



William James On Radical Empiricism and Religion (Toronto Studies in Philosophy)

Hunter Brown

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A century after the appearance of his famous works on religion, William James's philosophy of religion is still the subject of lively debate. James's numerous opponents have repeatedly charged him with abdication of intellectual responsibility, arguing that he advocated the adoption of religious belief without conclusive evidence on its behalf. In this book Hunter Brown shows that critics have consistently distorted James's view in the process of arriving at such charges.

The central argument presented here is that critics have failed to look at James's philosophical vision as a whole. This failure is addressed by Brown as he locates James's thought on religion within the wider scope of Radical Empiricism's analyses of experience in general, and subject-object relations in particular. Brown presents the main interpretations and critiques of James's work, and shows that James's views of religious experience, evil and power, human responsibility, and ethical concerns do not in fact lapse into subjectivism and fideism.

This penetrating study not only builds upon a long tradition of James scholarship but pushes through to new levels of inquiry and insight. It is a major work that will generate renewed discussion of James's thought along with the approaches and concerns emerging from it.



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