living*. A successful *MP* defense of religious belief offers a way to do this.

When we turn from James' science of religions in light of the later Lakatosian MSRP to matters of how the religious hypothesis and the naturalistic hypothesis might be *evaluated*, the first and most essential point to recognize is the keen *normativity* of this model. James writes: 'By confronting the spontaneous religious constructions with the results of natural science, philosophy can also eliminate doctrines that are now

known to be scientifically absurd or incongruous.<sup>72</sup> When James in *Varieties* discusses overbeliefs in the context of his MP version of *Dialogue*, he indicates that the types of satisfactions by which they are motivated may be different than those for a core religious hypothesis: 'Among the buildings-out of religion which the mind spontaneously indulges in, the aesthetic motive must never be forgotten.' In 'Religious Imagination and Virtue Epistemology' Roger Pouivet makes a closely related point, writing that 'In philosophical or natural theology, imagination has no place. But in everyday religious life, it may be useful and good. The idea is that, with respect to the imagination, we may adapt our epistemic requirements to the kind of intellectual domain we are in.'<sup>73</sup> Later on he writes:

Unlike classical foundationalism, virtue epistemology is not bound to a negative account of imagination, especially religious imagination. It can even explain how religious imagination can be made *virtuous*. Generally considered, virtue is a disposition to act or to judge appropriately, according to one's situation. It is not an *a priori* rule. Moral virtue is the ability to perceive what must be done; intellectual virtue the ability to perceive what is to be thought. About religious imagination we can similarly say that it is not good or bad in itself but that its quality is to be measured against the standard of what is appropriate for a certain person in a particular epistemic situation. For Aquinas, it is not when we are trying to explain the nature of incorporeal entities that imagination is appropriate, but in practical religious life—for instance in recalling episodes from the lives of Jesus or the saints or for the purposes of devotion. At certain junctures in a religious life it would simply go against common sense to reject all appeal to images and the imagination in order to preserve a rigorist dogma about rationality.<sup>74</sup>

From a rhetorical perspective, James' invoking of his Darwinian image of a survival of the fittest among religious hypotheses and overbeliefs served to bring his account more in line with Mill's stated view in *On Liberty*, the view that 'Complete liberty of contradicting and disproving our opinion is the very condition which justifies us in assuming its truth for the purposes of action.'<sup>75</sup> But according to Marc Moffett this condition of reasonable acceptance when combined with certain assumptions employed by Feldman in his work on an evidentialist epistemology of disagreement is likely to lead to a generalized skepticism about theoretical beliefs. So if (extrinsicalist) evidentialists like Adler cannot square their account of belief with doubt, (intrinsicist) evidentialists like Conee and Feldman it appears cannot square their account of epistemic obligation with the

holistic nature of evidence for propositions such as that God exists, etc. 'According to Feldman, once we acknowledge that there is no rational way of choosing between two or more distinct theories, the only rational course of action is to suspend judgment since we will then recognize our starting point as epistemically arbitrary.'<sup>76</sup> Moffett's argument is that a combination of recognition of underdetermination ('religious ambiguity') and conservatism avoids this worry about the Millian account; it underlines epistemic humility while avoiding (as we'll see) any principled agnosticism that makes recognition of serious peer disagreement on shared evidence directly imply a universal duty of suspending belief.

So James seems to have the combination that Moffett argues independently is the best answer. James' post-1900 works reflect a deep rethinking about how underdetermination problems impact not just upon the reasonable acceptance of personal beliefs, but of shared strategies and theoretical programs of research. The result of this rethinking is indeed something close to Moffett's combination of (1) moderate holism about the relation between theory and evidence, and (2) 'epistemic conservatism', the claim that awareness of underdetermination does not automatically constitute a defeater for one's theoretical belief. This is especially clear when grounding for the belief flows from a broader live research program of which it is seen as an aspect or part. James' holism as a response to his concerns about the underdetermination of theory by evidence, and of the evidential ambiguity of our highest-order framing principles (hard cores) ties directly into the MSRP. James and Duhem were both sorting through an important problem of theory choice, one that would later take on the name of the underdetermination problem and play a role in the downfall of the 'logician' account of metascience advocated by logical empiricists. As one philosopher of religion put it who has developed the *Dialogue Model* in this way, 'The emergence of holism and its consequences in philosophy of science have drastically changed what it means to supply evidence for a hypothesis.'<sup>77</sup>

Contextualists reject the shared assumptions of the 'Equal Weight' and 'No Defeater' responses to peer disagreement that predominate in evidentialist approaches to the epistemology of disagreement. Contextualists try more constructively to articulate middle paths in the avoidance of such false dichotomies. Let's try to articulate one ourselves; let's call the contextualism that Pappas and others claim is needed a 'dynamic response', in order to contrast it with the equal weight and no-defeater responses. Then,

the 'dynamic' response holds that disagreement facts such as peerhood sometimes reliably indicate symmetry and sometimes do not;

and this often depends on other epistemically relevant facts about the circumstances of the disagreement. Thus, it turns out that on the dynamic view, some cases of disagreement yielded a defeater, others need not result in a defeater, and ... still others are sufficient to yield a partial defeater.<sup>78</sup>

James' conservatism and moderate confirmation holism answer to epistemological evidentialism and its associated work on the epistemology of disagreement. When James thinks about the 'public duty' demand that moral evidentialists like Clifford make, he counters it with an individual's 'private right' claim. As Pappas writes: 'James thinks it is not the legitimate task of a philosopher to determine the relative weights that should be given to the different demands that are made upon an individual in a situation. Instead it is up to the individual in interaction with the particular situation.'<sup>79</sup> John Dewey, he reminds us, wrote that 'what is most distasteful to James is a skepticism which brings with it nothing that can contribute constructively to investigation'.<sup>80</sup> We have now seen how not just Clifford's moral evidentialism but also contemporary epistemic evidentialism (or at least the 'equal weight view' of Richard Feldman) fits the description of such a skepticism. And we have seen how some contemporary work on epistemology of disagreement like Moffett's provides an effective counter to it by developing the 'Jamesian' combination of confirmation holism and epistemic conservatism.

But while conservatism has its place in the *MP* defense of religious belief, what is under-recognized even among many of those who have sought to develop methodological parallels between theistic and other sorts of research projects is how well it fosters reflection and reconstruction on the part of religious believers. Moderate fideism, through both limit questions and pursuit of methodological parallels with science, we have now seen, have the potential to constrain religious beliefs, especially when connected with education in critical thinking and development of the deliberative virtues.

Gary Gutting, one of the first to apply MSRP in philosophy of religion, makes this argument very clearly, with respect to the *MP* defense in particular. Gutting writes:

The core of religious faith has only a very minimal propositional content, and consists primarily of living with an awareness of and an openness to the power and goodness of a divinity that remains essentially mysterious to us. The greatest cognitive failure of religions throughout history has been their confusion, due to fundamental self-misunderstanding,

of the core and the outer belt of their commitment. The separation of a core of belief from the outer belt of overbelief provides the basis for a rehabilitation of the cognitive claims of religion.<sup>81</sup>

### 3 Conclusion

Pappas's claim is that 'what James provides is a situational ethics of belief that relies on cultivating our characters in a certain direction'.<sup>82</sup> Like Pappas, I also see fulfilling this as demanding that we go well beyond the usual limited discussion of the *Will to Believe*.<sup>83</sup> *MP* is a more promising way to both defend and hedge the license to indulge in religious over-beliefs. Those too quick to dismiss interfaith dialogue and pronounce religious research programs as standing refuted, at the very least surrender the moderating potential of enticing religious believers to try to meet the Enlightenment challenge by considering carefully the deliberative virtues and the similarities and differences between scientific reasoning and value-charged religious faith. However, it strikes me that the reason why Gutting's bold claim about the *MP* model's strong normative force has never been realized may be the distinct characteristics of the 'historical religions' predominant in Western societies. When historical claims, such as a virgin birth or a resurrection event, are identified as defining tenets of a faith tradition, the model seems not to apply.

Perhaps then Rorty was right, and intellectual defense along the lines of the *MP* or core/belt model produces a Godhead that only a philosopher could love? Even if so Gutting's point nevertheless is illuminating about what Hollinger calls James' defense of the liberal Protestantism of his day. For however progressive that tradition was, as witnessed again in James' crediting of Mill for the new-found spirit of 'inner tolerance' of his own time, many of the liberal Protestants around him remained doctrinally conflicted, and James himself infatuated with defending 'beliefs' in some rather full-blooded sense. Even in our own time, the rehabilitation Gutting speaks of appears difficult to mainstream liberal Protestantism, and altogether foreign to orthodox Judaism and Islam, as well as to Christian evangelicals of the sort Clayton describes as 'the two Calvinisms', that with a Christian evidentialist apologetic (creation science, etc.) and that with an anti-rationalist 'basic belief' apologetic. Yet the peculiarities of the Middle Eastern religions, and the tendencies towards religious exclusivism and rivalry among these 'sons of Abraham' are not Gutting's, or James', or anyone else's fault. They are the realities that frame the difficult challenge for philosophy in serving the mediating and moderating role in cultural politics that James hoped it could serve.

To conclude then, the modesty of 'possibility and permission' still characterizes the Jamesian ethic of belief in *both* its LQ and MP defenses of religious faith ventures. Our approach has made it easy to see how James can both 'attack' the epistemic credentials of over-beliefs, as Richard Gale puts it, and yet maintain his judgment that one's overbeliefs are often among the most interesting and valuable things about a person. James' approach is therefore not so self-divided as some interpreters have supposed. Against the evidentialist ethic of belief, our neo-Jamesian account<sup>84</sup> affirms that faith ventures that pass a pragmatic test are '*certainly a lawful and possibly an indispensable thing*'. But it has also provided a more positive account of doxastic responsibility, and shown us how balanced character must be able to hold this permission together with epistemic humility in the face of serious peer disagreement. '*It may be that possibility and permission ... are all that the religious consciousness requires to live on*'.<sup>85</sup>

## Notes

1. W. James (1988) *Manuscript Essays and Notes* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press), #4476, p. 311.
2. D. Hollinger (2006) 'Damned for God's Glory: William James and the Scientific Vindication of Protestant Culture' in W. Proudfoot (ed.) *William James and a Science of Religions* (New York: Columbia University Press), p. 11.
3. G. Pappas (1994) 'William James' Virtuous Believer', *Transactions of the Charles S. Peirce Society*, 30(1), p. 77.
4. James dedicated *Pragmatism* to Mill, 'from whom I first learned the pragmatic openness of mind and whom my fancy likes to picture as our leader were he alive today'. W. James (1975 [1907]) *Pragmatism* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press), p. 18.
5. I. Barbour (2000) *When Science Meets Religion: Enemies, Strangers, or Partners?* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco), p. 23.
6. James, *Pragmatism*.
7. See also H. Jackman (1999) 'Prudential Arguments, Naturalized Epistemology, and the Will to Believe', *Transactions of the Charles S. Peirce Society*, 35(1), pp. 1–37.
8. D. Hollinger (1997) 'James, Clifford, and the Scientific Conscience' in R. A. Putnam (ed.) *The Cambridge Companion to William James* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), p. 80.
9. A conflation of faith and hypothesis was thus charged against James for his WTB argument, by those who want no truck with dialogue. But what strange bedfellows were these?
10. J. S. Mill (1859) *On Liberty*, chapter 3, URL: <http://www.utilitarianism.com/oi/three.html> (accessed 11 September, 2012).
11. W. James, 'The Dilemma of Determinism' (1979) in F. Burkhardt, F. Bowers, and I. K. Skrupselis (eds.) *The Will to Believe and Other Essays in Popular Philosophy* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press), pp. 117–18. This is quite a contrast to *Varieties* and still later works like 'Reason and Faith', which asserts that 'the religious question, we agreed, is a question about facts'. W. James (1927) 'Reason and Faith', *Journal of Philosophy*, 24(8), p. 199.
12. Gregory Fernando Pappas (1996) 'Open-mindedness and Courage: Complementary Virtues of Pragmatism', p. 78, *Transactions of the Charles S. Peirce Society*, 32(2), pp. 316–35. Pappas here quotes W. James (1978) *Essays in Philosophy* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press), p. 332.
13. W. James (1979 [1896]) *The Will to Believe* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press), p. xii.
14. Wernham writes that 'The ladder is not advocacy but description ... If one compares James' will-to-believe doctrine and the ladder, one finds differences between them and similarities too. The will-to-believe doctrine is advocacy.' J. C. S. Wernham (1987) *James's Will-To-Believe Doctrine: A Heretical View* (Montreal: McGill-Queens University Press; 1st edn).
15. W. James (19179 [1910]) 'Faith and the Right to Believe' in *Some Problems of Philosophy* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press), p. 223.
16. On descriptive fideism and philosophical disputes about it, see also L. Pojman (1986) *Religious Belief and the Will* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul), chapter 9.
17. Barbour, *When Science Meets Religion*, p. 52. Barbour puts this by saying that *Dialogue* resists what Nagle calls 'the illusion of a 'metaphysical wisdom' superior to 'mere science' (p. 363), but can allow the negative claim of the Vatican Observatory Study Group participants that science leaves open questions of 'the origin of ... laws and regularities—why they exist at all, or what meaning or significance they might have' (p. 167). This would be a kind of speculative belief that as James puts it, is consistent with known facts and can be put 'in terms to which physical science need not object' (p. 510).
18. W. James (1987) *Essays, Comments, Reviews* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press), p. 115.
19. W. James (2002 [1902]) *The Varieties of Religious Experience* (New York: Dover Publications), p. 526.
20. Barbour, *When Science Meets Religion*, p. 25.
21. *Ibid.*, p. 27.
22. James, *The Will to Believe*, p. xii.
23. It is able to form 'hypotheses', but with the restriction that such operations of the intellect 'presuppose immediate experiences as their subject matter', and so are 'consequent upon religious feeling', the true source of belief, 'not co-ordinate with it, not independent of what it ascertains' (James, *Varieties*, p. 342).
24. That James was so individualist (rather than communitarian) and anti-theological are apparent biases in James' view and, and for Hollinger, part of the evidence of how ensconced he was in the liberal Protestantism of his day.
25. J. E. Smith (1985) 'Introduction' in W. James, *The Varieties of Religious Experience* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press), p. xlii.
26. James, *Varieties*, p. 399.
27. *Ibid.*, p. 252.
28. *Ibid.*, p. 504.
29. *Ibid.*, p. 514.



30. See I. Lakatos (1978) *The Methodology of Scientific Research Programmes* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press).
31. Lakatos, *The Methodology of Scientific Research Programmes*, p. 4.
32. *Ibid.*, p. 179.
33. The connections between James and Duhem are historical as well as logical, as Isaac Nevo points out. See Isaac Nevo, 'Continuing Empiricist Epistemology: Holistic Aspects of William James's Pragmatism', *The Monist* 75 (1992), pp. 458–76. Given the basic correctness of Duhemian confirmation holism, Lakatos concludes that evaluation in science is comparative and historical: 'But, of course, if falsification depends on the emergence of better theories ... then falsification is *not* simply a relation between a theory and the empirical basis, but a multiple relation between competing theories, the original "empirical basis", and the empirical growth resulting from the competition' (*ibid.*, p. 35).
34. Lakatos, *The Methodology of Scientific Research Programmes*, p. 92n3.
35. Other proponents of this sort of moderate fideism might be J. Welchman (2006) 'William James's "The Will to Believe" and the Ethics of Self-Experimentation', *Transactions of the Charles S. Peirce Society*, 42(2), 229–41; J. Bishop (2007) *Belief by Faith: An Essay in the Epistemology and Ethics of Religious Belief* (Oxford: Oxford University Press); and E. Suckiel (1997) *Heaven's Champion: William James's Philosophy of Religion* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press).
36. James, *Varieties*, p. 519.
37. *Ibid.*, p. 490.
38. Pappas, 'William James' Virtuous Believer', p. 87.
39. *Ibid.*, p. 101.
40. R. Pouivet (2010) 'Moral and Epistemic Virtues: A Thomistic and Analytical Perspective', *Forum Philosophicum: International Journal for Philosophy*, 15(1), p. 2.
41. S. Napier (2009) *Virtue Epistemology: Motivation and Knowledge* (London: Continuum), p. 144.
42. S. Haack (1997) 'The Ethics of Belief Reconsidered' in L. Hahn (ed.) *The Philosophy of Roderick M. Chisholm* (LaSalle, IL: Open Court), p. 130.
43. James, *The Will to Believe*, p. 8. Compare how close the passage is to late James: 'Faith thus remains as one of the inalienable birthrights of our mind. Of course it must remain a practical, and not a dogmatical attitude. It must go with toleration of other faiths, with the search for the most probable, and with the full consciousness of responsibilities and risks' (James, 'Faith and the Right to Believe', p. 113). On cognitive risk-taking and personal identity, see Jennifer Welchman's "William James's 'The Will to Believe' and the Ethics of Self-Experimentation," *Transactions of the Charles S. Peirce Society* 42.2 (2006), 229–241.
44. Pappas, 'William James' Virtuous Believer', p. 87.
45. Cited in *ibid.*, p. 87.
46. *Ibid.*, p. 77.
47. *Ibid.*, p. 95.
48. *Ibid.*, p. 95.
49. *Ibid.*, p. 95.
50. James, *Varieties*. p. 272.
51. R. Audi (2008) 'The Ethics of Belief: Doxastic Self-Control and Intellectual Virtue', *Synthese*, 161(3), p. 416.
52. *Ibid.*, p. 404.
53. *Ibid.*, p. 406.
54. For an argument undercutting Feldman's epistemological ground of his ethics of belief, see my "From Internalist Evidentialism to Virtue Responsibilism," in T. Dougherty (ed.) *Evidentialism and its Discontents*, Oxford University Press, 2001, Chapter 4. By contrast with internalist evidentialism, externalist epistemology (including character epistemology) respects the epistemic centrality of diachronic evaluations of agents. The causal history of a belief can matter to its epistemic standing (its doxastic justification); this implies that forward-looking norms are epistemically relevant as well, since they will retrospectively *become* part of the causal history of why a belief is revised, maintained, etc.
55. R. Audi (2011) 'The Ethics of Belief and the Morality of Action: Intellectual Responsibility and Rational Disagreement', *Philosophy*, 86, p. 28.
56. *Ibid.*, pp. 28–9.
57. R. A. Christian (2009) 'Restricting the Scope of the Ethics of Belief: Haack's Alternative to Clifford and James', *Journal of the American Academy of Religion*, 77(3), p. 489.
58. J. Bishop (quoting James, *The Will to Believe*, p. 30). From 'Faith' at <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/faith/> (accessed 25 July 2012).
59. Christian, 'Restricting the Scope of the Ethics of Belief', pp. 468–9.
60. Haack, "'The Ethics of Belief" Reconsidered', p. 129.
61. Mill, *On Liberty*, chapter 1, URL: <http://www.utilitarianism.com/ol/one.html> (accessed 11 September 2012).
62. J. Rawls (1995) *Political Liberalism* (New York: Columbia University Press), p. 249. We err gravely in trying to reduce 'reasonable' people and reasonable 'disagreement' to the elusive evidentialist's notion of synchronic rationality or evidential 'fit'. If the *Overlap Thesis* is correct, and helps us, as Haack has argued, to conceptualize the sources of normativity that an ethics of belief draws upon, then reasonable habits of inquiry, proper intellectual motivation and a more holistic account of the relationship between 'overbeliefs' and their grounds, is clearly called for.
63. *Ibid.*, p. 248.
64. P. Clayton (1989) *Explanation from Physics to Theology: An Essay in Rationality and Religion* (New Haven: Yale University Press), p. 41.
65. Rawls, *Political Liberalism*, p. 248.
66. James, *The Will to Believe*, p. 234. Mill possessed what James sought to support in 'The Will to Believe', 'that spirit of inner tolerance without which all our outer tolerance is soulless, and which is empiricism's glory'. 'We ought ... delicately and profoundly to respect one another's mental freedom [and] ... live and let live, in speculative as well as in practical things'. *Ibid.*, p. 234.
67. 'To hate that fact is to hate human nature, for it is to hate the many not unreasonable expressions of human nature that develop under free institutions' (Rawls, *Political Liberalism*, p. 249).
68. Haack, "'The Ethics of Belief" Reconsidered', p. 120. 'Inquiry into a belief's epistemic standing will be tied to context, and assessment of epistemic

- responsibility will be person-relative and on occasion role specific. Given this orientation and the terms of the overlap thesis, the tasks in any particular case will be to determine whether the belief at issue is unjustified from an epistemic point of view; whether the individual embracing unjustified belief is to be deemed responsible for so holding it; and whether the belief at issue has resulted in, or threatens in a fairly direct way to result in, harm. Only when all three conditions are met will an overlap of epistemic and ethical appraisal obtain' (Christian, 'Restricting the Scope of Ethics of Belief', pp. 474–5).
69. Haack, "'The Ethics of Belief' Reconsidered', p. 138.
  70. Christian, 'Restricting the Scope of the Ethics of Belief', pp. 488–9, quoting directly from Haack's paper, p. 138.
  71. See Philip Kitcher's (2010) insightful and pragmatist-friendly 'Militant Modern Atheism', *Journal of Applied Philosophy*, 28, pp. 1–13, doi: 10.1111/j.1468-5930.2010.00500.x.
  72. Lakatos, *The Methodology of Scientific Research Programs*, p. 359.
  73. R. Pouivet (2002) 'Religious Imagination and Virtue Epistemology', *Ars Disputandi*, 2, pp. 3–4.
  74. *Ibid.*, pp. 8–9.
  75. Mill, *On Liberty*, p. 24. John Bishop is only staying true to this Millian approach of an ethic of belief applying to an agent's holding a belief true for the purposes of their practical reasoning.
  76. M. Moffett (2007) 'Reasonable Disagreement and Rational Group Inquiry', *Episteme*, 4, p. 360.
  77. N. Murphy (1997) *Reconciling Theology and Science: A Radical Reformation Perspective* (Scottsdale, PA: Pandora Press), p. 18. What James calls 'intellectual operations' related to religion (James, *Varieties*, p. 433) include primarily those of our overbeliefs, those of philosophy, and those of a science of religion.
  78. M. Thune (2010) 'Religious Belief and the Epistemology of Disagreement', *Philosophy Compass*, 5(8), p. 713.
  79. G. Pappas (1994) 'William James' Virtuous Believer', *Transactions of the Charles S. Peirce Society*, 30(1), p. 86.
  80. J. Dewey, *The Middle Works, Vol. 12: 1899–1924* (Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois University Press, 2008), p. 220. See Pappas, 'William James' Virtuous Believer', for comments. James, of course, also contrasts the evidentialist's universal 'veto' of experiments of living with an alternative personal and social ethic highlighting 'the spirit of inner tolerance, which is empiricism's glory', returning us to the Rawlsian concerns treated above.
  81. G. Gutting (1982) *Religious Belief and Religious Skepticism* (West Bend, IN: University of Notre Dame Press), pp. 175–6.
  82. Pappas, 'William James' Virtuous Believer', p. 78.
  83. *Ibid.*, p. 77.
  84. Our approach thus might also provide an answer to Richard M. Gale's (2002) worries about James' inconsistency, in 'A Challenge for Interpreters of Varieties', *Streams of William James*, 4, pp. 32–3.
  85. James, *Varieties*, p. 339. In developing a 'Christian Possibilism', Clayton and Knapp show how the boundary between evidential justifiability of Christian belief and what is perceived possibility (Jamesian 'liveness') has substantially shifted over the course of history.

## Index

- absolute conception of the world, 80  
 absolute idealism, 89  
 absolute reality, 35  
 Absolute, the, 84–6, 89, 91, 94  
 Adler, J., 190  
 afterlife, 38  
 agnosticism, 117, 191  
 al-Ghazālī, 63  
 analogy thesis, 111–12  
 analytic philosophy of religion, 4–5  
 anti-dogmatism, 30–1, 49  
 anti-foundationalism, 16  
 anti-intellectualism, 175  
 anti-naturalism, 64  
 anti-realism, 78, 86  
 Aquinas, T., 190  
 Aristotle, 24  
 Armstrong, D. M., 80–1  
 Arnold, M., 28  
 atheism, 4, 87, 89–90, 159–62, 163n24  
 Audi, R., 181–3  
 Axtell, G., 10
- Barbour, I., 166–8, 172, 174, 195n17  
 Barth, K., 145–6  
 belief-acquisition, 147–8, 156  
 Bernstein, R., 97, 104n51  
 block universe, 19, 89  
 Bradley, F. H., 85, 96  
 Brunsveld, N., 9  
 Bucke, R. M., 62  
 burdens of reason, 186
- Caird, J., 175  
 Calvinism, 193  
 Cardinal Newman, 175  
 chance, 3  
 Chernobyl, 154, 161  
 Chisholm, R. M., 112–14, 121–3, 123n2, 126n31  
 Christ, 63  
 Christian, Rose Ann, 183–4
- classical foundationalism, 190  
 Clayton, Philip, 186  
 Clifford, W. K., 9, 15–16, 112, 117–23, 125n14, 129–30, 144n1, 145, 147–8, 152–61, 162n3, 163n16, 170, 179, 181, 183–4, 188, 192  
 Colapietro, V., 105n68  
 comprehensive conceptions of the good, 186  
 conceptual relativity, 86  
 Conee, E., 158, 190  
 confirmation holism, 186, 192  
 conflict model, 166  
 consciousness, 61, 63–5, 72n4, 74n39  
 conservatism, 191–2  
 contextualism, 186, 191  
 conversion experience, 24  
 correlation thesis, 111, 114–17, 125n13  
 correspondence theory of truth, 79–81  
 credulity, 119, 123  
 cultural politics, 5
- Darwin, C., 20  
 Dawkins, R., 7, 161, 164n29  
 death, 44, 51, 106n70  
 deliberative democracy, 186  
 democracy, 178, 181  
 descriptive fideism, 169, 171–2  
 determinism, 87, 170  
 Dewey, J., 4, 25–8, 30, 34, 48, 50–1, 54n81, 78, 180–1, 192  
 dhyāna, 63  
 dialogue model, 166–70, 174, 178, 191  
 Diamond, C., 92  
 disbelief, 133  
 divided self, 166  
 dogmatism, 31, 35, 44  
 doubt, 18, 131, 133–4, 140–1, 144  
 Duhem, P., 177–8, 191, 196n33