

The Varieties of Mystical Experience: Paul Tillich and William James

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William James and Paul Tillich both offer rich resources for thinking about the interrelated topics of mysticism, religious faith, the object of religious faith, and the ultimate meaningfulness of life. We have seen that both can be classified as twice-born souls who sought and found comfort in mystical experience. Yet different personal and intellectual journeys led them to differing epistemologies of religious experience, which in turn led them to contrasting conclusions. These conclusions may, however, complement each other at key points.

It is no coincidence that indices for Tillich's major works include multiple entries for "mysticism." For Tillich bases religion on a mystical a priori, an immediate connection or identity of each person with the ultimate, the holy, the divine. We can discern the centrality of this mystical a priori in relation to key concepts in Tillich's theology. His most famous concept of "ultimate concern" involves not only our subjective concern but a grasping of – or rather a being grasped by – the object of that concern, however distorted, idolatrous, or even demonic our understanding of the ultimate may be. Indeed, the immediacy of the connection entails for Tillich a transcendence of the normal subject-object structure, which always involves separation or "cleavage" (e.g., S3:242). Thus the ultimate or God is not external to us in the way other finite beings are. As Tillich puts it in *Dynamics of Faith*: "In terms like ultimate, unconditional, infinite, absolute, the difference between subjectivity and objectivity is overcome. The ultimate of the act of faith and the ultimate that is meant in the act of faith are one and the same." (11). Revelation is always the correlation of miracle and ecstasy, the latter literally meaning "to stand outside oneself," which means that "reason ... is beyond its subject-object structure." (S1:112) Tillich is quite clear that there is "a mystical ... element in every type of faith" (DF 71), that "the element of identity on which mysticism is based cannot be absent in any religious experience." (CB 160; see also S2:83). Conversely, when this mystical element is ignored or rejected we have problems. According to Tillich modern philosophy of religion – in this context meaning since St. Thomas Aquinas! – has gone astray by undermining the ontological approach to God, wherein the human being "discovers something that is identical" with oneself (TC 10 ff) and which brings "immediate religious certainty." (TC 16).

Taking a historical perspective in the spirit of James' pragmatism, the strong mystical element in Tillich is predictable from his intellectual pedigree, apart from its reinforcement and honing through his personal experiences. For his theology has its primary roots in German Romantic idealism with its emphasis on religious feeling and its affinity with mystical experiences of God and nature. To risk a wider historical perspective (perhaps bordering on meta-narrative?), one could regard Romanticism as a backdoor attempt to fulfill the modern quest for absolute certainty launched by Descartes, as I have argued elsewhere: As it became clear that the Enlightenment hope of a universal religion based on reason was quixotic, some retreated to the alleged certainty of feeling and the intuitive ("DS").

In the year of 2002 we celebrated the centennial of the first publication of William James' classic, *The Varieties of Religious Experience*. It is primarily due to James that the phrase "religious experience" has taken on specialized meaning in religious studies as a direct contact with the divine or with a religious figure or power. Defined in this manner, all humans have religious experiences in Tillich's system, whether or not they label them as such; because of its a priori nature, religious experience is inescapable, inalienable for Tillich. Identifiable mystical experiences are thus an intensified and prolonged version of what all humans experience through the mystical a priori.

To turn directly to James, the crucial difference from Tillich is that religious experiences in general, and mystical experiences in particular, are epistemologically a posteriori. That is, they exist as particular, contingent experiences that only some humans undergo. This is precisely what we would expect given James' empirical and pragmatic bent both intellectually and personally. It is not an overstatement that mysticism is the sine qua non of religious experience for James. James sounds wistful in conceding that he can consider "mystical states" "only at second hand," for "my own constitution shuts me out from their enjoyment almost entirely" (VRE 370). James in fact was not entirely shut out and did enjoy a handful of experiences he labeled as mystical. Even so, such states of consciousness are extraordinary experiences open only to a distinct minority.

Because of their differing epistemologies, on the broadest level Tillich and James mean different things by "mystical" experiences. But Tillich does expound on self-conscious mystical states, so we can set the stage for comparing his "oranges" to James'. For sacramental faith, a concrete object or person symbolizes the ultimate, becoming a bearer of the holy (DF 66ff). Mystical faith recognizes the inadequacy of any finite reality to fully capture the ultimate – not to mention the idolatrous tendency to identify the symbol with the ultimate (S1:139-40). So, while not necessarily rejecting sacramental faith, mysticism attempts to transcend it, indeed to transcend "every piece of reality as well as reality as a whole" "to the point in which all concreteness disappears in the abyss of pure divinity." (DF 69). Yet for Tillich, to fully or finally transcend the concrete is neither possible nor desirable. Humans participate and are embodied in a world in time, a natural and historical world. And thus the unconditional can concern us ultimately "only if it appears in a concrete embodiment." (TC 28). Even mysticism then always involves "concrete formulas and a special behavior" "expressing the ineffable" (TC 28). When mystics lose sight of that truth, mysticism becomes problematic; so at least in its extreme forms, "(m)ysticism does not take the concrete seriously" (CB 186) and "implies an ultimate negation of ... existence in time and space" (S1:140). The divine perspective here correlates to the human one: In keeping with German idealism – and most notably with Hegel in the background and Schelling in the foreground– the infinite expresses itself, indeed fulfills itself, in and through the finite.

As suggested earlier, for Tillich religious faith or ultimate concern involves an immediate certainty by virtue of the mystical a priori. But this self-evident, "immediate awareness of the Unconditioned" (TC 27), this "unconditional certainty" (TC 23), does not provide any particular cognitive contents. So uncertainty and risk invariably enter in with any concrete, conditioned embodiment of our ultimate concern (TC 27ff). Here empirical messiness reigns. Here our encounter with the divine is "fragmentary, anticipatory and threatened by the ambiguities of

religion" (S3:242). But the prius of religious faith is the mystical a priori, the ground which makes particular mystical and other religious experiences possible – for every human, and which grounds us in a primordial certainty.

For William James by contrast the prius, the starting point, is religious faith. We begin with no certainty of any stripe. Rather than an inalienable religious experience making faith possible for all a la` Tillich, instead religious faith helps make possible mystical and other religious experiences, at least for some. Here we have faith as a matter of will, indeed, as "**The Will to Believe**". Where empirical evidence is more or less inconclusive, the will can and should tip the balance. A willing openness to the supernatural, a willingness to meet "the more" halfway, is a precondition for religious experience in general and for that gold standard of said experiences – mystical states – in particular. Indeed, for James the will must decide. Neutrality is not an option. A supposedly neutral attitude toward religious belief is itself a decision against openness, against reaching out and searching for the divine. From the start we are ensconced in empirical contingency and messiness, and the possibility of mystical experience, of an intimate connection with a higher power, depends upon us, upon our individual nature and upon our deciding and acting.

Interestingly Tillich does speak of James 'will to believe' as he analyzes the fate of the "ontological approach" in the modern world – and his evaluation is not positive. He characterizes 'the will to believe' as a "Scotistic doctrine" (TC 22). Tillich regards St. Thomas, Duns Scotus – more radically than Aquinas, and James as too imbued with a "cosmological approach" to philosophy of religion. Here God is inferred from the nature of the world. Here we meet a "stranger" when we meet God, a stranger about whose nature we can issue "only probable statements" (emphasis Tillich's) (TC 10). On the other hand, Tillich does tantalize with a reference to "genuine pragmatism," which partakes of the ontological approach to the extent it rejects cosmological arguments for God's existence and "refuses to accept the cleavage between subject and object as final." (TC 22).

As above, religious experience begins with an existential certainty for Tillich. Can religious certainty of any kind – perforce a posteriori – be realized in James' view? James does, of course, observe that noetic "insight" and "authority" are common to mystical experiences (VRE 371) and does note a subjective certainty: mystics consider the noetic implications of their extraordinary states of consciousness to be "invulnerable" (VRE 414-15). James himself judges that mystics have in fact encountered higher powers. To what extent does this judgment involve his "will to believe" in the face of inconclusive evidence? James does assert in *Varieties* that the "drift of all the evidence" (309) and "experience" (509) urges the reality of God. Yet James recognizes that others with other commitments do not share his reading of the evidence, his judgments about philosophical coherence, his overbeliefs. His "will to believe," his openness to signs of God's reality, enables him to interpret the evidence as he does. So mystics have no epistemological basis to compel others to accept the truth of their experiences or of their interpretations (however general or inchoate these latter may be). Mystical experiences in and of themselves constitute compelling evidence for mystics but not for third parties (VRE 415ff).

The Latin root of "intuition" means "to look at or towards" and, suggestively, since ancient times the word has carried meanings of "contemplation." Though construed differently, intuition is

crucial for both Tillich and James. While not consistently carried out in his corpus, Tillich in one work essays to avoid 'intuition' or 'experience' in relation to the mystical a priori, since these terms normally connote particular objects or concrete cognitive contents, preferring instead "awareness" (TC 22ff). With that caveat understood, though, we can aver that this awareness is for Tillich an a priori intuition, not formed by any particular experiences, but rather an intuition with which we have any experience in and of the world.

For James religion begins in the realm of the intuitive-emotional (VRE 422ff). In keeping with James' pragmatism, though, this intuition is a posteriori, arrived at through experience, through knowing as an action. The object or content of this religious intuition is summarized in James' philosophical works: a spiritual reality (or realities) that is more than the physical world and more than ourselves, but akin to our higher or "tenderer" qualities (e.g., PU 307), first in "being and power and truth," the most "primal" (VRE 35) and the most "eternal" or lasting, "throw(ing) the last stone and say(ing) the final word" ("WTB"), the most "overarch(ing)" and "envelop(ing)" (VRE 35). What is the empirical evidence for the reality of the object of said intuition? James has a place for judgments or proto-judgments about the nature of the universe, judgments that suggest (a) higher power(s) at work in the universe. At least this can be one import of his claim that "spiritual judgments" are primarily based on "immediate feeling" or "immediate luminousness" (VRE 19). Also, James' avowal that any "spiritualistic philosophy" involves a basic attitude of trust regarding the universe, whereby we keep no ultimate fear, is congruent with this thesis (PU 31-32).

However, for James the strongest evidence for the reality of the "more" is precisely religious experiences, in the sense of a direct perception of the "superhuman." This awareness comes by the auspices of the subconscious (VRE 229ff, 473, 501ff), whether the experiences be mystical, visionary, or just a general or "inchoate" sense of a divine presence (VRE 58 ff, 468). Here we encounter James' formulation of what Tillich appreciates about "genuine pragmatism": knowledge of the ultimate power comes not from the "cosmological approach" of deriving God from the nature of the world but rather from the "ontological approach," with its direct connection of the human person with the ultimate. Still there is a difference in how this connection is construed by Tillich and James. Tillich simply proffers an absolute immediacy transcending the subject-object structure and cleavage. James is less univocal. On the one hand

his use of "perception" is significant (VRE 63ff, 237). Perception is cognitively more direct than discursive reasoning but hardly escapes the subject-object structure or correlation. From this perspective, religious experiences are relatively direct, but still the subconscious mediates the supernatural rather than providing total immediacy. Indeed, James titles a section of *Varieties*, "The subconscious self as intermediating between nature and the higher region," and refers to this subconscious self as a "mediating term" (VRE 501). On the other hand, even before *Varieties* James admits the possibility of mutually enveloping or coterminous religious experience, where the human becomes directly aware of a superhuman consciousness at what is normally the margins of our consciousness. His references in *Varieties* to the more as "continuous" with parts of us are thus indicative (e.g. 509, 515). But it is in his further deliberations in a *Pluralistic Universe* that he most fully sets forth his notion of a "compounding" of minds, where "finite minds may simultaneously be co-conscious with one another in a superhuman intelligence" (PU 292). Here depicted is some merging or coinherence of human

and divine consciousness, here would be a kind of immediacy. We must remember, though, that such immediacy, if genuine, is realized only for certain individuals at certain times, rather than humankind's inalienable possession as in Tillich. Furthermore, this superhuman consciousness to which a select some are privy is not strictly contentless à la Tillich's mystical a priori but is in effect a divine perception we share. Finally, we do not comprehend the particulars in the manner the superhuman does; despite the compounding or overlapping, there is slippage on the human side.

The other side of Tillich's applauding pragmatism is its rejection of cosmological arguments for God's existence – here Tillich uses "cosmological" broadly, including teleological arguments as well. James does fit the bill here. He overviews the weakness of theistic arguments (VRE 427 ff) and notably dismisses the traditional "watchmaker"-type argument that induces an external creator (VRE 73). To borrow James "Will to Believe" terminology, this idea of divinity is not a live option for his educated contemporaries, whose subconscious intuitions are compatible with a more organic and immanent understanding (PU 29-30). In keeping with the primacy of the intuitive and emotional, any (proto)judgments about the existence of superhuman power(s) derived from the nature of the universe (e.g. VRE 421ff), while cosmological in approach on Tillich's definition, are definitely not "cosmological arguments," in that James posits no conscious inference or discursive argumentation. Whether in the form of "spiritual judgments" or of direct experiences of "the more," our intuitions and feelings may later find conceptual development – or over-development – in philosophical and theological systems (VRE 422). Again, this development itself is profoundly influenced by the subconscious elements that constitute the spirit of an age, according to James. In this "spirit," I will note how deeply James himself was influenced by Romanticism and by liberal Protestantism in his high regard for intuition and for religious feeling.

Tillich and James' diverse epistemologies and consequent views of religious faith lead to differing understandings of the nature of the object encountered in religious experience. Tillich emphasizes the immediate, unitive aspect of mysticism – and of all religious experience – as grounded in the mystical a priori. Recall again that such experience transcends the subject-object cleavage: one is aware of a unity with the ultimate, the unconditioned beyond any particular contents. That this unconditioned reality transcending the subject-object structure of the universe is one rather than many is assumed more than argued by Tillich. To be sure Tillich indicates that if the ultimate were conditioned by any other reality, it could not be ultimate, unconditioned, and infinite (e.g., CB 184-85, S1:237). If an alleged higher power were rivaled by another, it would fail the test of ultimacy, and we would be forced to look to a "God above" such a god. In addition, Tillich regards "pluralism of ultimate principles" as inconsistent with the order and unity that permits us to talk of one world (S1:232). However, Tillich's logic here is not patent to all (including William James). Tillich is certainly profoundly influenced in a monotheistic direction by the weight of the Christian tradition, as well as encouraged in some monistic tendencies by the Western mystical tradition, most proximately by its manifestation in German Romantic idealism and in the German mystics Jacob Boehme and Meister Eckhardt.

On this latter monistic score, Tillich once confessed that the total "feel" of the presuppositions of Spinoza resonate with him more than those of any other thinker (Ferre). And various critics were quick to accuse Tillich of pantheism. While Tillich sees the need for a pantheistic element in any

viable theology (S1:234) and rejects the notion that God is a person or being among others, the intent of Tillich's theology is best described as panentheistic rather than pantheistic. While the finite is in the infinite, which for Tillich involves the immediate coinherence of the mystical a priori, the world retains its integrity, freedom, and value. The proper interpretation and effect of any genuine religious experience involves an attitude of transformation where other finite realities are no longer treated as separate(d) from us (S3:119); but as earlier indicated Tillich critiques forms of mysticism that posit the devaluation or disappearance of finite particularities and their meaning in the divine abyss. Finite reality offers meaning to be actualized, and this means something to God, according to Tillich. Above I referred to the "intent" of Tillich's theology. Elsewhere I have argued that Tillich's difficulties and ambiguities in jettisoning concepts of divine immutability, impassibility, and timelessness compromised his panentheistic intent to portray a God who genuinely relates to a world in mutual freedom (PHT); but the intent is unmistakable.

In *Varieties*, James first appears to interpret mystical experiences – or at least report how mystics have typically interpreted them – with some analogy to Tillich regarding an identity beyond subject and object. Because of their unitive and enlarging dimensions, such states indeed point to monism (and optimism) (407ff). But then James confesses that he has "over-simplified" for "expository reasons" (VRE 416). There are in fact varieties of mystical experiences – or more to the point varieties of theoretical interpretations of same. The "mystical feeling of enlargement, union, and emancipation has no specific intellectual content whatever of its own" (VRE 416-17). (Notice here the parallel to the contentless character of Tillich's mystical a priori or "absolute faith" [CB, 176ff] and the tension with James' idea that we nevertheless intuit a divine consciousness with its contents – yet only take away a general feeling). James' exceptions to "monistic" mystics include dualists and theistic personalists (VRE 416).

An overarching question to consider is whether James is finally consistent in his interpretation of mystical experience vis-a-vis its object. G. William Barnard, in *Exploring Unseen Worlds: William James and the Philosophy of Mysticism*, judges that James never decides whether mystical experience can transcend or must ever retain the subject-object structure of reality. Specifically, Barnard posits a sharp distinction and never resolved conflict between James' notion of a finite God ontologically distinct from the mystic on the one hand, most strenuously argued in "The Will to Believe" (252ff), and "his depictions of interpenetrating levels of cosmic consciousness" (253) in later works on the other. First I will note that the piece Barnard refers to without citing its individual title is "Reflex Action and Theism," included in *The Will to Believe and Other Essays in Popular Philosophy*. As a lecture delivered and first published in 1881 and included without change in the just-mentioned collection, it represents James' earliest philosophical and formal positions. I grant that here James, in the interests of protecting the uniqueness of each individual subjectivity, will not admit of any immediacy or coinherence. However, his general psychological notion of pure experience, which found expression in the *Principles of Psychology* published in 1890, blurs the usual subject-object distinction with respect to the inaugural phase of every experience. At least by 1893's Ingersoll Lecture on "Human Immortality," James speaks of overlapping centers of consciousness (and not just about the inapplicability of spatial metaphors to non-ordinary reality that Barnard notices [256-257]). I maintain that the later James does delineate a consistent model of mystical experience in which the usual subject-object distinction is blurred but not obliterated. While James claims a

"coalescing" of our consciousness with a supernatural one in his Gifford Lecture notes, he consistently avoids any claim of absolute identity at any point between our consciousness and divine consciousness. He gainsays a contentless experience beyond subject-object à la full-blown monism or Tillich's more modest mystical a priori. Relative to the more perceptual, content-laden co-consciousness he does posit, note well that the experience is not commutative. While God may fully comprehend our consciousness, we do not comprehend the divine's – while we are privy to some contents of the divine mind, we nevertheless intuit only a vague or general sense of these. Though I have characterized above this coupling of awareness of contents without specificity as a tension, I do not judge it as incoherent. Indeed, many dream experiences and some intuitive waking states can be analogously characterized as bearing such a vague content. Barnard concludes that the proper solution that leaves behind "either-or" to embrace fully "both-and" would be an Eastern non-dualism which supposedly totally transcends subject-object duality while at the same time allowing for distinctions (259). My analysis has found that from the 1890's on James does consistently hold his own version of a "both-and": overlapping co-consciousnesses sans identity with a God in some sense finite, where the subject-object structure is partially but not totally overcome.

Let us now turn directly to the metaphysical object of religious experience. Especially in *A Pluralistic Universe*, James develops his over-beliefs about the more that mystics and others experience. James regards monism in general and Hegelian absolute idealism in particular as rationalist speculation that ignores the empirical, thus yielding various improbabilities and problems. The biggest one is that of evil. If God is the absolute and all-inclusive one, evil becomes an insoluble mystery for which God is ultimately responsible (PU 124, 294). Instead, James defends the notion of "a pluralistic metaphysic" and a "finite God," where God is a part of the totality of reality, where God is within a wider universe with an "external environment," where God faces some "limits." (PU 124, 310-11). At the same time James, as mentioned earlier, rejects the notion of God as external creator and endorses the more organic and pantheistic spirit of his age. Indeed, he is quite taken with the work of a German Romantic idealist, Gustav Theodore Fechner (PU 152ff). He sympathizes with Fechner's theory of concentric enveloping consciousnesses, an earth-consciousness containing the experiences of earth's inhabitants, then a solar system consciousness, and perhaps God as the most inclusive of consciousnesses. But he will not follow Fechner in positing God as "the total envelope" (PU 292ff), judging that this conclusion is appended, tangential rather than integral, to Fechner's system (PU 153-54). Again, God must be finite – limited "either in power or knowledge or in both" (PU 311), and something must be outside of God (PU 110-11) if only "metaphysical necessity" (PU 294), or else God as the whole will be responsible for evil.

While multiple and ontologically independent gods – superhuman powers working for good in the universe – are compatible with James' perspective, a close reading of his philosophical theology suggests little real interest in such strict polytheism. He attributes his use of the singular "God" in *A Pluralistic Universe* to his Christian background and audience; but his general sympathy with an organic and pantheistic spirit and particular sympathy with Fechner's theology suggests his over-belief preference for one enveloping – but not all-enveloping – God. While he labels Fechner's belief in an earth consciousness as "clearly polytheistic" (PU 310), this "god" is not ontologically independent but instead included in a larger consciousness. The universe is adequately pluralistic for James as long as there is some reality that resists God's total control:

his "finite God...may conceivably have almost nothing outside of himself" (PU 125, emphasis James').

Clearly I do not regard James' version of a finite God as *prima facie* incompatible with his notion of an enveloping or inclusive God. Barnard, however, paralleling his judgment of Jamesian mystical experience, finds "unresolved oppositions" (252). He labels James' combination of a finite God "with discrete boundaries and explicit limitations" and "the open-ended interpenetrating fields of pluralistic pantheism" as a "rather jarring mixture of incongruous metaphors" (255). Further he alleges that James "never explicitly wrestles" with how the two conceptions/metaphors might fit together. I contend that James' formulation of a finite God who may well contain everything save responsibility for evil is clear evidence of serious grappling. Barnard highlights James' reference to "the creator-God of orthodox christian [sic] theology" and of "popular Christianity" without "the cosmos in him" (253). But James is clear enough throughout his oeuvre that he rejects the external creator of classical Christianity and of the traditional teleological argument in favor of a more organistic divine-world relationship – as long as we stop short of monism and retain some appropriate distinctions. So James' reference to the classical and popular Christian rendering of the God-world relationship should hardly be interpreted as an endorsement of its sharp distinction between the two. Barnard rightly notes that James anathematizes the monistic Absolute, the divine as "an all-pervasive principle," not only because of his judgment that such a God must be responsible for evil, but also because this God is immutable and impassible (254). But Barnard fails to draw explicitly the conclusion that James' combination of "pluralistic pantheism" and a finite God, or as I prefer to put it, his inclusive God who is finite in some respects, is quite consistent with his insistence on a personal God temporal and passionate.

As suggested above Barnard's preferred resolution of the tensions in James' thought is Eastern nondualism. Consonant with the ineffability of mystical experiences, nondualism supposedly "can assert that distinctions are just as important as unity," because it transcends a logic tied to subject-object duality and related either/or's that assume an excluded middle (259). It is true that James means to uphold both distinctions and unity. Further, as stipulated above James did move from an early position endorsing mutually exclusive subjectivities to his belief in co-consciousness, which did entail a softening of the rule of the "law of the excluded middle." We should remember once again, however, that James never did endorse exhaustive identity between subject and object in mystical experience. More broadly, James never did renounce the most basic assumptions of Western philosophical methodology and logic. He did move well beyond Cartesian dualism. He was quite cognizant of the inability of philosophical language to fully capture our intuitive and perceptual experience. But when James sensed that opposite qualities both applied to a reality, his *modus operandi* was to attempt to articulate the particular respects in which each quality pertained. Even conceding the non-literal nature of mystical language, James never would sign off on simple assertions that nondualism accounts for both difference and identity and entails that the world is both perfect and imperfect (Barnard 259), sans an effort to unpack their meaning.

More decisive than issues of philosophical methodology are those of philosophical and theological substance. And here there are even greater reasons to look West rather than East, to look to James' Western milieu which in fact grappled with metaphysical issues of identity in

difference and divine intimacy and organicity. We need again to recall the influences of German idealism and Romanticism and of American liberal Protestantism, itself much influenced by Romanticism and German idealism. German idealists had an interest in both organicity and retaining something of the traditional Christian distinction between Creator and creation. While some appropriated the term "pantheism," they were not entirely comfortable with it. In his discomfort, Karl C. F. Krause coined the term "panentheism," "all is [in] God." Of the German idealists, James' titan, Fechner, most fully developed a panentheistic concept, with the God-world relationship construed as that of whole to part, where the whole transcends the parts and their sum while the parts retain their integrity and freedom. Ideally, James might have noted and struggled with Fechner's belief in the compatibility of divine all-inclusiveness and human freedom, in contrast to James' own assumption that God as all-enveloping in any sense precludes the freedom that might explain evil without making God responsible for it.

While Alfred North Whitehead did his philosophizing at Harvard following James' death, he was steeped in England's versions of Romantic idealism. Interestingly, Whitehead's process theology promulgated an all-inclusive divine sympathy, while delineating restrictions on omnipotence and omniscience, even as James had associated such restrictions with his notion of a finite God. In Whitehead's case, he jettisoned all-controlling power in favor of divine persuasion and excised traditional foreknowledge from omniscience, so that God does not know future contingents. And by the nature of concrete actuality, God's Consequent Nature, which includes the world's actuality, is finite; while God's Primordial Nature, as the source of possibility, is infinite in some sense.

Closer to home was Borden Parker Bowne, born one year after and dying in the same year as James, professor of theology at Boston University and founder of the theological and metaphysical school known as Boston Personalism. The German Idealist Rudolph Lotze, who held that humans while distinct persons are akin through feeling to the ultimate Person, God, served as the strongest influence on Bowne's thought. Bowne saw God as the personal ground of finite persons and all interpersonal relationships, entailing for him an intimate and temporal God. Intriguingly, Bowne's student, Edgar Sheffield Brightman, expounded a "finite" God, limited by the "given" in God. This functioned as the "metaphysical necessity" to which James referred – though tellingly for James it must be "outside" of rather than "in" God.

What is the upshot of my deliberations? James did indeed grapple with the parameters of a God inclusive and sympathetic, yet finite and distinct from the world in appropriate respects, and James evocatively pointed to a successful synthesis. Yet he did not – nor to be fair did he intend to – proffer a full-blown philosophical theological system of over-beliefs on the nature of

God. Barnard is correct in sensing that James did not resolve the relevant tensions, while missing how tantalizingly close he came. According to my reading, the one thing lacking in James is the formulation of some sense of divine all-inclusiveness compatible with some finiteness and distinctions within the God-world relationship. As James' thought stands, however, Tillich parts company on James' unwillingness to admit that all is included in God, on his insistence that something must be outside of God to save God from responsibility for evil. Tillich would regard James' stipulated God as finally an instantiation of "theological theism," where God "is seen as a self which has a world, as an ego which is related to a thou, as a cause which is separated from

its effect, as having a definite space and an endless time. He is a being, not being-itself." (CB 184).

Both Tillich and James deal with doubt regarding the meaningfulness of life. Tillich is famous for his claim that meaningless is the chief existential threat of the modern age (e.g., CB 61-63), a claim based not only on cultural observation but on his own personal experience, particularly with respect to World War I. James for his part penned that religion's "universal message" is that "All is not vanity in the universe, whatever the appearances may suggest" (PU 38). Their differing epistemologies, though, result in different construals of how such doubt is confronted and overcome. In Tillich's system our intuitive connection with the God above the God of theism can give us "the courage to be," even when all particular meanings have vanished in an abyss of meaningless, including God as a being external to us (CB 182ff). As we are grasped by the God above God in "absolute faith," we become aware of the source of our courage to be in the face of fate, guilt, and emptiness, a source that infinitely transcends yet includes our concrete and fragmentary meanings. Because of this certain connection with the ultimate, we receive an absolute assurance of the ultimate meaningfulness of our life, even in the absence of any concrete evidence supporting such assurance. Concurrently on the divine side, God's overcoming of all nonbeing and ultimate fulfillment transcends "potentiality and actuality" (e.g., S1:251-52). To borrow once again from James' terminology, this absolute guarantee seems well-suited for those with a twice-born temperament, those in need of a spiritual rebirth.

For James our intuitive judgments about the existence and nature of a higher power are not so certain; nor even are our mystical and other religious experiences, which are only the privilege of some of us on some occasions. And from the divine perspective, given the "pragmatic" upshot of a pluralistic universe for James, God must work against realities and powers that resist the divine will. So ultimate victory is far from assured. Yet if we in faith work with the higher power, we "may actually help God ... to be more effectively faithful to his own greater tasks" (VRE 509). So while the victory of meaning is uncertain, our very efforts increase its prospects.

The primary purpose of this article has been to expound and amplify the respective positions of James and Tillich in their similarities and differences. However, I will take the opportunity to conclude this chapter with evaluative remarks. Overall James' epistemology is the more defensible, particularly in light of postmodern concerns. Tillich's positing of an a priori and certain connection with the ultimate appears very modern and Romantic indeed from today's vantage point. I do accept the postmodern dictum that all human experiences are mediated – through our bodies, organs of perception, language, etc. By this criterion even James' empiricism is much implicated in Romantic modernism in a liberal Protestant vein, by allowing for a rather direct infusion of a superhuman consciousness into ours. I would note that though both thinkers accept inclusion or "enveloping" of our consciousness by the divine, as I do, the relationship is hardly commutative: it does not follow that we can or must include the divine in ours.

James maintains the existence of realities with ultimate ontological independence from God – and realities ultimately opposing God – as the only adequate explanation for evil. James might defend this opinion as an empirical observation based on the pervasiveness of evil, or at least as an easy inference from it. But at the metaphysical level of articulated generality, simple empiricism is inadequate and inferences are never easy – or at least never uncontested. (I do not

follow radical postmodernism in disavowing metaphysics.) Tillich – and I – would ask James who or what creates the environment, the universe for God and the power(s) resisting God, who or what sets the conditions for their interaction? Perhaps indeterminacy and chance are inherent in the very nature of finite existence – with process theology I judge this to be the case. But if this be a "metaphysical necessity," must we construe it as a reified power ontologically independent of, ultimately outside of the divine, albeit the entailed freedom and randomness often frustrate God's highest hopes for the world? The intent of my rhetorical questions is to suggest that some form of panentheistic monotheism resembling Tillich's may be possible and rational, constituting an over-belief that stops short of the idealistic monism James incisively rails against.

I will point out that the alleged empirical basis for James' support for higher forms of consciousness enveloping lower forms has largely vanished today. Recall James' approval of Fechner's purportedly scientific notion of an earth consciousness, a solar system consciousness, and other such expansive forms of awareness. Despite proponents of Gaia and neo-shamanism, who often tout the backing of "newer" science, support for Fechner's version of panpsychism among academic philosophers, theologians, and natural scientists is virtually nil. Empirical, scientific observation that could demonstrate any mechanism or means for an earth or galaxy consciousness does not constitute a live option for James' scholarly successors.

I have questioned Tillich's affirmation of the meaningfulness of life, in spite of whatever particular meanings are thrown into doubt, insofar as its foundation is the mystical a priori . However, another ground for an intuition of the basic meaningfulness of life is possible. It is more empirical, though involving a judgment transcending mere observation or experience; and it has connections to James' question of whether we can have a basic attitude of trust towards the universe. The intuition: bodily existence, given normal integration and functioning, is inherently good. Normally, to be, to see, to hear, to move, etc. are intrinsically valuable. Of course, physical and psychological disease or trauma can override the normal goodness of animal and human life, of embodied existence. So whether the good outweighs the evil in a particular individual's life as a whole or in any given stretch is a messy empirical matter. So unlike Tillich, I can make no absolute claim as to the meaningfulness of my life. But this intuition, if valid, upholds the meaningfulness of life at a basic level, such that the overall meaningfulness of existence is not bound to particular outcomes. This intuition, this over-belief if you will – again if valid – would offer greater assurance than does James that religion's abiding claim is indeed true: All is not vanity.

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