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**Psychology vs. religion—*ad hominem*? The *ad hominem* fallacy
and Freudian and Skinnerian psychological criticism of
arguments from religious experience**

Kagan, Michael Alan, Ph.D.

Washington University, 1988

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PSYCHOLOGY VS. RELIGION--AD HOMINEM?
THE AD HOMINEM FALLACY
AND FREUDIAN AND SKINNERIAN PSYCHOLOGICAL CRITICISM
OF ARGUMENTS FROM RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCE
by
Michael Alan Kagan

A dissertation presented to the
Graduate School of Arts and Sciences
of Washington University in
partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree
of Doctor of Philosophy

May 1988

St. Louis, Missouri

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The members of my committee--Professors Robert B. Barrett, Steven S. Schwarzschild, and Jerome P. Schiller--deserve greater praise than I can express here. They have been critical yet supportive, concerned but not intrusive. Where sentences are short, language clear, and the ideas come through, their help is felt. Each has brought his own expertise to bear on this task. I thank them and hope this work does them justice.

Professor Joseph S. Ullian provided useful comments on an earlier version of the Goodman material in the Epilogue. Professor Roger Gibson helped with background information on the friendship of Skinner and Quine. Edwin Fisher, Jr., helped me learn to appreciate behaviorism. His fellow psychology professor, Saul Rosenzweig, helped me learn to respect psycho-dynamic theories.

Hamner Hill helped with legal sources; Susan Roman arranged computerized search services; Leo Weisman shared his experience with DSM-II I. Michael Schmidt and John Hoaglund helped track down sources in informal logic and shared their work.

Sara Kagan and Bruce Ching helped clarify my thinking on many points. They helped make this work more accessible to the literate non-philosopher.

Nina Kaplan shared her own experience as an analyst. Jan Eigner also gave me a glimpse into the world of the psycho-therapist. They, along with my other congregants and those in the nursing homes I serve, have kept me aware at all times of the incredible stakes involved in counseling and the therapeutic enterprise.

For persistent encouragement, I thank Dorothy Fleck, Shaaron Benjamin, Debi Katz, Minnie Romansky, Gizella Fisher, and Bea Kupfer. For her gentle reminder that familiarity can be deceptive and that errors inevitably creep in, I thank Ng Mui.

My family cannot be thanked enough. My wife Sara brought both scientific and artistic training to bear on the project. She helped me move ideas from conversation to paper. Our parents gave constant help. And I thank our son, Eliah, who has long waited for his father to find time to go with him to the zoo and see the black leopard with the black spots.

DEDICATION

For Sara and Eliah,
who waited.

Chapter One
Ad Hominem and
Psychological Criticism of
Argument from Religious Experience

I. Overview

To over-extend the proper limits of descriptive psychology to the prescriptive domain of epistemology is to commit the error of psychologism, to mistake the normal for the normative, the natural for the moral.

Yet, there do seem to be some important relations between the two major sense of "norms," especially when we consider issues of credibility and epistemic authority. Children fare poorly as witnesses in the law courts not because lawyers have no concern for them, but because children so often give inadequate testimony. In Talmudic law, children (along with others considered handicapped or otherwise inappropriate) generally are not allowed to testify. At times, only the most reliable witness (as demonstrated by previous behavior) is allowed to bear witness.

When we consider epistemology as a normative enterprise concerned with what one ought to reject or accept as evidence, we enter into questions concerning the merits of certain sources of knowledge, and ponder the limits of the genetic fallacy. When these sources are persons, we at times find ourselves worrying about the borders of *ad hominem* argumentation.¹

Some, like Quine, have argued that the blind and the insane should not be considered as reporting observations with which we need concern ourselves when trying to get at the scientific facts of the matter.² Yet, some cases are exceptional. It is not always so clear that, even to this extent, we wish to trade our philosophical inheritance of epistemology moralized for an epistemology naturalized.

Matters may be muddled by special circumstances of which we are not yet aware. The ordinarily bad witness, say a layperson in the expert's laboratory or a child evaluating manuscripts in the archives as to accuracy in reproduction, may turn out to be the best

¹This fallacy is to be discussed later in depth in Chapter Two under the rubric of "abusive *ad hominem*"; it involves inappropriately rejecting an utterance due to some flaw in the utterer.

²"Epistemology Naturalized," in Ontological Relativity and Other Essays; The John Dewey Essays in Philosophy edited by the Department of Philosophy, Columbia University, and including the John Dewey Lectures, Number One (New York and London: Columbia University Press, 1969), p. 88.

available authority when concerns require what is normally considered a lesser point of view. When we explore the subjective, when we want to know if a scientific account is understandable as a popular account, when we are not so sure ourselves, when the very knowledge that informs our observations may distort them (as in proof-reading), it may be that a different kind of expertise is required. In Talmudic law, for example, there is one case where the child, normally not sought as a witness at all, is considered an expert: In evaluating the calligraphy within a Torah scroll, an essential criterion is that each letter be correctly written. When there is doubt, it is shown to a child "who does not understand the contents but knows and understands the letters" If the child reads it correctly, the scroll is fit for use.³

One way of summarizing much of what occurs in the following pages concerning the nature and presence of *ad hominem* in psychological criticism of argument from religious experience is as follows: Criticism of sources is not *ad hominem* when it is carefully limited,

³"Laws Concerning Errors and Defects in a Sefer Torah," Code of Jewish Law: Kitzur Shulhan Aruh, revised edition, Volume 1, translated by Hyman E. Goldin, LL.B. (New York: Hebrew Publishing Company, 1961), Chapter 24, Section 5, p. 80.

when it takes account of the possibility of exceptional circumstances. In these cases, tentativeness may turn out to be as much a virtue of honesty as humility.

My concern in this work is to consider the question of the *ad hominem* character of psychological criticism of argument from religious experience, then to make suggestions on the basis of that consideration concerning the interplay between psychologies and philosophies, the normal and the normative.

A. Summary

Is philosophical use of psychological criticism abusive *ad hominem*? A paradigm case is the use of Freudian or Skinnerian psychological theory in criticism of religious experience argument. An explication of *abusive ad hominem* is developed and applied to the focal concern of this dissertation, the *abusive ad hominem* character of Freud's and Skinner's psychological criticisms. Broader related issues and implications are discussed at the end of the study.

B. Introductory

Psychological criticism of argument from religious experience is taken seriously. In philosophical treatments of argument from religious experience such criticism is discussed with respect and handled with care.⁴ Psychological criticisms are adduced frequently by philosophers rejecting the validity of religious experience as evidence for religious beliefs. These philosophical critics argue that insanity, pathology, or conditioning is the source of these experiences and experience reports, rather than some underlying objects of religious experience. Yet, in that arguments and statements are being rejected on the basis of some flaw in their human source, the psychological criticisms themselves may commit the fallacy of abusive *ad hominem*.

⁴This occurs in most discussions of argument from religious experience: e.g., John Hick's Philosophy of Religion 3d. ed. (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1983); the treatments in the Encyclopedia of Philosophy (s.v., "Religion, Psychological Explanations of," and "Religious Experience, Argument for the Existence of God"); Louis J. Pojman's "The Argument from Religious Experience" in Pojman's (Ed.) Philosophy of Religion: An Anthology (Belmont, California: Wadsworth Publishing Company, 1987), pp. 90-96; Hans Küng's, Freud and the Problem of God, translated by Edward Quinn (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1979); and J. L. Mackie in his The Miracle of Theism: Arguments For and Against the Existence of God (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1982).

It indeed seems that psychological criticism of religious experience arguments constitutes a *prima facie* example of argument *ad hominem*, and is thus itself questionable. Writers in the area have suggested as much.⁵ Yet, other writers--among them notable philosophers of science such as Grünbaum and Quine--find such rejection of observation claims quite proper. Grünbaum finds Freud's critique of religion essentially correct.⁶ As for Quine, the rejection of

⁵One potent example of counter-criticism is offered by William James (in his Varieties of Religious Experience: A Study in Human Nature, being the Gifford Lectures on Natural Religion Delivered at Edinburgh in 1902-1902, enlarged edition with appendices and introduction by Joseph Ratner (New Hyde Park, New York: University Books, Inc., 1963), pp. 19, 22ff). Also, see Rudolf Otto's The Idea of the Holy: An Inquiry into the Non-rational Factor in the Idea of the Divine and its Relation to the Rational, Revised with additions, translated by John W. Harvey (London: Oxford University Press, H. Milford, 1936) p. 37, note 1.

The issue of the propriety of psychological criticism in the religious arena is also debated by Pashman and Kleiman (Jon Pashman, "Is the Genetic Fallacy a Fallacy?" in Southern Journal of Philosophy 8, 57-62; Lowell Kleiman, "Pashman on Freud and the Genetic Fallacy," and Pashman's "Reply to Mr. Kleiman" in 9, 93-94).

⁶Adolf Grünbaum in "More on Freud, Psychoanalysis, and Religion: An Interview with Adolf Grünbaum" Free Inquiry Winter 1985/86 Vol. 6, No. 1:30-36. For Grünbaum's evaluation of the status of Freud's theories, see Grünbaum's The Foundations of Psychoanalysis: A Philosophical Critique (Berkeley, Los Angeles, and London: University of California Press, 1984).

psychopathological observations is central to his naturalized epistemology.⁷

Surely there is some sense in rejecting a claim on the basis of considering its source. Witnesses can, after all, be impugned, and we normally think this proper. In certain legal systems entire classes of persons are exempted from candidacy as certain kinds of witnesses.⁸

Yet, defenders of religious experience can argue that this kind of criticism, with its rejection of these experiences as evidence for religious claims, is unfair and misguided. It is unfair because it is a kind of "name-calling" or "mudslinging" to argue that the central religious accounts given by the founders and significant exemplars of most world religions are the results of insanity, hallucination, greed, self-deception, deception, or conditioning, and not evidence

⁷W. V. Quine, "Epistemology Naturalized," p. 88, note 7.

⁸We are familiar with the requirement for a degree of competence from witnesses in American law with respect to, e.g., children and the mentally deficient; for a discussion of this, see Richard O. Lempert and Stephen A. Saltzburg's A Modern Approach to Evidence (St. Paul: West Publishing Company, 1977), p. 310. Similar restrictions on the deaf, women, slaves and minors exist in Jewish law; for sources and discussion, see Leonard Swidler's "Women Bearing Witness" and "Women, Children and Slaves," in his Women in Judaism: The Status of Women in Formative Judaism (Metuchen, New Jersey: The Scarecrow Press, Inc., 1976), pp. 115-118.

of what they claim. The use of psychological counter-argument and theory itself, they may claim, evidences a "psychological fallacy," "pernicious psychologism," or "genetic fallacy." In short, a defender of argument from religious experience may argue that any criticism based on diagnosing the experiencer reeks of argument *ad hominem*. The defender may further claim that psychological criticism of argument from religious experience relies on character assassination instead of consideration of the evidence and issues at hand: in this case, the thesis that religious experience is of the kind such that it offers evidence or reasons for accepting religious claims.

II. Method

The general issue here is the *ad hominem* character of psychological criticism of argument from religious experience. The more narrow particular question to be focused on in this work is, "Do either Freudian or Skinnerian criticisms of religious experience argument commit the fallacy of abusive *ad hominem*?" It is clear that in order to answer a question of the form, "Is X as it bears on Y a case of Z?" we need to have some notion of the terms under consideration. For our question, we need to be clear on what counts as committing the fallacy, what

religious experience arguments are being taken under consideration, and what is being interpreted as Freudian and Skinnerian psychological criticism.

A. A Theory of Abusive *Ad Hominem* is Developed and Defended. (Chapter Two)

Were we in possession of a more developed theory of abusive *ad hominem*, the task would be easier. The theory could be stated and applied to this case. Yet, although treatments of the fallacy *ad hominem* go back at least as far as Aristotle,⁹ we still await an explication allowing for reliable diagnoses of the fallacy. Even though seminal work on the fallacy of *ad hominem* is being done, the focus of such work is a different variant of the fallacy, "circumstantial *ad hominem*."^{10,11} So, although steps toward constructing

⁹Aristotle, On Sophistical Refutations, On Coming-to-Be and Passing-Away, trans. E. S. Forster, published with D. J. Furley's translation of On the Cosmos (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press; London: William Heinemann, Ltd., 1955), p. 115.

¹⁰Briefly put, the difference between circumstantial and abusive *ad hominem* is the difference between consistency and competence: the fallacy of circumstantial *ad hominem* involves denying the truth of what is preached due to a failure in practice; the fallacy of abusive *ad hominem* concerns rejecting an utterance due to some flaw in the utterer. Analysis of circumstantial *ad hominem* turns on notions of practical inconsistency; analysis of abusive *ad hominem* concerns the person as defective data gathering instrument.

¹¹This task is undertaken by Douglas N. Walton, in his book (discussed in Chapter Two, below), Arguer's

a theory of abusive *ad hominem* have been taken since Aristotle, it is necessary for the purposes of this dissertation, and for fallacy theory in general, to refine critically this previous work in order to develop and defend a new theory of abusive *ad hominem*. The gist of the theory developed here is that abusive *ad hominem* fallacy occurs when a generally useful (often not explicit) rule relating the quality of persons to the truth of their utterances is over-extended, the over-extension often turning on some unusual circumstance or issue that undermines what might have been taken to be the rule's universal applicability. After presenting this theory in Chapter Two, a paradigm case of argument from religious experience is reconstructed in Chapter Three.

B. Religious Experience Arguments are Exemplified:

1. A Reconstruction of William James's Religious Experience Argument (Chapter Three)

Having developed a theory of abusive *ad hominem* in Chapter Two, I turn to the issue of religious experience arguments and their criticisms in Chapters

Position: A Pragmatic Study of Ad Hominem Attack, Criticism, Refutation, and Fallacy. Contributions in Philosophy, Number 26 (London and Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1985).

Three and Four. A sophisticated and cautious argument from religious experience, one not from the beginning a "straw man" awaiting the flames of psychological criticisms, is provided. I turn to the work of one who was not only psychologically informed, but is also considered one of the greatest psychologists since that field was "emancipated" from philosophy in the nineteenth century. William James, over the course of many years and many writings, provided material for a religious experience argument that addresses, even in its formulation, the issue of psychological criticism.¹² The Jamesian argument, as it is reconstructed in Chapter Three, turns on James's pragmatic justification of accepting a religious hypothesis the bare possibility of which may be found in religious experience.

¹²The reconstruction of James's argument is culled from a wide range of his works including Varieties of Religious Experience, Talks to Teachers on Psychology and to Students on Some of Life's Ideals (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1983), Will to Believe and other Essays, Essays in Radical Empiricism (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1976), Some Problems of Philosophy (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1979), Pragmatism and the Meaning of Truth (Cambridge, Massachusetts and London: Harvard University Press, 1978), Principles of Psychology (Cambridge, Massachusetts and London: Harvard University Press, 1983), among others.

2. A Popular Religious Experience Argument is Sketched (Chapter Four)

In fairness to the cause of religious experience argument, the Jamesian is presented due to the fact that it is designed to resist psychological attacks. In fairness to the intentions of those who offer psychological criticism of argument from religious experience, however, it is also necessary to provide an example of the kind of popular religious experience argument that is usually the target of their attacks. This second kind of target argument holds that a divine source is the only or best explanation of religious experience; it is one of a family of religious arguments found in popular informal discussions, and not unknown in philosophic circles.

C. Freudian and Skinnerian Criticisms of Religious Experience Arguments are Developed (Chapter Four)

The religious experience arguments now having been reconstructed (the Jamesian in Chapter Three, and the popular in the beginning of Chapter Four), I then present Freudian and Skinnerian psychological criticisms of religious experience arguments.

Freud's work is often cited and applied to the criticism of religious experience argument.¹³ Skinner's work, closely connected as it is with the work of Quine,¹⁴ seems to be a more appropriate source of psychological criticism of religious experience argument for one major stream of recent Anglo-American philosophy (the Russell-Quine tradition), which finds Freud's own views philosophically suspect.¹⁵

Skinner applies his psychological theory to the analysis of religion in Science and Human Behavior.¹⁶ He provides material for analysis of particular cases in Verbal Behavior.¹⁷ Although Skinnerian behaviorism has not yet found its way into the center of

¹³See notes 4 and 6 above, and the Pashman-Kleiman debate mentioned at the end of note 5.

¹⁴Some of Quine's most important work is explicitly conducted on the lines of Skinner's behaviorism. This is most apparent in the theory of language acquisition Quine presents in Word and Object (Cambridge, Massachusetts: M.I. T. Press, 1960), pp. 80, 82. The influence is mutual. Skinner acknowledges his debt to Quine in The Shaping of a Behaviorist, Part Two of an Autobiography (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1979), p. 151.

¹⁵The grounds for this suspicion, usually based on concerns with experimental data and the possibility of falsification, are discussed below in Chapter Six, Part II.

¹⁶B. F. Skinner, Science and Human Behavior, (New York: The Free Press, 1965; c. 1953 by the Macmillan Company), Chapter 18, "Religion," pp. 350-358.

¹⁷B. F. Skinner, Verbal Behavior (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1957).

philosophical debate of religious experience argument, it probably will. As mentioned, Skinner is intimately linked to the Russell-Quine tradition, since Skinnerian psychology was self-consciously offered from its inception as a naturalized epistemology¹⁸ and Quine's theory of language acquisition is based on Skinner's. Furthermore, those in the Russell-Quine tradition who wish to criticize religious experience arguments might well prefer to argue on the basis of a theory they accept (Skinner's) when discussing issues other than religion.¹⁹

Skinner and Freud both present naturalistic theories to be used in making sense of religious experience reports and argument. Many philosophers, even while denying the particulars of these psychological theories,²⁰ have gone along with the claim that religious experience reports are not evidence for the truth of theology. The thrust of such analyses is that, "such experiences are evidence of

¹⁸Shaping., p. 29.

¹⁹One of the ironies of psychological criticism of argument from religious experience in philosophical circles is the use of Freud to criticize religion by Anglo-American philosophers who, when they do philosophy of science, accept views (e.g., Popper's) that undermine Freud's theory.

²⁰See, for example, Grünbaum's "Interview." and Mackie's Miracle of Theism.

individual or group psychology and psychopathology, not theology." Thus these philosophers have applied psychological theory to religious experience argument.

The task of providing a Freudian criticism of religious experience argument was undertaken to a remarkable degree by Freud himself in a variety of works, the most famous of which include Future of an Illusion,²¹ Civilization and its Discontents,²² New Introductory Lectures on Psychoanalysis,²³ Totem and Taboo,²⁴ and Moses and Monotheism.²⁵ A Skinnerian

²¹The Future of an Illusion, Newly translated from the German and edited by James Strachey (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1961).

²²Civilization and its Discontents, Newly translated from the German and edited by James Strachey, (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1961).

²³New Introductory Lectures on Psychoanalysis, Newly translated and edited by James Strachey; especially Lecture XXXV, "The Question of a *Weltanschauung*" (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, Inc., 1965).

²⁴Totem and Taboo (in A. A. Brill (Ed.), The Basic Writings of Sigmund Freud (New York: Random House, Modern Library Edition, 1938)).

²⁵Moses and Monotheism, translated from the German by Katherine Jones (New York: Vintage Books, a Division of Random House, 1967).

Freud's work relevant to his critique of religion is still being published: i.e., his recently discovered A Phylogenetic Fantasy: Overview of the Transference Neuroses, edited with an essay by Ilse Grubrich-Simitis, translated by Axel Hoffer and Peter T. Hoffer (Cambridge, Massachusetts and London: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1987).

criticism of religious experience argument also begins with his own works, notably Beyond Freedom and Dignity,²⁶ Science and Human Behavior,²⁷ and Verbal Behavior.²⁸ In Chapter Four both Freudian and Skinnerian criticisms are reconstructed as two-pronged attacks on religious experience argument, with one prong criticizing religious experience arguments in terms of the origins of religious experience, and with the other prong doing so in terms of the consequences.

Having laid the groundwork for answering the question of the *ad hominem* character of psychological criticism of argument from religious experience, I propose a solution in Chapter Five, by addressing the question, "Do either Freud or Skinner over-extend a rule relating the quality of persons (in this case their psychological status) to the value of their utterances (religious experience reports and arguments)?"

²⁶Beyond Freedom and Dignity (New York: Bantam/Vintage published by arrangement with Alfred A. Knopf, Inc.; Alfred A. Knopf edition 1971, Bantam/Vintage edition, 1972).

²⁷Science and Human Behavior (New York: Macmillan Company, 1953; first Free Press Paperback Edition, 1965).

²⁸Verbal Behavior (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, Inc., 1957).

D. These Psychological Critiques are Analysed in terms of the theory of *Ad Hominem* Fallacy (Chapter Five).

At this point I have already developed in Chapter Two an explication of *abusive ad hominem* fallacy as over-extension of a (usually enthymematic) rule of thumb concerning persons and the truth of their utterances. In Chapter Three, an account has been reconstructed of Jamesian religious experience argument that focuses on the pragmatic justification of choosing religious hypotheses partially on the basis of the bare possibilities introduced by religious experience. The reader is reminded in Chapter Four of popular arguments that the very presence of widespread religious experience is best explained by a divine source. The chapter continues by showing how aetiological criticisms appropriate to the popular argument are buttressed by Freud and Skinner by the addition of pragmatic criticisms that challenge the pragmatic promise and hence pragmatic grounds of the Jamesian argument.

In Chapter Five, I conclude that Freudian and Skinnerian criticisms of arguments from religious experience can be, and are, at times, used to commit the fallacy of *abusive ad hominem*, whenever the aetiological prong alone is used in an attempt to undermine religious experience arguments based on the

pragmatic value of such experiences. However, according to my analysis, Freud and Skinner do not so use them. This is a function of both the target (popular or Jamesian argument) and tactics of the attack (one-pronged or two).²⁹

For the purposes of both the reader who desires a synoptic view of this argument as process, as well as the scholar interested in the product or philosophical "bottom line," Chapter Five provides a summary of the conclusions of the arguments of the previous chapters. Viewing the first five chapters of this work as an argument, Chapter Five can be thought of as an epitome: It not only presents the conclusion to the argument, but also can be referred to for a list of the intermediate premises, or lemmata, reached en route.

III. Epilogue

Having completed the task of the dissertation, I begin here by summarizing its contributions to the related fields of philosophical debate--informal logic and fallacy theory, and philosophy of psychology and religion. After reviewing the questions which have been answered, I then turn, in Part II of the Epilogue,

²⁹For a more extensive summary of the entire argument of the dissertation to this point, including a tabulation of targets and tactics, see Chapter Five.

to tasks left undone, and offer some tentative suggestions concerning the development of better religious experience arguments and psychological criticisms. Also discussed are the pragmatic role of universal salvation in the development and critique of the Jamesian argument, the scientific status and current credibility of Freud's and Skinner's theories, and the Kantian nature and sources of James's pragmatic argument for religious belief.

In Part III of the epilogue, the issue of the involvement and careful use of psychology in philosophy is then approached with an eye to possible collisions. On the basis of the work done in Chapters Two through Five, and following insights gleaned from the psychologists Saul Rosenzweig³⁰ and Jane Loevinger,³¹ and the philosophers Nelson Goodman³² and Immanuel

³⁰Saul Rosenzweig, Freud and Experimental Psychology: The Emergence of Idiodynamics (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company; St. Louis: Rana House, 1987); "Background to Idiodynamics," The Clinical Psychologist, 1986, 39, 83-89; and "Some Implicit Common Factors in Diverse Methods of Psychotherapy," American Journal of Orthopsychiatry, 1926, 6, 412-415 (as discussed in "Background," p. 87).

³¹Jane Loevinger, Paradigms of Personality (New York: W. H. Freeman and Company, 1987).

³²Nelson Goodman, Fact, Fiction and Forecast; Third Edition (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 1979), Problems and Projects (Indianapolis: The Bobbs-Merrill Company, Inc., 1972), The Structure of Appearance; Third Edition with an Introduction by Geoffrey Hellman (Dordrecht-Holland/Boston-U.S.A.: D.

Kant,³³ a prologue to a philosophical attitude to be taken towards the different psychological schools and their relationship to philosophy and philosophies is presented. This sketch focuses on the pragmatic value of an ideal of a unified world version. The tentative program suggested there is informed by a wariness derived from the previous *ad hominem* analysis, and combines a *methodological realism* inspired by Kant with a *multiparadigmatic* view inspired by Goodman, Loevinger, and Rosenzweig.

Reidel Publishing Company, 1977), Of Mind and Other Matters (Cambridge, Massachusetts and London: Harvard University Press, 1984).

³³I am alluding to the following passages: Immanuel Kant's Critique of Pure Reason, Unabridged edition, translated by Norman Kemp Smith, (New York: Macmillan & Co., 1929; St. Martin's Press, 1965), p. 650 (= B857); Sections 87-91 of Kant's Critique of Judgement, translated, with an Introduction, by J. H. Bernard (New York: Hafner Press, A Division of Macmillan Publishing Co., Inc., and London: Collier Macmillan Publishers, 1951), pp. 298-339; and Kant's Introduction to Logic and his Essay on the Mistaken Subtlety of the Four Figures, translated by Thomas Kingsmill Abbot, B. D., with a few notes by Coleridge (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, Publishers, 1972; copyright 1963 by Philosophical Library, Inc.), Sections IX-X, pp. 56-78.

Chapter Two: Abusive *Ad Hominem*

. . . all these people direct their solutions not to the argument but to the man. . . . In the above examples, even though everything is conceded, yet we say that no proof has been effected.

Aristotle, Sophistical Refutations, 178b
17-20¹

I. What is the Fallacy of Abusive *Ad Hominem*?

Unlike other fallacies such as affirming the consequent, which can be ascribed to proofs without considering their human origins, invocation of *ad hominem* occurs in contexts of counter-attack and

¹Aristotle, On Sophistical Refutations, On Coming-to-Be and Passing-Away, trans. E. S. Forster, published with D. J. Furley's translation of On the Cosmos (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press; London: William Heinemann, Ltd., 1955), p. 115.

According to Walton in Arguer's Position: A Pragmatic Study of *Ad Hominem* Attack, Criticism, Refutation, and Fallacy, Contributions in Philosophy, Number 26 (London, England and Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1985), p. 42, the Latin translation of this quotation is the source of the familiar Latin term "*ad hominem*". Walton cites C. L. Hamblin's Fallacies (London: Methuen, 1970; reprinted with a preface by John Plecnic and John Hoaglund in 1986, Newport News, Virginia: Vale Press, 1986), p. 161. As Hamblin's analysis indicates, and even a cursory reading of Aristotle reveals, the term "*ad hominem*" finds itself applied to sources far afield from this original mention in the context of Aristotle's discussion of division.

challenge to the human element as it is related to the reliability of an argument. *Ad hominem* appears to be a narrower case of the genetic fallacy, with genesis narrowed to the creations of humanity. Since arguments as we know them are either the creations of persons, or the creations of machines whose ancestry includes persons, the role and relevance of the possibility of human error in input and processing seem to be relevant to some degree. This possibility of genuine relevance of persons to argument has engendered considerable differences concerning the nature and scope of *ad hominem*.

Ordinarily used to characterize arguments and argument tactics that rely on "attacking an opponent's character rather than answering his argument" or persuasive attempts directed at "a person's prejudices, emotions, or special interests rather than to his intellect or reason,"² *ad hominem* argument has received some most unordinary interpretations. Some philosophers have argued that *ad hominem* is not always a fallacy.³ One analyst argues that all philosophical

²The Random House Dictionary of the English Language (New York: Random House, 1966), s.v.

³E.g., Douglas N. Walton in Arguer's Position.

argument is and ought to be *ad hominem*.⁴ Still another argues that all argument of any kind is best understood as *ad hominem*.⁵

Ordinarily, however, the term "*ad hominem*" is used to pick out presumably flawed arguments that change the focus of discussion from the issue at hand to that of the people attached to certain positions, reflecting an attempt to change the course of an argument on the

⁴This is the approach presented in Henry W. Johnstone's Validity and Rhetoric in Philosophical Argument: An Outlook in Transition (University Park, Pennsylvania: The Dialogue Press of Man & World, Inc., 1978).

⁵Chaim Perelman and L. Olbrechts-Tyteca offer this approach in The New Rhetoric, translated by J. Wilkinson and P. Weaver (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1969), pp. 110-114.

In arguing as they do, Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca, as well as H. W. Johnstone are following in a tradition of *ad hominem* analysis that finds its first clear modern exemplar in John Locke's Essay Concerning Human Understanding, collated and annotated by Alexander Campbell Fraser (New York: Dover Publications, 1959), Book IV, 17.21, (p. 411), where Locke writes of the third of four classes of arguments usually used to gain assent, "A third way is to press a man with consequences drawn from his own principles or concessions. This is already known under the name of *argumentum ad hominem*."

This allows for legitimate application of *ad hominem* argument, as Fraser notes in his comment to this passage (p. 411, n. 2). According to Fraser, "this argument is legitimate when the question in dispute is not the truth of a proposition, but the self-consistency of the person who proposes it. It becomes irrelevant, and therefore fallacious, when used as an *argumentum ad rem*." (See also Hamblin's Fallacies, pp. 158-164.)

basis of its arguer's position. E.g., if an arguer has acted inconsistently⁶ with his or her claims or does not display a coherent ability to introduce or defend the claim at issue, this is held to reflect on the claim as presented, and the arguer is then challenged to defend the claim or the ability to claim it. *Ad hominem* challenges tend to take the form of attacking an opponent's (or opponent's sources') behavioral consistency (often moral failures along the lines of hypocrisy) or argumentative competence (often epistemological failures due to some deficit).

Given this two-fold division, it is customary to divide *ad hominem* arguments into two groups: circumstantial and abusive.⁷ The circumstantial is normally associated with allegations of hypocrisy and bad faith. A circumstantial *ad hominem* argument is generally considered to be fallacious when the failure

⁶This notion of acting inconsistently with a claim is admittedly obscure in that inconsistency is most easily understood as a syntactic relation. Yet, "inconsistent action" talk occurs with considerable frequency in our ordinary moral discourse. Apparently it refers to the logical relation that occurs when some preferred description of an individual's deliberate behavior contradicts one of his or her claims. Walton's Arguer's Position is devoted to the attempt to provide a formal explication of this notion as it relates to the fallacy of circumstantial *ad hominem*.

⁷There may be room for other categories of *ad hominem* as well, e.g., constructive *ad hominem*, in which one is being told that one would be a better or more beautiful person for accepting a certain thesis.

to practice what one preaches is cited as evincing the falsity of the thesis defended in words but breached in practice. Abusive *ad hominem* has in common with circumstantial the feature of connecting statements with their proponents; but it differs in focusing more on the person than on his or her behavior.

Abusive *ad hominem* argument and counter-argument moves from deficiencies in theses' proponents to deficiencies in their qualifications to make statements along the lines of those they offer in the argument context. Often viewed as a "reverse argument from authority," abusive *ad hominem* argument attacks competence, usually moral or epistemological, and is directed against claims on the basis of the lack of credibility of those who make them.⁸ An abusive *ad hominem* can be used directly in argument with an individual by criticizing the individual's right or qualifications to advance a claim as in, "of course an English professor would say that a familiarity with the 19th century English short story is a necessary condition for counting someone as educated" or "I don't have to pay attention to your remarks on mathematics since you are a philosopher"; such cases

⁸For this reason abusive *ad hominem* can be viewed as a specific case of a genetic fallacy, i.e., movement from criticism or rejection of sources of a thesis to criticism or rejection of the thesis itself.

are considered to be among the most ill-mannered. An abusive *ad hominem* challenge can be used indirectly to criticize an opponent's sources as in, "but your evidence relies primarily on the testimony of mediums and faith-healers, who are scoundrels." Arguments involving abusive *ad hominem* are generally considered fallacious when they are interpreted as inferring the falsity of theses from flaws in their proponents.

In this chapter, I present a theory of the fallacy of abusive *ad hominem* adequate to the *ad hominem* analysis of psychological critique of argument from religious experience. I develop a general theory of abusive *ad hominem* in order to address the specific question, "Does psychological critique of argument from religious experience along the lines suggested by Skinner and Freud commit the fallacy of abusive *ad hominem*?" In advancing this theory of abusive *ad hominem* I will:

- (I) specify the kinds of entities that will be termed "arguments" for the purposes of this discussion,
- (A) adopt a formal approach to analysis of argument as product; i.e., an approach that allows for the formal analysis of ordinary language arguments interpreted into the symbols of the first order predicate calculus

with polyadic quantification theory and identity,

(B) adopt a pragmatic approach to analyses of arguments as processes; i.e, make use of the techniques offered by non-formal strategies of informal logic that focus on non-syntactic features of ordinary language arguments as these arguments stand pre-systematically (with respect to the formal analysis indicated above). This is reflected by a special attention to the process of "argument moves"--the activity of covertly or overtly introducing premises and considerations into the arena of argument.

(II) address basic issues in informal logic concerning:

(A) adequate explication of "fallacy,"

(B) the nature of fallacies both formal and informal,

(C) categories of fallacy termed "*ad hominem*."

(III) present a theory of abusive *ad hominem* explaining why the theory introduced here is

(A) adequate not only to the task at hand (of analyzing psychological criticism of argument from religious experience) but also

(B) how the theory contributes to the on-going debate in informal logic concerning fallacy in general as well as the nature of *ad hominem* in particular.⁹

II. Arguments and Argument Moves

Later in this chapter I provide a characterization of fallacy and delineate criteria of wrongness, some at the level of arguments and some at the level of argument moves,¹⁰ in order to work out and present a

⁹This debate is characterized by a concern with explaining how there can be *ad hominem* fallacy without an explicit *ad hominem* argument, with how *ad hominem* can characterize individual premises as well as assertions, as well as the above mentioned "basic issues in informal logic."

¹⁰The notion of argument move introduced and developed here is similar to that of "dialectical move" as used by Hamblin in so far as it is narrowed to special circumstances, and the formal level is stressed. In so far as the concept is a function of an emphasis on viewing arguments not only as products but as processes of which parts have argument-making characteristics and which are capable of argument-like flaws, the idea of argument move and the concomitant notion of "proto-fallacy" are novel. Hamblin is not interested in developing a concept of fallacy that would characterize fallacies as argument parts, premises, or processes. As far as Hamblin is concerned, "A fallacy is a fallacious argument." See Hamblin, Fallacies, p. 224. For his use of "dialectical move" consider, e.g., p. 280, 281, 284.

Another version of Hamblin's notion, where the "move" is essentially a turn in which one may introduce a premise or criticize a premise introduced by one's opponent in a dialogue game, occurs in Walton's Arguer's Position, e.g., p. 71.

theory of abusive *ad hominem*. Working definitions of both concepts, "argument" and "argument move" need to be provided in order to make sense of these criteria.

A. Arguments:

During the past one hundred years or so since the publication of Frege's ground-breaking *Begriffsschrift* and the monumental contribution of Russell and Whitehead's Principia Mathematica, we have had made available to us the powerful tools of modern symbolic logic yielding precise criteria for the formal analysis of proofs. Given these developments, it would be a boon to find a definition of "argument" that allowed for a formal treatment of arguments. Our definition would then allow us power with precision, virtually guaranteeing the clarity of our approach. A formalist explication of "argument" satisfying the explication-criterion of being adequate to paradigm cases¹¹ while

¹¹Since the evaluation of an enduring debate appearing to be rife with *ad hominem* allegation and counter-charges--the adequacy of psychological criticism of argument from religious experience--is the object of investigation, it is particularly important that the analysis apply to actual arguments.

Examples of apparent *ad hominem* criticism not only characterize the opposition to argument from religious experience but also appear in counter-charges offered by the defenders of certain western religions. See, for example, Hans Küng's Freud and the Problem of God,

helping resolve borderline instances would have much to offer.

If an analysis of arguments allowing for formal methods can be defensibly provided that takes adequate account of clear cases, and allows us to provide a coherent and justifiable rationale for legislating hard cases, the advantages will be many. We will then have available clear, rigorous, decision procedures for many argument analyses, and proof procedures adequate for yet more. An argument will be shown to have gone wrong when it is formally invalid; by definition, no formally valid argument will suffer from a defect of validity, formal or otherwise, and *ad hominem* analysis need only be provided for arguments failing a formal validity test¹² or where soundness is at issue,¹³ in so far as

translated by Edward Quinn (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1979), Chapter 1, "The Genesis of Freud's Atheism," pp. 1-27; also see his Chapter 3, "Critique of Freud," pp. 87-89.

¹²In the event that the *ad hominem* fallacy took the form of a non-truth-bearing inference rule such as the extremely impractical rule "treat any statement made by a communist as implying a contradiction," which licenses inferences along the lines of the crude, "You are a communist, therefore your statement is false."

¹³There is a practical sense in which *ad hominem* analysis is rarely required for formally invalid arguments since formal analysis of an argument's invalidity is logically sufficient for its refutation. However, in practical circumstances, involving debate with persons unfamiliar with or skeptical of logical technique, a response in the form of an example along the lines of the following may be helpful: "but, that's *ad hominem*--like claiming that because a

ad hominem flaws occur at the semantic level. A formal approach, if acceptable, might answer the question concerning the adequacy of Freud's and Skinner's psychological criticisms of argument from religious experience: We translate such psychological criticisms into proofs the last lines of which state the inadequacy of argument from religious experience, and then test the proofs thus translated. If invalid, then our task is completed; if not, then the argument can be addressed at the level of soundness, in terms of the truth of its premises.

So it is that given the overarching problem at hand, an answer to the question, "what is an argument?" might first be sought in terms amenable to some formalist analysis.

Let us consider first, then, an argument as any fragment of discourse renderable into the lines of a formal derivation or decision procedure, and thus analyzable with powerful formal tools towards categories of valid, sound, unsound, and possibly, "fallacious" (at least as far as formal fallacies go).¹⁴

Pentecostal said that a triangle has three sides, we need to recount them."

¹⁴For example, consider that the argument is invalid. Then, by definition, it is unsound. If the invalid argument is formally identifiable as formally

There are at least two weaknesses of the above. The first occurs whenever the possibility of valid non-deductive argument is raised. If there are such arguments, and cogent critics allege there are many (e.g., conductive, inductive, analogical)--then the formal definition suggested will not be sufficient for determining their validity, since this formal analysis is geared to deductive validity.

Yet it can be argued that this definition is useful even for helping to identify valid non-deductive arguments, even though it excludes them from its own bailiwick. E.g., a non-formally valid argument is an argument competent judges deem to be valid despite the fact that non-controversial formalization fails to yield a decision of deductive validity.¹⁵

A second weakness concerns the possibility of rendering many sentences into lines of derivations that fallacious, then we have identified a fallacy via formal analysis.

¹⁵Now this definition itself leaves a lot to be desired in that it relies on the obscure notion of "competent judges". What I am after with this definition is not a formal definition of non-deductive validity, but rather a definition of argument allowing for the utility of formal tools in the process of determining that an argument is non-deductively valid. A useful notion of "competent judges" here would be along the lines of "good speakers of the language" or along the lines of what Carl Wellman calls "normal-thinkers." See his Challenge and Response: Justification in Ethics (Carbondale and Edwardsville, Illinois: Southern Illinois University Press, 1971), pp. 96-97.

most of us would deny status as arguments. E.g., newspaper articles, encyclopedia entries--virtually any set of sentences in the indicative mood.

An informal presystematic sense of what an argument is, along the lines of a dictionary's definition of "argument" as "presentation of reasons for or against something"¹⁶ suggests that in argument analysis it makes most sense to focus on those fragments of discourse involving in some direct way the support or rejection of claims or positions describable in the indicative mood or as the objects of "propositional attitudes."¹⁷

With these cases in mind, arguments could be described as exchanges in defense or support of theses renderable, for the sake of analysis or classification,

¹⁶s.v. "argument"; Scribner-Bantam English Dictionary, Revised Edition, Ed. Edwin Williams, New York: Bantam Books, 1979. See also The Random House Dictionary of the English Language (New York: Random House, 1966), s.v.: "ARGUMENT, CONTROVERSY, DISPUTE imply the expression of opinions for and against some idea."

¹⁷i.e., the objects of belief, fear, hope, etc., as usually expressed in the complex names of statements which follow, e.g., the relative pronoun "that," as in "I hope that you answered his letter," or "I believe that _____," or as indicated by the subject of sentences such as "_____ is the case." A useful discussion of propositional attitudes and their relationship to referential opacity occurs in Michael Dummett's Frege: Philosophy of Language, second edition (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1981), pp. 186-187.

into the lines of formal derivations.¹⁸ The paradigm cases of such exchanges would be attacks and defenses of claims describable as the objects of propositional attitudes.¹⁹

Arguments, then, would be exchanges, probably sets of sentences, ordinary paradigm cases of which are usually used in the task of persuading or convincing persons to accept some claim (the conclusion). These exchanges can be reworked into the symbols of the first order predicate calculus such that some portion of them can be treated as initial lines (or premises) from which others (conclusions that may themselves function as initial lines for other conclusions) may be derived.

B. Argument Moves:

By an argument move, I mean the act or process of introducing sentences, statements, or other considerations with which initial lines are identified or from which initial lines are later developed.²⁰

¹⁸This set of lines would include the conclusion.

¹⁹Treating these as paradigm cases should address the second weakness.

²⁰"Move," like many useful terms, is liable to a process-product ambiguity. I will attempt to use "argument move" to refer to the process of introducing premises and considerations with which initial lines are equated. When discussing such moves as products of

Given the view of argument as discourse formalizable into the lines of a derivation, the argument as a formalized whole could be identified with its lines in toto. Individual lines, normally called premises or conclusions, are introduced by formal and informal argument moves.

In a formal derivation, such a move may be accomplished by citing line numbers and derivation rules. In an informal debate, lines may be introduced, e.g., by the explicit consent of the debaters. In a rhetorical situation lines might be introduced by way of being taken as implicitly granted as obvious at least to the parties to the debate, and thus unnecessary to state, i.e., enthymematically,²¹ as in, "He is president so someone must have voted for him

this activity, the familiar terminology of "premises," "conclusions," and "components of an argument" will occur.

²¹An "enthymematic premise" is defined for the purposes of this study as a statement taken for granted as well-known or accepted in the context of a discussion or argument, usually suppressed (not rendered explicit); "enthymematic" will be used to refer to premises of this kind. Enthymematic premises can range from logical truths or truths of identity to the commonplaces or proverbs held dear by a particular community or sub-community. One person's enthymematic premise may be another's hotly debated issue, and still another's patent falsehood. E.g., throughout much of the discussion in Jewish and Christian scripture, the existence of God seems to be taken enthymematically. For more discussion of this view of enthymematic premises as related to the logical tradition, see section VIII, below.

[enthymematic premise: "presidents are voted into that office"]."²² When a line is introduced illegitimately, by use of an illegitimate formal or informal argument move, the line may be criticized, as lines often are, as resulting from fallacy. E.g., if the line is presented as following from a formal rule, and that rule licenses any inconsistencies, i.e., fails to be a truth-preserving rule, the line is ruled out in so far as its introduction relies on a formal fallacy. If the line is presented in violation of an informal standard, i.e., is licensed by any of the "informal fallacies" it is ruled out in so far as its introduction rests on that procedure. For example, in the case of enthymematic introductions, it is illegitimate to

²²Here hearkening back to Aristotle's definition of the rhetorical syllogism in the Rhetoric [I. ii. 8 (1356b), Freese trans., p. 19].

Here, the enthymematic premise is introduced covertly by the move of speaking as if the only kind of presidential succession is via election. One of the great advantages of enthymematic premises is that they are not directly available for counter-attack and criticism. Given that folk wisdom tends to contain enthymematic maxims which, even if not mutually contradictory, are at tension, e.g., "a penny saved," as opposed to "nothing ventured," interesting results may be available to the unscrupulous as well as to the confused. Many enthymematic premises, for all that they are generally accepted, may be rejected in a particular context.

It may even be the case that part of what distinguishes the specialist or professional from the lay-person may be the differences between their respective stocks of enthymematic premises.

introduce or use as an enthymematic premise in part of a complex question the premise at issue, as when someone argues for psychological egoism along the lines of "Sure, he looked altruistic, but perhaps we should look at his motives. What was in it for him?"; it being assumed that all human behavior is a function of self-interest.²³ This would be one way of begging the question.²⁴

Any theory of argument making explicit use of a formal approach in its treatment needs to take into account the opposition of some contemporary scholarship along with its prevailing mood. Many contemporary analysts in the area of informal logic have decided that the use of classical formalist techniques in argument analysis is a mistake, that formal methods are not applicable to argument in ordinary language.

²³Like most enthymematic premises, this is plausible. Virtual plausibility is, after all, a significant criterion of enthymematic premise. Yet, for all that, this statement involves an interesting variety of ontological, philosophical, and psychological commitments (to the presence of inner states and uniformity of human motivation) aside from following from the thesis it is cited in support of (psychological egoism).

²⁴It seems that, at its crudest level, some cases of begging the question may be, despite the currently received view, examples of a formal fallacy describable along the following lines:

1. P only if P

Therefore P

Despite such objections, it is contended that the concept of argument I introduce here, though formalist, is useful for analysis of arguments in ordinary language (with "ordinary language" being understood to include language used by professionals at their work).

As indicated, this last point about the overlap between arguments amenable to formal analyses and arguments in ordinary language is controversial, in that writers primarily concerned with ordinary language argument (e.g., Peter Minkus,²⁵ Stephen Toulmin²⁶) as well as others more well known for their formal contributions (e.g., Yehoshua Bar-Hillel²⁷) have argued that the apparatus of symbolic logic (meaning the first order predicate calculus with quantification theory and identity) is not appropriate for the task of analyzing argument in ordinary language. A response to their challenge follows.

²⁵Peter Minkus, "Arguments that Aren't Arguments" in Informal Logic: The First International Symposium, edited by J. Anthony Blair and Ralph H. Johnson (Iverness, California: Edgepress, 1980), pp. 69-76.

²⁶Stephen Toulmin, The Uses of Argument (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1958).

²⁷Yehoshua Bar-Hillel, "Argumentation in Pragmatic Languages" in Proceedings of the Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities, IV 8 (Preprint) 1970. Translation of "Ti'unim bi-sefot pragmatiyot" read in Hebrew 3 June 1969.

III. The Anti-Formalist Challenge in Argument Theory:

Chaim Perelman and L. Olbrechts-Tyteca,²⁸ Stephen Toulmin,²⁹ Yehoshua Bar-Hillel,³⁰ and Michael Scriven³¹ are among those who argue that formal logic is not up to the task of testing arguments in natural languages. In this section, I will focus on explaining and attempting to meet the anti-formalist challenge as presented by Bar-Hillel and Scriven. I focus on Bar-Hillel and Scriven's versions of this challenge since, between them, they seem to capture the range and power of the anti-formalist position as well as what I take to be the underlying sentiment of the basic anti-formalist argument.

A. Bar-Hillel

Bar-Hillel argues that formal logic is not up to the task of argument analysis of arguments as they occur in natural pragmatic contexts, since there is no

²⁸The New Rhetoric.

²⁹Stephen Toulmin, The Uses of Argument (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1958).

³⁰Yehoshua Bar-Hillel, "Argumentation in Pragmatic Languages."

³¹Michael Scriven, Reasoning, (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1976); see pp. xiv-xvi.

formal procedure for capturing relevant pragmatic features in formal languages. Furthermore, Bar-Hillel points out, formal languages have thus far (with the possible exception of some hoped for³² changes in computer languages) been designed with the goal of ignoring pragmatics, in order to get at syntactic features.³³

In Bar-Hillel's opinion, workers in the area have either thrown up their hands at the difficulty of dealing formally with argument in pragmatic language, or they have verged on treating the problem frivolously, as if it were a simple matter to render ordinary language into symbols. He begins by addressing "a natural reaction" to the defeatism of the former in terms of "formal logic--whose professed aim is to put at our disposal general tools for dealing effectively with such a major constituent of human communication as our ability to test the validity of arguments." The response to this proposed solution, he points out, is a challenge concerning bridging the gap between the cup of ordinary discourse and the lip of formalized schemata:

³²by Bar-Hillel.

³³Yehoshua Bar-Hillel, "Argumentation.," pp. 163-164, also numbered (in the preprint) [13]-[14].

[F]ormal logic can be applied only after arguments have been reformulated in some *normalized* fashion. Responsible logicians have said this many times. . . . Aristotle himself, for instance, assumed that many, if not most, arguments can be forced into syllogistic form--unfortunately for him and for us, without giving much thought to the clarification of the processes by which this is to be achieved in practice

Bar-Hillel explains that the current view in formal logic and philosophy of science has it that this kind of procrustean rendering of ordinary discourse may be appropriate to mathematics, and possibly science. But, he suggests that application to other important subject matters has not produced such equanimity:

[W]ith regard to the applicability of the methods of formal logic to argumentations in natural languages that deal with philosophical, ethical, political, legal and thousands of other topics, there exists in these circles a strange ambivalence between despair and shallow (I was almost tempted to say 'frivolous') underestimation of the difficulties of such applications.³⁴

B. Scriven

Scriven presents his version of the anti-formalist argument in Reasoning, a book which has had a great deal of influence in the informal logic movement. He presents arguments based on psychological studies,

³⁴Yehoshua Bar-Hillel, "Argumentation.," p. 152, preprint p. [2].

common knowledge, as well as his own view of the translation problem.

He first argues that the view that careful thinking in formal disciplines will be generalized is an erroneous one, alluding to studies that indicate, "that so-called 'transfer of learning' or 'generalization' always turns out to be less than educators had previously supposed." He suggests that this kind of justification was used inadequately to justify Latin, mathematics, and science, claiming, "[T]he fact is that no significant transfer from the standard approaches to any of these subjects to the analysis of problems outside the subject matter they cover has ever (to my knowledge) been demonstrated, whereas the incredible *incompetence* of a brilliant mathematician in handling business affairs, of a physicist expounding on politics or psychology, has been too often authenticated to be treated as aberrant."

Later in the same passage, Scriven concludes that modern formal logic training is of little use to any but formal logicians. He even expresses a slight preference for classic syllogistic logic:

[O]ne has to view with great skepticism the very idea that formal logic is likely to help improve reasoning skill. What it improves is skill in doing formal logic. The syllogism

was probably nearer to reality (though not comprehensiveness) than the propositional calculus, but not near enough to make it useful in handling the average editorial or columnist today. It's not incidental that there are ferocious unresolved issues even within the theory of the syllogism and in interpreting the connectives of the propositional calculus.

But even granting that these issues of interpretation and the pedagogical problems were addressed, Scriven argues that the translation problem remains and is serious:

The usage of any calculus to handle problems that surface in reality (in natural languages) involves three steps. *Encoding* the original problem into its formalized representation; *computing* or *transforming* it, using the formalized version of the problem; and *decoding* that, i.e., translating it back into the original language or real-world terms. This is what we do when we use math to solve problems of making change or designing planes; and this is what we have to do in applying formal logic.³⁵

Scriven argues that the procedure appeals due to the formal rigor of the transformation rules within the formal system. But he sees the translation problem as a weak link in the chain which may keep us from

³⁵It is worth noting here that if we were to take Scriven's analogy strictly with respect to the issue at hand, the value of formal methods, we would have to conclude that mathematics, too, lacks in pragmatic utility in the contexts of ordinary reasoning about the world.

achieving anything with our calculations. His argument continues:

[T]he problem with formal logic is that the encoding step, particularly, is just about as debatable (in anything but trivial arguments where there's no need to use the calculus) as the assessment of the original argument. A similar argument shows why the attempt to make a Newtonian science out of psychology has been such a dismal failure. And it shows why computerization often fails to solve applied problems.

. . . a calculus is a diversion one can't afford; it is a combine harvester when we need a carving knife.³⁶

C. Response to the Anti-Formalist Challenge

Bar-Hillel and Scriven have a point. There is no general mechanical test for determining the validity of arguments in pragmatic languages (which include known natural languages), and this is a serious problem. There is no formal algorithm for translation of arguments in non-formal languages into formal languages. And arguments often are used in pragmatic languages such as ordinary English. After all, arguments are often used to persuade, and good arguments, at least, can be thought of as the tools of rational persuasion, or as just those arguments which ought to persuade. Of course, it would be a mistake to

³⁶This and the previous quotations from Scriven are taken from his Reasoning, pp. xiv-xvi.

identify argument with persuasion,³⁷ even rational persuasion. Though persuasion of an argument's conclusion seems to be a goal of users of argument in pragmatic language like our own arguments in political, philosophical, or ideological contexts, we do sometimes use arguments non-persuasively. For example, we may present arguments for analysis in a critical thinking course; we may try to construct a proof of some theorem P of which we are already persuaded in order to test the adequacy of some formal system. We may construct an argument for some theorem Q which we would never wish to accept in order to show the error in some set of assumptions, as when we try to show a formal calculus implies an inconsistency or an ethical system licenses injustice.

Yet, though their insights are important to any future argument theory, Bar-Hillel and Scriven may be getting carried away with a pessimism hinted at in Bar-Hillel's suggestion that logic is of no ordinary use, a suggestion expressed by his claim that the Stoics broke their promise when they claimed to offer a useful logic. Bar-Hillel reminds us that Epictetus the Stoic

³⁷To identify argument with its goal, just because we had identified its goal, would lead us into the bizarre position of identifying argument with all those enterprises the goal of which is to persuade (indoctrination, brainwashing, bludgeoning, etc.).

praised logic as useful. According to Bar-Hillel, when asked by one of his audience to "demonstrate its usefulness," Epictetus responded, "'This is the point. How could you, without such study, test whether my demonstration would be valid or not?'"

Bar-Hillel is not impressed with this response, and goes so far as to suggest that anyone who took Epictetus's logic course on the basis of his argument, would regret the tuition fee. Epictetus had shown a need for an applicable logical theory, not his own possession of such theory:

. . . Epictetus had shown them was only that there was a need for a theory that would enable one to test the validity of argument in natural languages. What he intimated on that occasion was that he himself was in a position to teach such a theory to whoever was ready to pay the fee.

Bar-Hillel continues by suggesting that Stoic logic, including as it does only truth-functions and syllogistic, is far "too weak to fulfill the announced aims of such a theory," and that this weakness would constitute the grounds for his audience's disappointment:

It is possible that at the end of the course they started cursing Epictetus, all philosophers, and philosophy and logic as well, but I have no doubt that they could not possibly have managed to give a clear formulation of what it was that aroused their

feeling of having been cheated. In this respect we are today in a much better position, but then we are also sufficiently polite not to express our dissatisfaction with the failures of the philosophers, the logicians and the linguists in such a coarse form.³⁸

Not only does the Stoic truth-functional logic fail to live up to the challenge of adequately treating arguments in pragmatic languages, Bar-Hillel claims, but modern logic, for all its power, fails to keep the same promise.³⁹

It is my suspicion that this pessimism stems from a certain characteristic of these versions of "the basic anti-formalist argument," or "the standard argument against formal evaluation of argument in ordinary language." Such argument is, I think, a reflection of our disappointment in the limits of formal analysis. Those who offer this argument note that formal methods are not *sufficient* for the analysis of arguments in ordinary language.⁴⁰ It is usually pointed out that formalization needs to take place

³⁸This and the previous quotations from Yehoshua Bar-Hillel are taken from his "Argumentation.," pp. 164-165; preprint pp. [14]-[15].

³⁹Yehoshua Bar-Hillel, "Argumentation.," p. 165, preprint p. [15].

⁴⁰This is also characteristic of the approach offered by Toulmin in The Uses of Argument and Chaim Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca in The New Rhetoric.

first, and that there is no reliable method of mechanical translation.⁴¹ They then point out that since formal methods do not specify how to solve the thorny problems of translation and enthymeme,⁴² formal methods are of little or no use for the evaluation of ordinary language arguments.⁴³

This is suspicious, for all its initial plausibility. A rethinking of the argument seems to show that the lack of the sufficiency of formal methods is being blurred into an identification with a claimed lack of utility. Nonetheless, the argument can be seen as showing something important by reminding us that, though formal methods are or may be useful in the analysis of ordinary language argument, formal methods

⁴¹Some are more open about the possibility of such translation, e.g., Bar-Hillel in "Argumentation," p. 164 [14]; others, like Scriven, seem more pessimistic.

⁴²E.g., when is a shrug a shrug, and when is it an epistemic operator? How do we determine what is going on when confronted with the task of evaluating an apparently invalid argument already containing explicit premises we deem ridiculous? Should we ascribe equally ridiculous enthymematic premises and then diagnose the argument as valid but unsound?

⁴³E.g., Scriven argues that the absence of an analysis of "assumption" renders formal logic relatively useless, since "almost every real argument involves assumptions," and his parenthetical remark that, "The enthymeme approach is not even moderately successful as a pragmatic device" (Reasoning, p. xvi).

are not sufficient.⁴⁴ I.e., we may need to consider the pragmatic dynamics of certain arguments in order to decide who is trying to show what to whom, which gestures suggest enthymematic premises, which constitute assent to premises, which constitute denials, what enthymematic premises and assumptions would be accepted by whom, . . . etc.⁴⁵ Criteria need to be developed in order to determine what explicit moves and what moves crafty and sly are being used to introduce considerations into the context of discussion. The utility of formal analysis of arguments as products can be combined with the examination of arguments as processes. When the issue of deductive validity has been determined in the negative, we will need to make sure the argument was indeed a deductive one before passing judgment. When the argument has been found to be deductively valid but still suspect, we can then concern ourselves with issues

⁴⁴There is, as a matter of interest, the parallel argument against the sufficiency of any method or technique that cannot apply itself or decide when to apply itself or requires the use of individual judgment at some pre-systematic level, e.g., at some time prior to the application.

⁴⁵For example, we are formalizing x's argument. We query x, "p?"; x responds by shaking x's head. We formalize '-p'; this is expected. But are we not also taking as enthymematic that a head-shaking routine in response to a query constitutes denial (not a purely logical denial, or the one who shook her head twice in response to a query would be taken as affirming it)?

of premise introduction with respect to soundness and truth. Thus, the formal analysis will play an important part in the examination and evaluation of arguments in ordinary language.

IV. Arguments and Argument Moves: Validity, Soundness and Truth

The familiar categories of argument and argument move criteria are validity, soundness, and truth. Validity is normally understood as deductive validity such that the initial lines of a valid formalized argument cannot be consistently affirmed along with the denial of some set of subsequent lines identified as its conclusion. This is sometimes explained in logic texts in terms of the tautologous nature of a conditional whose antecedent corresponds to the conjunction of initial lines identified as premises and whose consequent is identified with the conjunction of lines collectively identified as the conclusion.

Ascription of soundness occurs when the initial lines identified as premises in a valid argument are accepted as true by the one giving a diagnosis of sound consistent with this definition of validity.⁴⁶ The

⁴⁶What is important in this context is that the ascription of soundness in this strict sense requires the ascriber to assent to the premises. One can also discuss "soundness" in terms of the legitimate reasons for accepting the premises as true. In this sense,

analysis of truth usually follows a given author's ontological commitments and metaphysical predilections. This is not surprising, given the centrality of their works on logic to the oeuvre of many great philosophers and the manner in which their extra-logical metaphysics often dovetail with their logics.⁴⁷ In recent texts, truth is usually understood in a Tarskian sense in the more formal introductions to logic; in the more elementary texts, the notion is often left unexplained.

Validity is a formal or syntactic characteristic of arguments. Soundness is a mixed characteristic of arguments, syntactic in requiring formal validity, semantic in taking account of truth, usually understood as a property of statements.

Ascription of truth involves other criteria, some syntactic, some semantic, and some pragmatic. E.g., a sentence cannot be true unless it is consistent and well-formed; consistency with other sentences taken as true is a formal syntactic criterion of a semantic predicate with respect to the diagnosis of inter-

where soundness is less of a product success-word and more of a procedural or process success-word, an argument is said to be sound when it is valid and there are good reasons for believing the premises to be true, even if they should happen to be false.

⁴⁷E.g., Russell and Whitehead regarding Principia; the early Wittgenstein and the Tractatus; the logical treatises of Bradley, Aristotle, and Kant.

sentence consistency.⁴⁸ It is evident that in evaluations of sentences, criteria for truth of sentences include successful comparison (the formal syntactic element) with other sentences accepted by the evaluator as true (semantic element), and, in most defensible instances, epistemic criteria warranting advancing or accepting sentences as true. Such evidence can include proofs (on the formal end), testimony (on the less formal end), and sensory data as reported in testimony of others or as retrieved by memory. In so far as sentences are components of arguments, and argument moves means of introducing sentences, any questionable sentence may indicate a questionable argument move introducing it.⁴⁹

V. Fallacies Formal and Informal

Formal fallacies are normally ascribed to arguments which when formalized seem to reflect a non-

⁴⁸Of course, most of us take it for granted that "any set of true sentences must be consistent." For there is a logical guarantee of the falsity of any inconsistent conjunction of sentences. What is at issue in the use of inter-set consistency as a criterion is the reliance on some set of sentences as a touchstone for evaluating and rejecting some other set.

⁴⁹It is in this sense that the criteria of truth for sentences can function as evaluative criteria for argument moves. Any argument move which introduces (note that I am not referring to truth preserving deduction rules here) a falsehood is suspect.

truth preserving syntactic structure resulting in a formally ascertainable deductive failure. I.e., formal fallacies characterize invalid deductive arguments based on bad deductive rules.⁵⁰ "Affirming the consequent" and "denying the antecedent" are popular examples of this, since arguments evidencing these forms occur with some frequency in ordinary social and rhetorical experience and seem to persuade certain audiences:

"All great men retire into solitude at some point in their lives; I myself have just returned from seclusion . . . (therefore you can infer that I am a great man)."⁵¹

It is tempting when analyzing fallacies, especially for those of us who prefer formal analyses, to treat fallacies as classes of arguments, and to avoid the murky problems that tend to crop up in particular cases of these arguments, and their accompanying argument moves. After all, the formal analysis seems ideal for the analysis of linguistic products, and even more so for classes of such

⁵⁰How such rules come to be applied, and why they may seem to have some initial plausibility are issues to be discussed below in section IX, A.

⁵¹I once heard this argument offered by an art critic before an admiring crowd of young artists. That he might have meant it as a touch of humor escaped them (as was revealed by their questions and later discussion of his greatness).

products, conceived in terms of the concerns of the analyst. Yet, there are certain illegitimate argument moves that remind us that sometimes fallacy attribution is specifically criticism of a particular move, as when we point out, in response to what we take to be an illegitimate attempt at premise introduction, that someone has committed the fallacy of complex question.

In the analysis I provide, fallacies are certain kinds of argument move or arguments characterized by such moves. Fallacies according to this analysis are fallacies of validity, of soundness, of truth, and of truth criteria and statement introduction.⁵² In general, an argument is primarily fallacious when infected by a fallacy of validity, e.g., affirming the consequent. It is derivatively fallacious when infected by an illegitimate argument move concerning truth or truth criteria, e.g., "but, since he's a communist, we need not accept his statement." Furthermore, a sentence or set of sentences is proto-fallacious if it is illegitimate, i.e., of a kind to function in or set up a derivative fallacy, as in, "he who just happens to be a communist asserts P."⁵³

⁵²As one might expect, within these categories, sub-categories emerge.

⁵³No explicit claim of connection between being a communist and telling the truth is explicitly asserted. Tone, raising of eyebrows, and expressions such as

According to these distinctions, primary fallacies require arguments in the context of which they are fallacies. The standard notions of fallacy hold that there can be no fallacy that is not a fallacious argument. With the exception of proto-fallacy, I agree.

Proto-fallacies are usually line introduction moves (often in the context of argument) or data introduction moves in the context of information exchange (with the kind of information exchange being understood as a communication renderable into first order logic). Proto-fallacies are usually characterized by their over-reliance on principles of limited scope; i.e., proto-fallacy is most likely to occur when treating a limited rule of thumb as a universally applicable law of nature, or treating a prima facie principle as universally binding despite what emerges given the facts of a case and collisions with other prima facie principles. What characterizes these flaws is a lack of sufficient caution or hedging.⁵⁴

sneering, however, may easily help introduce the gist of such a claim. For convenience, this kind of behavior (which is often quite effective) will be called "refutation by sneer."

⁵⁴Stating something explicitly as a rule of thumb, explicitly presenting *ceteris paribus* clauses, and assertion of truths prima facie are just some of the ways in which we can hedge a generalization. Depending on the field of discourse, the hedge can refer to almost any kind of circumstance or procedure that might

An argument is formally fallacious when and only when a truth table or truth value analysis of its corresponding conditional allows for at least one non-tautologous interpretation.⁵⁵ It is here suggested that the distinction between formal and informal fallacies will parallel that between the primarily fallacious and proto-fallacies.

Given the power, beauty, and clarity of the great formal systems of the past 100 years or so, it is not surprising that scholars of the fallacies have tried to bring formal weapons to bear on the "informal fallacies" normally thought to depend on non-formal features of arguments such as the history and health, nature and behavior of the participants in the discussion (the fallacies *ad hominem*), the prejudices of their audience (*ad populum*, *ad misericordiam*), etc. With respect to circumstantial *ad hominem* some important work has been done, notably that of Walton,

interfere with the statement's truth. Some language communities, for example, tend to hedge important statements about the future (e.g., the Arabic *insha'allah*). For convenience, I will refer to the generalizations as rules of thumb, and the hedges as *ceteris paribus* clauses.

⁵⁵In the case of arguments rendered in the language of quantification, e.g., '(x)Fx only if (∃x)Fx' or more complex polyadic formulas for which there exist no general decision procedure, the procedure is supplemented by providing an interpretation of the relevant formula in a non-empty universe which satisfies the antecedent while falsifying the consequent.

attempting to combine deontic logic with rules involving act-descriptions in the attempt to make sense out of contradictions between person's actions and statements, and fallacious inferences based on such contradictions.⁵⁶

VI. Classifying Abusive *Ad Hominem* as a Fallacy as a Problem for a Theory of Abusive *Ad Hominem*

Many of the "fallacies ad"⁵⁷ do not lend themselves to organized treatment, formal or informal, because fallacy analysis in informal logic has held to Hamblin's dictum that for something to be a fallacy it needs to fulfill the condition of being a bad argument:

A fallacy is a fallacious argument. Someone who merely makes false statements, however absurd, is innocent of fallacy unless the statements constitute or express an argument.⁵⁸

Yet many fallacies of the abusive *ad hominem* type are not strictly speaking arguments at all; as Hamblin himself points out, they can be presented in such a way as to avoid the charge:

⁵⁶This is the basic task he undertakes in Arquer's Position.

⁵⁷The "fallacies of appeal"; e.g., *ad hominem*, *ad verecundiam*, *ad populum*, *ad baculum*, *ad misericordiam*," etc.

⁵⁸C. Hamblin, Fallacies, p. 224.

Consider the so-called *argumentum ad hominem*, in the sense of the modern books. Person A makes statement *S*: person B says 'it was C who told you that, and I happen to know that his mother-in-law is living in sin with a Russian': A objects, 'The falsity of *S* does not follow from any facts about the morals of C's mother-in-law; that is an '*argumentum ad hominem*'; B may reply 'I did not claim that it followed. I simply made a remark about incidentals of the statement's history. Draw what conclusion you like. If the cap fits . . .'. This would be disingenuous, but the point remains that B cannot be convicted of fallacy until he can have an *argument* pinned on him.⁵⁹

Often a speaker when indulging in what appears to be abusive *ad hominem* will claim to be merely speculating on the background of the opposition, or providing interesting information about their interests, mental health, or pathology.⁶⁰ This may be

⁵⁹Hamblin, *Fallacies*, pp. 224-25.

⁶⁰One way of introducing such *ad hominem* data is by pointing out that which one is too honorable to introduce into the argument. I suspect that it is possible to do this with the entire collection of "fallacies *ad*" through phrases such as, "a less honorable person would not hesitate to point out here that such and such applies." Consider, e.g., Socrates' discussion in the *Apology* concerning his children and the fact that he will not stoop to argument *ad misericordiam*--to an appeal to pity. Socrates first condemns the practice of appeals to pity made by producing children in court as well as tearful family and friends. He explains that, unlike many in his audience, he will not stoop to such behavior though he faces death, saying, "I on the contrary intend to do nothing of that sort, and that, although I am facing as it might appear, the utmost danger." Socrates then acknowledges that some of his juror audience might be angry with him for keeping his dignity at such a high risk when they may have sacrificed theirs for a lower

occur when one responds to an argument with a psychological diagnosis. Walton considers such a case, "The Powerless Theoretician," in the context of his own discussion of Hamblin's rule about fallacy and nailing down an argument.

Walton begins by pointing out that the subject of the argument was medical paternalism, and that it occurred in the journal Man and Medicine.⁶¹ The argument in question, "Who's in Charge Here?", is a commentary by a medical doctor, Nicholas P. Christy, on an article by a philosopher, Allen Buchanan. Buchanan

price. So he continues by addressing the possibility that some of them will express their anger in their votes:

If one of you is so disposed--I do not expect it, but there is the possibility--I think that I should be quite justified in saying to him, My dear sir, of course I have some relatives. To quote the very words of Homer, even I am not sprung 'from an oak or a from a rock,' but from human parents, and consequently I have relatives--yes, and sons too, gentlemen, three of them, one almost grown up and the other two only children--but all the same I am not going to produce them here and beseech you to acquit me.

Why do I not intend to do anything of this kind?

(Apology 34c-34e, quoted from Hugh Tredennick's translation in Edith Hamilton and Huntington Cairns (editors), The Complete Dialogues of Plato Including the Letters (Princeton: Princeton University Press, Bollingen Series LXXI, 1963, 1973), p. 20.)

⁶¹Walton cites vol. 5, no. 3 (1980) 203-206.

attacked paternalistic decision-making by physicians.

Christy begins by criticizing Buchanan's arguments, but

towards the end of his article, he takes a different, more personal approach and ventures to speculate on what he calls the "roots" of Buchanan's reasoning. In this section, Dr. Christy poses a number of questions and suggests that Professor Buchanan may be arguing from a position of powerlessness as a university professor of philosophy. We are asked to consider, therefore, whether Professor Buchanan's argument might stem from an unconscious wish to strip physicians--a very powerful class of professionals--of their paternalistic authority.

According to Walton, Christy then creates a picture of a "kind of philosophical Dr. Strangelove, obsessed by a fantasy of usurping the heady power of clinical decision making--the thwarted theoretician disassociating the doctor from his white lab coat, donning it, and then marching boldly into the medical wards to make decisions." Walton evaluates the image as "absurd," but points out:

It is funny enough, yet contains enough of a kernel of cunning appeal to make it a devastating ad hominem. Professor Buchanan's motives are so subtly and thoroughly undermined that his credibility, in the minds of most readers, is likely to be utterly destroyed. . . .

Walton concludes his summary of Christy's attack as follows:

Dr. Christy goes on to add that this fantasy reminds him of the astronomer in Samuel Johnson's Rasselas who, after years of observing the planets, eventually came to believe that he controlled their movements. He then adds that any resemblance between these fantasies and the ones he attributes to Professor Buchanan are "purely coincidental."⁶²

It is difficult to carry through an ascription of fallacy here⁶³ when one is limited to arguments and does not include the steps taken to introduce statements as premises implicitly or explicitly, i.e., argument moves, as part of the realm of fallacy. This is poignant when the innuendo of the argument move is explicitly denied by the proponents of a position as being part of the argument.⁶⁴ Yet, since such moves do occur, are often persuasive, and often illegitimate as well, it seems to be helpful to broaden the concept of informal fallacy to include that of introduction of premises at more subtle levels in any of the many

⁶²Douglas N. Walton, Arguer's Position, pp. 205-207.

⁶³Walton follows Hamblin in referring to carrying through such an ascription as "nailing down the fallacy."

⁶⁴Other means of altering considerations in an argument context include *obscuring* premises. Paradigm cases of this involve the twisted euphemisms of double-speak made famous by Orwell. Convoluting syntax can also serve the purpose of premise obfuscation, e.g., assertions from the USSR stated in the form of denial of their contradictories along the lines of, "it is not true that we have not"

rhetorical situations characterized by enthymeme.⁶⁵
 This is why I have developed the concept of "argument move" to facilitate the analysis, diagnostic classification, and understanding of fallacies. According to this view of fallacy, persuasive or argumentative utterance can be fallacious at the level of argument (as in the formal fallacies) or at the level of argument move where attempts are made to introduce premises to the arena of argumentation through means which may initially appear to offer some plausibility (as in the "refutation by sneer" discussed above, or the fallacy of composition), though they may, in the end, be unconvincing and illegitimate.

VII. Four Adequacy Criteria for a Theory of Abusive Ad Hominem Fallacy

Given the above discussion, for a theory of abusive *ad hominem* fallacy to be adequate it would seem to need to fulfill at least four conditions.

- (1) A theory of abusive *ad hominem* needs to make enough sense of the concept of "fallacy" to explain why abusive *ad hominem* is fallacious. I.e.,

⁶⁵i.e., marked by the assumption of assumptions not necessarily made explicit in the argument situation itself.

- a) what we mean by calling it a fallacy
- b) and what features make it fallacious.

A theory of abusive *ad hominem* fallacy needs to make sense of abusive *ad hominem* being a fallacy even in the absence of an explicit argument. Otherwise, not only will there be a practical problem with "nailing the fallacy" but a theoretical one as well, given that there are paradigm cases of abusive *ad hominem* that are not explicitly stated at the level of argument and, as matter of fact, seem to make sense only at the level of argument move, the level of premise introduction.

To do this, a theory of abusive *ad hominem* needs to explain why abusive *ad hominem* is a fallacy, given the view of fallacy spelled out in (1a). It will be helpful if the theory helps us understand how abusive *ad hominem* could be persuasive given its fallaciousness, i.e., makes sense of the rhetorical use and effectiveness of *ad hominem*. An adequate treatment of these concerns should shed light on the general issue of putatively "valid fallacies" as well as the particular issue involved in the claim that there are valid *ad hominem* arguments.

Textbook examples of abusive *ad hominem*, like the example of the Russian⁶⁶ provided by Hamblin, tend to

⁶⁶where, "B says 'it was C who told you that, and I happen to know that his mother-in-law is living in

be fairly unconvincing. Yet, rhetorical use of *ad hominem* technique is often quite effective and usually needs to be addressed in the course of the debate in which it occurs.⁶⁷ And, as specialists in the area of informal logic have pointed out,⁶⁸ sometimes there are

sin with a Russian'," and, A objected, "'The falsity of S does not follow from any facts about the morals of C's mother-in-law; that is an '*argumentum ad hominem*'." See Hamblin's Fallacies, pp. 224-25.

⁶⁷As Walton has it, ". . . ad hominem is such an aggressive attack that [it] virtually forces its victim to reply to it and thus change the subject, or risk sacrificing credibility entirely" (Arquer's Position, p. 50.)

In another (and related) connection Wellman argues that a "speaker's competence is relevant to his claim to speak the truth" and that responding to challenges to competence may be required to carry out the task of justification. Wellman summarizes his argument as follows:

The incompetence of a speaker is indirect evidence of the falsity of his statements because incompetent speakers are less likely to speak the truth than other speakers. Although an incompetent speaker can claim truth for his statement, he is not in a position fully to defend his claim. And the opinion of an incompetent speaker cannot represent itself as the verdict of the process of criticism. For these three reasons one who makes an ethical statement may find that he must meet a challenge to his competence as an ethical judge in order to justify his ethical statements. (Challenge and Response., p. 251.)

⁶⁸See, for example, Trudy Govier's "Worries about *Tu Quoque* as a Fallacy," where, through enthymematic expansions, she provides what she calls "a subtle and more plausible version" of a circumstantial *ad hominem* challenge. Informal Logic Newsletter, 3, no. 3, 2-4.

legitimate appeals to authority and legitimate criticisms of sources. We need to develop criteria for distinguishing legitimate from illegitimate appeals and appropriate from inappropriate attacks on sources if we are to carry through a criticism or defense of a position with respect to allegations of abusive *ad hominem*. Some arguments involve the relationship between people and the reliability of their testimony without being fallacious *ad hominem*.

(2) A theory of abusive *ad hominem* needs to make sense of the relationship between different kinds of *ad hominem*.

In distinguishing, for example, circumstantial from abusive *ad hominem*, the theory would ideally provide some criteria for classifying other candidates as well. These might include Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca's *ad personam*, and the kind of "constructive *ad hominem*" that seems to characterize, e.g., many arguments on the issue of "why be moral?"⁶⁹

⁶⁹I.e., the kind of argument in which one is being told that one would be a better or more beautiful person for accepting a certain thesis. Probably the classic example of such argument is in the Meno (86b). There Socrates discusses his argument for the doctrine of recollection as shown by the uneducated slave's correct responses to Socratic interrogation concerning the size of a side of a square of area $2n$ given the size of side of a square of area n . Plato portrays Socrates as stating, "I shouldn't like to take my oath on the whole story, but one thing I am ready to fight for as long as I can, in word and in act--that is, that

It would be helpful for a theory of abusive *ad hominem* to be consonant with the on-going work on circumstantial *ad hominem*. Even if it is not possible to reduce either of the two kinds of *ad hominem* to the other, it would be a weakness in a theory of any kind of *ad hominem* were it not to shed further light on the as yet developing general theory of all kinds of *ad hominem*.⁷⁰

(3) A theory of abusive *ad hominem* needs to acknowledge and to attempt to meet the difficulties in informal logical analyses due to the ubiquity of enthymeme, the paucity of univocity, and the occasional presence of duplicity.

Since a theory of abusive *ad hominem* involves arguments that may be deliberately kept covert, as in the case of the "Powerless Theoretician" discussed above, and since *ad hominem* arguments of this type might be offered by persons who are deliberately using a fallacy to persuade, an adequate analysis at the theoretical level would ideally allow for and be

we shall be better, braver, and more active men if we believe it right to look for what we don't know than if we believe there is no point in looking because what we don't know we can never discover." (W. K. C. Guthrie's translation in Hamilton and Cairns, Complete Dialogues of Plato., p. 371.)

⁷⁰This would not be a fatal weakness, just a lack in desired power.

coherent with pragmatic analyses at the level of daily debate.

(4) A theory of abusive *ad hominem* needs to comply with the requirements of explicational adequacy.

A theory of abusive *ad hominem* needs to explain why clear cases of abusive *ad hominem* are clear cases, needs to legislate hard cases, and should abide by as many of our intuitions as consistency and the task permit.

This requirement (4) is particularly important if we wish to use an explication of *ad hominem* diagnostically, as in the present work, where the issue to be determined is whether or not a particular kind of psychological criticism of argument from religious experience is abusive *ad hominem*, and if so, is as such fallacious.

It does seem obvious that not every argument that mentions a relationship between the qualifications and background of a party to the argument and a statement to be considered as premise (premise candidate) is abusive *ad hominem*, particularly if we regard abusive *ad hominem* as a fallacy or flaw in introducing or reasoning about or from premises. Consider, for example, the following candidates for diagnosis as

abusive *ad hominem* arguments. First, (i) the case of the "blind eyewitness":

1. You tell us you saw him commit the crime;
2. You had been blind 12 years at the time of the crime;
3. Blind people cannot see.
4. Therefore you did not see him commit the crime.
5. Therefore your claim is not to be admitted as a premise.

Or the more involved case (ii) of the "crooked source":

1. You tell us 'p'
2. Your source for 'p' is x who is known to lie about 'p'
3. We do not accept premises based on the testimony of known liars as true.
3. Therefore we do not accept your claim as a premise.

Or (iii) the "inconsistent witness"

1. You testify 'p' here;
2. You claimed 'not-p' in your deposition;
3. We do not accept self-contradictory testimony;
4. Therefore we do not accept your testimony as true.

Or (iv) the case of the "liar for sale":

1. You tell us 'p' which is worth n to you if we accept your claim;
2. but, you are known to lie for y and $y < n$;
3. we do not accept the testimony of those who sell it and change it for a price.
4. therefore we do not accept your claim of 'p' as true, given what you stand to gain.

What seems to characterize the above arguments, and some combinations thereof,⁷¹ is the apparent correctness, relevance, and merit of the attacks on the premises despite the occurrence of terms that have to do with the character and qualifications of those asserting the premises or their sources.

On the other hand there are candidates for the attribution of fallacious abusive *ad hominem* such as:

(v) "the republican":

1. You claim that the President is healthy enough to serve, but you are a republican;
2. Therefore your claim is suspect.

and its neighbor (vi) "Your opinion":

⁷¹e.g., a combination of (iv) and (ii) in which the source is a "liar for sale."

1. You say some knowledge of Plato should be required for the Ph.D. in philosophy, but that's your opinion,

2. Therefore your claim is suspect.

(v) and (vi) seem more suspicious, despite the popular use and apparent effectiveness of them and their analogues. Cruder, more paradigmatically fallacious instances can be constructed along the lines of (v) and (vi) by implicitly⁷² suggesting a change in the words "is suspect" to "is false" along the lines of (vii) to hint at an enthymematic conclusion:

1. You say some knowledge of Plato should be required for the Ph.D. in philosophy, but that's your opinion,

(enthymematic premise): Therefore your claim is of no value as a premise.

An explication of abusive *ad hominem* should allow us to diagnose most clear cases of *ad hominem* without sacrificing our more cherished intuitions. It should be of some aid in resolving less clear cases, e.g., the use of psychological criticism of the unconscious motives of philosophers as in the case of the "powerless theoretician." It should apply to the

⁷²I.e., by saying 'your' in a deprecating tone of voice while sneering and attempting to stifle a laugh.

analysis of psychological criticism of argument from religious experience.

VIII. Shibboleth⁷³ as Paradigm of Informal Fallacy to be Applied to Abusive Ad Hominem

There is a theory of fallacy, that after criticism, when properly extended and corrected, and rethought in terms of the analysis of argument into the two levels of argument and argument move, approaches adequacy with respect to the above four criteria. This theory finds its earlier (pre-extended) expression in the work of Nicolas Capaldi.

In his Art of Deception, Capaldi opts for an enthymematic approach to the analysis of fallacious arguments. He claims that fallacious arguments are usually not invalid but rather unsound. He recommends analyzing informal arguments by attempting to render them formal, i.e., normalizing them for the purposes of his analyses as syllogisms,⁷⁴ and then filling them out

⁷³The term "shibboleth" is taken because it captures the slogan-like character of many enthymematic premises, as well as the fact that enthymematic premises often vary with communities to such an extent that it might be possible to identify members of a community by means of enthymemes. (See Judges 12:5-6.).

⁷⁴Nicholas Capaldi, The Art of Deception, second edition (Buffalo, New York: Prometheus Books, 1979), pp. 174-175, claims that "all arguments can be reconstructed as syllogisms," and that he will be

by citing enthymematic premises⁷⁵ in the form of universal generalizations. For example, he argues that arguments evidencing the part-whole version of the fallacy of composition should be reformulated as including a premise stating that the properties of the parts are the properties of the whole.⁷⁶ Concerning the inference from the lightness of a locomotive's parts to the lightness of the locomotive he reconstructs the argumentative situation as follows:

concerned with categorical syllogisms in his formal analysis of arguments.

⁷⁵I have used the term 'enthymematic premises' to refer to unstated or suppressed premises. It should be noted that since Aristotle, the concept of enthymeme has been applied to arguments with suppressed premises; these premises themselves have been called "platitudes," "known facts," (e.g. Quine, Methods of Logic, fourth edition (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1982), pp. 202, 199) and "implicit generalizations," (Capaldi, p. 183). In order to stress their role in argument and argument moves, I have chosen to call them "enthymematic premises." In desiring to discuss the unstated explicitly, I continue to refer to these premises as enthymematic premises when they are made explicit, and to describe sentences as enthymematic in a given context when they are of the kind to function as enthymematic premises in that context. Since fallacious arguments, according to Capaldi (and later according to my own account), involve enthymematic premises in this sense, it seems useful to refer to such arguments as enthymematic. Since the domain of enthymematic arguments in this sense seems to be identical to that of the Aristotelian, I hope that no untoward confusion will result.

⁷⁶Nicholas Capaldi, The Art of Deception, pp. 183-184.

[M]ost, if not all, of the traditional fallacies of informal logic may be viewed as valid argument but with an unacceptable major premise, and therefore as unsound arguments. For example, the fallacy of composition is the fallacy of believing⁷⁷ that what is true of all the parts is true of the whole:

All that is true of the parts is true of the whole.

All of the parts of a locomotive are light.

Therefore a (whole) locomotive is light. Since the argument is valid but the conclusion false (or unacceptable), one of the premises must be false (or unacceptable).⁷⁸

According to such an approach, a fallacious argument move may reflect a poor and possibly dishonest generalization, initially concealed at the level of enthymeme.

IX. A Theory of Abusive Ad Hominem:

According to this kind of analysis, *ad hominem* at the level of argument would then be arguments characterized by enthymematic premises concerning the relationship between a person and a statement. This

⁷⁷Since Capaldi explicitly claims that the work in which this definition appears is written along the lines of a Machiavellian manual for those who wish to perpetuate fallacies (Art of Deception, pp. 13-14), I think it fair to infer that his phrase, "fallacy of believing" should here be taken as "fallacy of perpetuating the belief," or of "promulgating a questionable enthymematic premise."

⁷⁸Capaldi, pp. 184-85 (emphasis his). He also provides parallel examples for arguments *ad populum* and *ad baculum*.

process is straightforward in the sense that it often goes without saying, as when we suggest an argument by pointing out, "Brown claims to be seriously running for President, but she's Jewish."⁷⁹

Two examples of *ad hominem* rules of thumb follow:

1) The observations of the insane are not suitable for scientific purposes (abusive *ad hominem*);

2) We need not take seriously claims of obligation flagrantly violated by their proponents (circumstantial *ad hominem*);⁸⁰

⁷⁹At the level of argument move such as when information is introduced into the background of an argument along with the explicit claim that this information is not part of an argument, *ad hominem* fallacy still would refer to the introduction of information along with the implicit rule of thumb, though it may be explicitly denied.

Of course, in the general case, the introduction of an enthymematic premise can get complicated, often in just those cases where controversy emerges. Consider the cigarette manufacturers who spend a great deal of money telling teenagers not to smoke because smoking is an adult activity. The effectiveness of the tobacco move involves the explicit giving and the implicit taking (based on the typical teenager's desire to participate in adult activities).

Although Capaldi does not take account of explicit denials, to account for them seems consistent with the spirit of his analysis. Again, it is worth noting that such explicit denial does not keep the enthymematic consideration from having strategic effect, just as a formal instruction to strike inflammatory testimony from the record does not guarantee that the jury will not be influenced by it.

⁸⁰See Trudy Govier's "Worries about *Tu Quoque* as a Fallacy," (Informal Logic Newsletter, 3 (1981), no. 3, 2-4) where she presents the following example of what

It should be immediately noted that, as rules of thumb, these two examples have utility. The former is a variant of one of the basic positions involved in the explication of "observation sentences" in Quine's epistemology;⁸¹ the latter is often used properly in criticizing advocates' claims on the basis of their good behavior being inconsistent with their theses-- i.e., if their behavior is good, their claims are not.⁸²

I will now point out what I think is amiss in Capaldi's treatment of fallacies as it stands. I will then argue that Capaldi's view, when properly explained

she takes to be a plausible circumstantial *ad hominem* criticism:

1. A advocates that P be followed.
2. A does not himself follow P.
3. A does not take P seriously.
4. Others need not take A's advocacy of P seriously.
5. Whatever reason people may have for following P, it does not presently come from A. (P.3)

⁸¹W. Quine, "Epistemology Naturalized," in Ontological Relativity and Other Essays (New York: Columbia University Press, 1969), p. 88.

⁸²We find this sometimes when people are criticizing positions on the basis that their interlocutors do not live according to them, in combination with the interlocutors' refusal to see themselves as evil in their own eyes. "Surely," it is argued, "you are a good person, but you don't follow your theory of what it is to be a good person. Therefore, given this counter-example of your own behavior, your theory is lacking."

and extended, is adequate to the task of providing an analysis of many informal fallacies including abusive *ad hominem*.

A. Critique of Capaldi's View of Fallacy as Bad Enthymematic Premise in a Syllogism:

There are two aspects of Capaldi's interpretation that make it problematic. The first concerns problems of enthymematic premise attribution given the collision of principles of charity with an arguer's manifest foolishness or duplicity, which makes it difficult to render an argument analysis which is both fair and accurate. The second problematic aspect concerns Capaldi's assertion of the adequacy of a syllogistic theory of fallacy given the existence of more powerful formal systems.

1. Critical Expansion of Capaldi's Enthymematic View

Enthymematic generalizations of the type Capaldi ascribes to fallacious arguments can often plausibly be seen as being behind the introduction of illegitimate⁸³

⁸³Note that the illegitimacy of an argument move refers to its ancestry as well as to its nature, i.e., to the process introducing the move, or to the move introduced. Consider grading a formal logic exam. The student may make an error and write a line which cannot be deduced from the initial lines, and which, it turns out, is truth functionally inconsistent. If the student derived the line with the rule "alternation simplification" ("from 'p v q' infer 'p'"), then not

argument moves. This perspective makes sense of both the initial plausibility and terminal flaws that lead us to categorize arguments as informal fallacies.⁸⁴ As we have seen, Capaldi presents a theory of informal fallacy as a being a flaw in soundness due to bad enthymematic universal generalization. This makes sense when combined with my view where the enthymematic premise is seen as a rule of thumb gone wrong (either a bad rule, or overextended). It allows us to find fallacies both at the level of move (particularly useful in arguments the course of which has allowed the enthymematic assumptions to remain implicit) and at the level of argument. The proto-fallacious argument move can be interpreted as the application licensed by the rule of thumb. If we want to interpret the argument, we can resort to a full formalization including what is taken as the licensing enthymematic premise.⁸⁵

only is the line illegitimate by nature (false since inconsistent), but it is illegitimate by ancestry, since it came from its ancestors by a logically unnatural act.

⁸⁴Criterion (1).

⁸⁵The step to interpreting the argument as an unsound deduction is worrisome, involving as it does the problematic attribution of enthymematic premises to arguers or arguments.

One might respond to such an enthymematic attribution by responding that one knows full well that one is applying a rule of thumb not true in all cases.

Let's consider a fragment of an argument between two graduate students concerning the propriety of comprehensive exams:

T, who has yet to pass the comprehensive exams in the graduate department of rhetoric, suggests that the comprehensives be eliminated in favor of a less stressful requirement, course distribution, in the interests of preserving the health and psychological well-being of the graduate students. Q, on the other hand, has come to the study of rhetoric from a demanding law program and excels at taking tests. As a matter of record, T's test scores have been shockingly lower than the level indicated by the rest of T's written work. They argue as follows:

The reply might continue by claiming that one is not committed to the false universal generalization but that the rule justifies the decision in the case at hand. This will be discussed below, in terms of the issue of the "*ceteris paribus* clause."

Such arguments are not uncommon in ethics, for example. One might argue that "John ought to do so and so since he promised to" without being committed to the position that one ought always keep one's promises. Depending on one's penchant in analysis one can invoke supports for such non-universalization along the lines of non-deductive accounts of validity including probabilistic theories, good reasons theories along the lines of (for instance) Toulmin's approach in The Uses of Argument and elsewhere, or the theory of conductive argument argued for in Wellman's Challenge and Response: Justification in Ethics or the theory of prima facie obligation offered by W. D. Ross in "What Makes Right Acts Right?", Chapter II of his The Right and the Good (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1930), pp. 16-47.

T: The comprehensives constitute an excessive pressure keeping students like myself from making progress through the program. A course requirement would serve the purposes of giving over-all familiarity with the field, without producing so much stress for the graduate student.

Q: Only a poor student would feel such stress. You, of course, are against the comps since they would exclude poor students like yourself from the program. Your mistaken perceptions of self-interest are leading you to state an inaccurate view. Don't you think you would be happier in a less demanding field?

Without going into a full formalization, we can see that Q is relying on the plausibility of the claim that a poor student's views on pedagogical stress are not to be taken as true on the basis of that student's say-so. The enthymematic premise seems reasonable enough in itself. Here, of course, it may be being over-extended due to factors which may not be as obvious to Q (who is taking the validity of the exams for granted), whose assessment of T's quality as a student may have been determined by the sort of exam at

issue; the rule may be being applied in an exceptional circumstance.⁸⁶

Abusive *ad hominem* arguments, according to this view, would be arguments including moves licensed by abusive *ad hominem* enthymematic premises⁸⁷ along the lines of, "all statements introduced by suspect persons (hypocrites, insane people, persons with serious moral or epistemological deficits) are sufficiently suspect to disallow them from consideration in reasoning; they are, as it were, to be struck from the record." This is an enthymematic premise in so far as it is generally accepted without needing to be stated,⁸⁸ and can be seen as licensing, once included in a premise set, many other premises and arguments involving similar premises. E.g., "He is crazy so I didn't believe you were here on his say-so"; or "Observation sentences

⁸⁶A more sustained example of this kind of analysis will occur when we apply it to psychological criticism of argument from religious experience in Chapter Five.

⁸⁷To eliminate the appearance of circularity here, read "enthymematic premises relating persons in a negative way to the acceptability of their utterances" for "abusive *ad hominem* enthymematic premises."

⁸⁸Since the most useful enthymematic premises, in terms of illegitimate persuasion, are often persuasive only when unstated, it will often be the case that the difference between convincing and unconvincing examples of the same fallacy will be a function of the light shed on their assumptions.

suitable for data in a science need to have probative value so we discount the statements of the insane."

My expansion of Capaldi's view in terms of "rules of thumb" explains why abusive *ad hominem* is fallacious (licensed by an abusive *ad hominem* enthymematic premise) and why it is plausible, i.e., why someone could commit the fallacy and get away with it:⁸⁹ Abusive *ad hominem* is often persuasive since it is based on a generally reliable rule of thumb. Though Capaldi fails to point out this rule of thumb aspect of

⁸⁹One of the difficulties noted by many informal logicians concerning fallacy theory is that many of the fallacies as presented in the literature seem to be totally unpersuasive. This is usually considered a problem, since the ordinary view of fallacies is that they are characteristic of arguments which should not be, but often are, persuasive.

It is interesting that so many examples of the fallacies, going back to the standard representations of Plato's Euthydemus and Aristotle's Topics and Refutations, seem to be more convincing as examples of jokes than as samples of the kind of counterfeit reasoning capable of passing as good currency in the marketplace of ideas. It would seem that these sophisms were given with deliberate humor as examples due to ease in memorization, or with a low estimate of the critical abilities of the auditors of argument, or as parodies of formal reasoning offered for some other purpose, possibly to show the virtuosity of one's own sophistical skill.

It is the general view, however, that fallacy detection and analysis is and (has traditionally been) taught as part of critical thinking with a goal of helping critics make better evaluations of the material presented to them in order to avoid being "conned" or illegitimately persuaded. Thus, it is a strength in a fallacy theory if it can explain why a fallacy is plausible, though wrong.

enthymematic premises and is willing to ascribe patently false universal generalizations to arguments, he nonetheless has made a useful suggestion in asking us to seek out enthymematic assumptions in suspect arguments.

One might object that this somehow violates the principle of charity, that we are ascribing the promulgation of false generalizations to arguers in order to make sense of the fallaciousness of their reasoning. Wouldn't it be more fair to ascribe narrower generalizations to their arguments which are not being mis-applied? Certainly. Yet, given the view of fallacy as a defect in soundness which may result from deliberate deception or genuine ignorance or carelessness, we are well-advised to be able to detect the deception when it occurs. When one, for example, argues that the church should support a particular candidate since its members do (or vice-versa), one may really be mis-identifying the church with some of its parts on the basis of a composition (or division) type of assumption which is being misapplied.

The gap between Capaldi's position and a more adequate analysis is twofold. One weakness⁹⁰ is that

⁹⁰I am postponing consideration of the second weakness, formal limitations of syllogistic, until the next section.

patently false enthymematic premises are ascribed in order to save the validity of fallacious arguments and to criticize them at the level of soundness. Capaldi, it would seem, in order to present a more elegant and generally useful analysis of arguments as products without the clutter of possible defenses in the argument process itself, has not opted to emphasize the plausibility that many enthymematic premises have when understood as rules of thumb.

In general, it seems, we accept rules of thumb since they work, and realize, after reflection, that they are rules of thumb, and not invariable laws of nature, since we are aware of cases where they fail.

Capaldi's account of fallacy can be amended to state that fallacious reasoning occurs when a rule of thumb is taken (usually implicitly and initially unavailable for criticism) as a true universal generalization to license an argument move. We can further point out that the over-extended rule of thumb has enough plausibility, while unexamined, to make the move persuasive. At this point, the fallacy related to that rule of thumb has occurred. However, many rules of thumb, for example many of those concerning relations, do not lend themselves to the syllogistic reconstructions Capaldi advocates.

2. Critical Expansion of Capaldi's Syllogistic Interpretation

The second problem with Capaldi's view involves the power of the formal system he invokes, though syllogistic has both convenience and tradition behind it. Although syllogistic has been around long enough to influence the daily argumentative practice from which it derived⁹¹ and thus directly applies to much ordinary argument, there is a large class of arguments that cannot be adequately dealt with in terms of syllogistic reasoning.⁹² For many of these arguments there now exist formal methods (i.e., the propositional calculus and polyadic quantification theory with identity). There are, for example, arguments that require the formalization of relative terms in order to prove validity as in Jungius' circles (viii):

1. All circles are figures;

⁹¹I am here following Nelson Goodman's reconstruction of the evolution of deductive logic offered in his "The New Riddle of Induction" in Fact, Fiction, and Forecast 3rd ed. (Cambridge: Hackett, 1979).

⁹²It is, admittedly, anachronistic to include a discussion of the inadequacies of syllogistic as a formal method in a philosophy dissertation written in the 1980's, given the revolution in logic which took place a century ago. Nonetheless, informal logic is still an inchoate field; and Aristotle's work is still taken by some as definitive. Capaldi seems to be a case in point.

2. Therefore all who draw circles draw figures.⁹³

In order to account for enthymematic arguments along the lines of the above, e.g., "since you bribed the President, you bribed an official," it would be useful to extend Capaldi's analysis to relational arguments by extending the formal apparatus underlying this method of analysis to include that which modern logic has to offer.⁹⁴ Furthermore, there are all those cases of arguments whose formal interpretation and decidability lie outside syllogistic. Many of these are addressable with the propositional calculus, most of the rules of which enjoy almost the same stature and tenure as the canons concerning syllogistic.⁹⁵ If we stop at the level of syllogistic,

⁹³W. V. Quine, Methods of Logic, 3d edition, (New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, Inc., 1972) p. 138.

⁹⁴There is, of course, a way to deal with such situations in an ad hoc fashion which neglects certain syntactic features, e.g., for the enthymematic "since you drew a circle you drew a figure," one can provide as an enthymematic premise, "all who draw circles, draw figures" instead of "all circles are figures." Jungius' example as it stands is more challenging to the provider of enthymematic premises. But even if the challenge is met, the point remains that with modern machinery there is no need for an enthymeme at all in Jungius' case. And even the case brought up in this footnote would require the more limited enthymematic premise which was Jungius' premise.

⁹⁵These rules, including the truth-functional analysis of the conditional, seem to date back to the Stoics.

there are many arguments we can only begin to formalize. Some of these are arguments whose patent validity seems to stare us in the face, though we cannot explain them with any rigor in the absence of polyadic quantification theory. If we stop at syllogistic plus truth functions, then there is a sense in which we can formalize any argument whatsoever,⁹⁶ but many of these same patently valid arguments, as well as others more subtle, will evade truth functional or syllogistic analysis.

Capaldi's analysis of fallacy in terms of enthymeme needs to be expanded in theory to account for the pragmatic difference between enthymematic premises stated and unstated, to account for the plausibility of some fallacies before analysis. Capaldi's analysis of fallacy needs to be extended in terms of formal methods to increase its power, though adequate in many ordinary cases, given the above mentioned influence of the theory of the syllogism. But, even granting these deficiencies, Capaldi's view on fallacy is a useful subset or special case of the more general fallacy theory that it suggests and which is developed here.

⁹⁶by rendering the conjunction of the premises as 'p' and the conclusion as 'q'.

X. General Fallacy Theory Stated, Criticized and Applied to Abusive Ad Hominem:

Fallacies are of two kinds, formal and informal. Fallacies occur at two levels, the level of argument and the level of argument move. Formal fallacies occur at the level of argument, informal fallacies can occur either at the level of argument if they concern a bad rule of inference⁹⁷ or at the level of argument move when they are licensed by an initially or covertly plausible enthymematic premise.⁹⁸ When an informal fallacy is licensed by such an enthymematic premise, the argument can be analyzed, using the powerful tools of modern formal logic such as polyadic quantification and identity, as valid but not sound, and the fallacy understood as a proto-fallacy.⁹⁹

The expanded version of this analysis makes good sense given the enthymematic character of most rhetorical arguments presented before particular

⁹⁷E.g., a crude *ad baculum*: Since I have the hostages, the premises about my country imply that you should help us with large sums of money and arms.

⁹⁸The lines between kinds of fallacy blur when we consider cases where it is the bad rule of inference itself which seems to be the initially plausible enthymematic premise.

⁹⁹This nomenclature allows us, if we wish, to retain the word "fallacy" per se for bad arguments in accord with the tradition, as well as to distinguish fallacies as to kind.

audiences, as well as in arguments that take the form of debates. Furthermore, this kind of analysis is coherent with insights concerning informal argument analysis and the nature of philosophical investigation since the time of Plato and Aristotle.

The theory of covertly plausible enthymematic premise accords with Aristotle's treatment of rhetorical argument as enthymematic. It makes sense out of the method of Socratic dialectic in so far as that method was used to get interlocutors to derive theses contradictory with their personal stocks of received wisdom. It helps explain why rhetorical (by definition enthymematic) arguments vary as to persuasive effect with audiences (since enthymematic premise stock varies from audience to audience). It makes sense of insights about dialectical and informal argument that turn on the relations between persons and their statements. It explains why it is often so important to make implicit commitments explicit in an argumentative or dialectical context, rendering arguer's "commitment stores" explicit.¹⁰⁰ It even

¹⁰⁰For more on this interesting idea of "commitment stores," the statements to which one is committed (knowingly or unknowingly), see Walton's Arguer's Position, pp. 246-249. As Walton explains, (e.g., pp. 248ff., Logical Dialogue-Games and Fallacies, New York: University Press of America, 1984) the term is Hamblin's. Hamblin initially uses the it to describe, in the context of a dialectical

sheds some light on the theory that all argument is *ad hominem*, if we think of *ad hominem* argument as including any argument relating persons to statements, and we think of convincing or persuading a person to accept or reject a statement as a central task of argument.¹⁰¹

But, in the view developed here, "*ad hominem*" is better limited to arguments invoking initially or covertly plausible rules of thumb about the relationship between persons and their statements. Circumstantial *ad hominem* would involve the invocation of rules concerning the relation between the truth of statements and the behavior of the people defending them, between practice and preaching. Briefly stated the core fallacious enthymematic premise of such circumstantial *ad hominem* would be along the lines of "whenever a person states a thesis and fails to act in accordance with that thesis we are allowed to take this behavior as a refutation of or evidence against the thesis."

What makes the useful circumstantial *ad hominem* rule of thumb fallacious is over-extension. In

exchange, "a kind of persona of beliefs: it need not correspond with . . . [one's] real beliefs, but it will operate, in general approximately as if it did."
(*Fallacies*, p. 257.)

¹⁰¹In the Lockean sense picked up by Johnstone as well as Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca.

general, a theory of fallacy that sees fallacy in terms of misapplied rules of thumb is a theory of fallacy as over-extension.

Given such a theory of circumstantial *ad hominem*, attempts to analyze circumstantial *ad hominem* with methods of translating act-descriptions to commitment claims or propositions begin to make sense. Given such a model of circumstantial *ad hominem* one with a formalist penchant might wish to develop calculi in which one could symbolize behavior as well as statements, and then make deductions. This is, in fact, the case with the most recent work on circumstantial *ad hominem*.¹⁰²

Abusive *ad hominem*, on the other hand, would involve enthymematic premises relating persons' qualifications to make or defend utterances and would rely on rules of thumb on the order of, "scoundrels and the insane are not to be relied upon for evidence."

The so-called "sound" or non-fallacious versions of abusive *ad hominem* would then be those in which the rule of thumb has no obvious exceptions or is applied with an understanding of its exceptions, i.e., is applied to cases which are not exceptions. For example, we might have a framework in which life and

¹⁰²Walton's work in Arguer's Position.

death decisions are normally made on the basis of at least two witnesses, believing that inter-subjective agreement is an indicator of greater reliability, and that (with respect to issues of fallibility) two witnesses may be used to establish or disestablish their own credibility as witnesses. I.e., we might have a rule of thumb according to which, in such serious cases, any single witness is to be taken as an unreliable witness. In other words, reliable witnessing is a public matter. Consider the parallel requirement of intersubjective testimony for scientific observation.

Normally applied, with a sensitive awareness of the implications of a *ceteris paribus* clause, this rule of thumb should work. Yet, in certain extreme cases, where the event in question is non-controversial, the one available witness has the appropriate competence, has nothing to gain, and great misery can be prevented by accepting the solitary testimony, we might claim exception to the rule of thumb, "one witness is suspect for a decision." Consider another analogy more perfect with respect to abusive *ad hominem*: We might have criteria that disallow the testimony, e.g., of minors or of people with certain handicaps, which we might relax in similar circumstances. In this case, we might have a rule of thumb, "The testimony of minors is

suspect and not to be relied upon," which is applied correctly (or "non-fallaciously") in those areas where, as a matter of fact and procedure, the testimony of minors is not reliable, and which may be "fallaciously applied" when attached to one of its exceptions, e.g., in certain investigations of child-abuse, etc.

Now, one of the weaknesses of an enthymematic approach to fallacy theory is that application of the theory requires familiarity with the subject-matter of the argument at hand and cognizance of the general "truths" and "commitment stores" of those participating in the debate. Without making such implicit information explicit a formal logic may fail to help us arrive at a correct result in the same way that a mathematical approach can fail if those applying it neglect certain important information.¹⁰⁴ Attaining

¹⁰³In place of a *ceteris paribus* clause here, we might also have a detailed list of exceptions.

¹⁰⁴To use a tired example: It is well known, that in conjunction with certain physical knowledge, mathematics is useful for the calculation of volumes-- e.g., 1 liter + 1/2 liter equals 1.5 liters *all things being equal*. If we remove the cautionary phrase we need other information which provides the same result: e.g., we need to know if the one liter contains the same material as the 1/2 liter; we need to know if there are any unusual threshold properties (e.g., as a function of increased mass) relating to volume; we need to know if there are any unusual combinatory properties relating to volume (e.g., as function of molecular or sub-molecular structure, as in the case of combining water with alcohol). Information is also required about the environment in which the combination process

the required data may be difficult or impossible given constraints of time and subject matter. This problem of required subject matter familiarity extends even to the relatively simple example of (iv), the "liar for sale" give earlier:

1. You claim 'p' which is worth n to you if we accept your claim;
2. but, you are known to lie for y and $y < n$;
3. therefore your claim of 'p' is all the more suspect, given what you stand to gain.

Though presented above as a seemingly relevant *ad hominem* argument, this apparently simple example shows a weakness in our approach in so far as it involves

is to occur. If the rule is read as a statement without hedging, it may be taken as "an illuminating lie," as Nelson Goodman claims in Ways of Worldmaking (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 1978), when he argues that, "Most scientific laws are of this sort" Goodman claims that what matters even if these laws are taken as true approximations, "is that the approximations are preferred to more exact truths." (p. 121; emphases added.)

Those who perceive this need for factual information as a serious weakness are in a tradition going back at least as far as Sextus Empiricus, who argued that this is a weakness of fallacy theory in general. Hamblin (Fallacies, pp. 95ff.) quotes Sextus from Outlines of Pyrrhonism, II, Sections 236-59, "As regards all the sophisms which dialectic seems peculiarly able to expose, their exposure is useless; whereas in all cases there the exposure is useful, it is not the dialectician who will expose them but the experts in each particular art who grasp the connexion of the facts."

evaluation in terms of soundness. For, though it seems that claims about the corruptibility of a witness are indeed relevant to the question of whether or not to accept that witness's testimony, the claims made implicitly in the abusive *ad hominem* attack in (iv) are psychologically suspicious themselves, even at the intuitive level. If the psychological principle in (iv) is that "if one will commit a crime for small gain, then one will commit a crime for greater," that psychological principle is false (in the absence of a *ceteris paribus* clause). We simply do not know beforehand whether, e.g., a woman who would lie to save herself or another a mild embarrassment would also lie to save herself or another from a prison sentence. In order to make a determination of soundness, then, in (iv) we need to know the detailed expansion and defense of the implicit "all things being equal" in the enthymematic premise, "those who lie for the value y will lie for value z if $z > y$." Generally, knowledge concerning reliability of a rule of thumb and its exceptions is more than purely logical knowledge.¹⁰⁵

¹⁰⁵Strategic rules of thumb concerning proof-strategies and translations may be exceptions to this rule.

In view of the need to ascertain the *ceteris paribus* clause, we see here an abusive *ad hominem* argument based on a rule of thumb along the lines of, "people who lie for gain of a given value n are to be suspect of lying for gain in cases y , such that $y > n$, all things being equal." When such an *ad hominem* challenge implicitly ignores its *ceteris paribus* clause, by failing to acknowledge the relevance of certain information that overrides the rule in given cases, the *ad hominem* fails.

A candidate for an *ad hominem* analysis would be, then, any argument or argument move involving rules of thumb concerning the relation between individuals and their utterances. In general, it would seem, successful or "non-fallacious" abusive *ad hominem* would involve restriction of the rule of thumb in such a way as to have it bear on the case at hand as a rule correctly governing an instance as a non-exception.¹⁰⁶ In a given argument, an abusive *ad hominem* challenge

¹⁰⁶As stated above, "sound" or non-fallacious versions of abusive *ad hominem* would then occur in at least two kinds of cases: (1) when the rule of thumb has no obvious exceptions or (2) when the rule is applied with an understanding of its exceptions, i.e., is applied to cases which are not exceptions. An analog of the former can be found in the rules of thumb for certain game strategies (e.g., don't resign a game of chess before making your first move). An analog of the latter can be found in the application of grammatical rules by a competent speaker.

along the lines of, "but that's *ad hominem!*" would be a challenge to the one challenged to show why the *ad hominem* rule of thumb actually applies to the case at hand. A "fallacious abusive *ad hominem*" would be, in the paradigm case, an abusive *ad hominem* argument relying on a false universal generalization about the relationship between persons and their utterances which itself had some initial plausibility as a rule of thumb.

A. Summary Evaluation of this Theory of Abusive *ad hominem* in terms of the Four Criteria

Four criteria have been suggested for a theory of abusive *ad hominem*.¹⁰⁷ In this section, I summarize how the abusive *ad hominem* theory introduced and developed in this chapter fares with respect to these criteria.

Regarding Criterion #1:

The theory of abusive *ad hominem* introduced here involves a theory of abusive *ad hominem* fallacy as a fallacy at the level of argument move, itself part of a view of fallacy that makes sense not only of fallacious arguments but also of illegitimate steps or moves in

¹⁰⁷See above, section VII, "Four Adequacy Criteria for a Theory of Abusive *Ad Hominem* Fallacy," pp. 62-67.

arguments. This view explains abusive *ad hominem* as a proto-fallacy or fallacy at the level of argument move based on the over-extension of a rule of thumb without due attention to a *ceteris paribus* clause. Arguments in which this fallacy is implicated are abusive *ad hominem* arguments. Understood as such, the abusive *ad hominem* is persuasive as a result of the initial plausibility of the rule of thumb. So-called "valid" instances of abusive *ad hominem* fallacy are a function of arguments not based on such over-extension, where the rule is limited or contains a *ceteris paribus* clause.

Regarding Criterion #2:

The view of abusive *ad hominem* presented here relates abusive *ad hominem* to other variants of candidates for *ad hominem* fallacy in terms of the rules of thumb involved. The common feature linking different kinds of *ad hominem* is that each *ad hominem* (circumstantial, constructive, abusive) turns on rules of thumb concerning a putative relationship between persons and their utterances which bears on the credibility and acceptability of the utterances.

Regarding Criterion #3:

The view of abusive *ad hominem* introduced here addresses several difficulties of informal logical analysis. One is the difficulty of ascribing enthymematic premises. Another is ambiguities in meaning and power that are a function of the ordinary argumentative situation; this includes such matters as the shifts in the plausibility of implicit assumptions once spelled out and subject to attack in the light of day. Still another is the problem of making sense of the possibility of abusing ordinary argument via sophistry. One focal point of concern is the deliberate denial of the existence of the very rules of thumb that may make an argument exist and work persuasively. The view of *ad hominem* developed here allows us to address cases like the "powerless theoretician" and other argumentative uses of innuendo.

Regarding Criterion #4:

According to the view presented here, clear cases of abusive *ad hominem* will remain in general to be interpreted as clear cases based on their associated rules of thumb: abusive *ad hominem* fallacies will be categorizable in terms of the falsity of the associated rule of thumb, or the absence of careful consideration

of its *ceteris paribus* clause. One weakness of the view in terms of explicational adequacy concerns its application: Borderline cases concerning the accuracy of the associated rules of thumb and degree of required restriction require knowledge of the issue at hand for evaluation and diagnosis of abusive *ad hominem* fallacy. This is the difficulty of the requirement of subject matter familiarity.¹⁰⁸

XI. Conclusions and Implications for this Study

Psychological criticism of argument from religious experience involves assumptions concerning the relationship between persons and the truth or credibility of their utterances. Such argument is a candidate for an *ad hominem* analysis given the above interpretation of abusive *ad hominem*. What is at issue is the nature and range of application of the assumptions involved in these criticisms of religious belief. Reconstructing these criticisms will, of course, require subject matter familiarity. If a careful reconstruction of psychological criticism of argument from religious experience shows it to be

¹⁰⁸As indicated, evaluation may also require knowledge of the arguer's "commitment store." Thus, subject matter familiarity in a given argument context may also involve the background necessary for reconstructing a particular arguer's position.

fallacious and plausible abusive *ad hominem* (given the above analysis of *ad hominem* argument), then it will rely on a false rule of thumb or an over-generalized rule of thumb accepted without due respect for its associated *ceteris paribus* clause.

In what follows, a version of argument from religious experience as well as psychological criticisms of argument from religious experience will be explained in terms of assumptions, background, etc. Care will be taken to present a strong version of an argument from religious experience as well as a sketch of the basic structure of popular argument from religious experience. An equally painstaking reconstruction will be provided of both a psychodynamic criticism of the argument (in the footsteps of Freud) and a behavioral one (on the lines of Skinner's behaviorism).

The stronger version of argument from religious experience presented here has been chosen because it has been so often found convincing among a popular readership as well as finding advocates among professional philosophers, and because it is, for all its epistemological daring, as relatively weak in its assumptions¹⁰⁹ as it is bold in its risk. Also of some

¹⁰⁹as I interpret the theory; If I fail as an exegete, I nonetheless claim to have presented an

relevance to this study, it comes ready-made with *ad hominem* counter-charges to a variety of possible criticisms. I here refer to what I take to be a general argument from religious experience found in the works of William James. The popular religious experience argument presented in Chapter Four, on the other hand, was selected since it seems so often to be the target of the psychological attacks presented in that chapter.¹¹⁰

In the next chapter, Chapter Three, I present a reconstruction of James's argument as a paradigm case of argument from religious experience. I then, in Chapter Four, sketch the popular religious experience argument which is so often the target of psychological criticism of argument from religious experience. The rest of Chapter Four is devoted to presenting versions of both psychodynamic Freudian and behavioristic Skinnerian psychological criticisms of religious experience. When these psychological criticisms are evaluated, their adequacy is tested with respect to the strong version of James's argument introduced in Chapter Three, and also with respect to the popular form of argument from religious experience. I then

argument from religious experience worthy of consideration.

¹¹⁰This was done in the interests of fairness.

address, in Chapter Five, the issue of the charge that such psychological criticism commits the abusive *ad hominem* fallacy. And finally, I turn to the questions of the general adequacy and philosophical propriety of such psychological critique in the conclusion, Chapter Six. We now turn to Chapter Three, and a reconstruction of Willian James's arguments from religious experience.

Chapter Three

Jamesian Argument from Religious Experience

I. Proems

As the essence of courage is to stake one's life on a possibility, so the essence of faith is to believe that the possibility exists.¹

*A rule of thinking which would absolutely prevent me from acknowledging certain kinds of truth if those kinds of truth were really there, would be an irrational rule.*²

(1) Mystical states, when well developed, usually are, and have the right to be, absolutely authoritative over the individuals to whom they come.

(2) No authority emanates from them which should make it a duty for those who stand outside of them to accept their revelation uncritically.

(3) They break down the authority of the non-mystical or rationalistic consciousness, based upon the understanding and the senses alone. They show it to be only one kind of consciousness. They open out the possibility of other orders of truth, in which, so far as

¹William Salter, quoted with favor by William James in "Is Life Worth Living?", The Will to Believe and Other Essays in Popular Philosophy (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1979), p. 56. According to the editorial note on p. 263, James is quoting Salter's "Carlyle and the Social Question," Free Religious Index, n.s. 2 (September 1, 1881), 100.

²From William James, "Will to Believe," Will to Believe., pp. 31-32.

anything in us vitally responds to them, we may freely continue to have faith.³

--William James

II. James's Arguments and Religious Experience

In so far as any argument for a religious hypothesis is a religious argument and in so far as any pragmatic argument can be seen as an experience argument, James has many religious experience arguments. For example, he offers a variety of pragmatic arguments in Will to Believe. This experiential pragmatic nature of Jamesian religious arguments can be seen emerging when one takes synoptically a principle of pragmatism (along the lines of "*ideas (which themselves are but part of our experience) become true just in so far as they help us to get into satisfactory relation with other parts of our experience*"⁴) together with a concept of objects as

³James, Varieties of Religious Experience: A Study in Human Nature, being the Gifford Lectures on Natural Religion Delivered at Edinburgh in 1902-1902. Enlarged Edition with Appendices and Introduction by Joseph Ratner, New Hyde Park, New York: University Books, Inc., 1963, pp. 422-23.

⁴James, Pragmatism: A New Name for Some Old Ways of Thinking, edited with an introduction by Bruce Kuklick (Indianapolis and Cambridge: Hackett Publishing Company, 1981), p. 30.

their effects⁵ in the framework of a Jamesian empiricism that has all facts being facts of experience.⁶

Such a synoptic view yields a two stage view of Jamesian religious experience argument. The first revolves around the Will to Believe arguments, risk-taking arguments centered on a pragmatic principle concerning accepting hypotheses. This kind of argument attempts to show that the risk of accepting a religious hypothesis is justified by the possible epistemological and moral gains which might not be available by any other means. The second stage of Jamesian religious experience argument turns on the pragmatic concept of an object as its effects. This concept appears to generate the view of the reality of objects in terms of their influences, a view developed in James's later radical empiricism. Objects, effects, ideas, and hypothesis are, in the neutral monism characteristic of that empiricism, all taken as experiences in a world of pure experience. It is then possible to interpret the basic pragmatic religious experience argument of

⁵"Our conception of these effects, whether immediate or remote, is then for us the whole of our conception of the object, so far as the conception has any positive significance at all." James, Pragmatism, p. 26.

⁶Essays in Radical Empiricism, "Experience of Activity," p. 81.

Varieties of Religious Experience on the basis of this pragmatic radical empiricism. In the following interpretation, I will sketch these two stages, attempting to make sense of the notion of objective reality as influence and legitimate belief as sometimes being warranted by the most bare possibility of its fruition. James's focus on the various life-enhancing effects of the experienced objects of religious experiences presented in Varieties of Religious Experience can then be understood as an attempt at providing a degree of "objectification." The objects of religious experience are "objectified" on the basis of actual and possible influences of these experiences and their objects. This influence testifies to the bare possibility of the actuality of the experienced object. This possibility is then, by means of a Pascalian move, viewed as a first step in generating a genuine competitor for belief-choice. This move is suggested by the view on habits and emotions Principles of Psychology seen in light of James's later "ladder of faith" argument as well as his early "Will to Believe" argument. Both "ladder" and "will" conspire in the final argument to provide the minimal grounds for accepting a religious hypothesis as a legitimate

alternative in the special circumstances that face us when we confront what James calls a "genuine option."⁷

III. James's Audience and James's Arguments

A. James's Audience

In presenting such a variety of arguments it seems James is following the classical advice to rhetoricians to consider one's audience in order to determine which arguments are most persuasive.⁸ Despite appearances, despite popular wisdom, despite a title like "Will to

⁷As indicated, this argument is culled from a wide range of James's works. These include Varieties of Religious Experience, Talks to Teachers on Psychology and to Students on Some of Life's Ideals (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1983), Will to Believe and other Essays, Essays in Radical Empiricism (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1976), Some Problems of Philosophy (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1979), Pragmatism and the Meaning of Truth (Cambridge, Massachusetts and London: Harvard University Press, 1978), Principles of Psychology (Cambridge, Massachusetts and London: Harvard University Press, 1983).

⁸James was sensitive to the audience-appropriateness of his essays. In a letter to one of his critics, James alleged ignorance of this factor as the source of flawed interpretation:

"You take utterances of mine written at different dates, for different audiences belonging to different universes of discourse, and string them together as the abstract elements of a total philosophy which you then show to be inwardly incoherent." The Letters of William James (Boston: Atlantic Monthly Press, 1920), II, 355, cited and quoted p. xxxviii, in McDermott's introduction to Essays in Radical Empiricism.

Believe and other Essays in Popular Philosophy," James does not see himself as addressing, even in his "popular" works, the general American public of his day.⁹ Rather, he is writing for a specific group of people who have learned enough science to lose faith, but not enough science, in James's opinion, to know that science leaves room for faith. In his preface to Will to Believe, James explains that he is attempting to address a certain psychological condition, a specific loss of nerve, infecting certain academic audiences. He begins by pointing out that if he were facing a different audience such as the salvation army, he would want to put a damper on their faith. For them, he would try to increase the influence of scientific criticism. But, academic audiences suffer from a "timorous *abulia* in the religious field" caused by the belief that this is a realm in which we should await scientific evidence before committing ourselves.¹⁰

James's arguments are directed to an audience who, in so far as they are dedicated to science, are

⁹Apparently, James uses the word 'popular' to refer to issues of fundamental concern to people in general such as concerns of religious belief, moral obligation, and immortality. See Edward H. Madden's "Introduction" to Will to Believe, p. xii.

¹⁰Will to Believe., "Preface," pp. 7-8.

dedicated to the chief values of science, one of which is truth and another of which is the moral ability to pursue it.¹¹ James attempts to show that faith has the power to bring forth truth, either by energizing us in our pursuit of truth or through the exercise of a certain precursive fact-creating power of its own, as when outcomes are determined by our attitudes and actions. James claims that such precursive faith is not to be rejected even if it "runs ahead of the evidence." In cases of a precursive faith that might count towards producing its object, James suggests that it is a form of scientific absolutism and logical insanity to "say that faith running ahead of scientific evidence is the 'lowest kind of immorality' into which a thinking being can fall."¹²

It should be noted that James is not interested in rehabilitating any of the traditional proofs for the existence of God, e.g., the ontological, cosmological,

¹¹As Richard Rudner astutely pointed out ("The Scientist Qua Scientist Makes Value Judgments," *Philosophy of Science*, Vol. XX (1953), scientists qua scientists make value decisions. Ellis Rivkin has argued on similar lines in What Crucified Jesus?, (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1984), pp. 24-32. According to the kind of arguments they offer, various professions require certain kinds of moral practices as necessary conditions for success in their enterprises (given the common understanding of success: e.g., a general seeks victory; a scientist, truth).

¹²From William James, "Will to Believe," Will to Believe., p. 29.

or teleological arguments. These are arguments James takes to have lost credibility as a result of Kant's criticisms.¹³ In order to challenge his chosen audience, in order to address his concern with "defending the legitimacy of religious faith,"¹⁴ James presents at least four different--though arguably interrelated--pragmatic arguments, one of which is most obviously a variety of argument from religious experience.

B. James's Arguments

James's arguments for what he terms the "religious hypothesis" include:

- (1) A constructive *ad hominem* moral argument that we may be better, braver, and more liable to the strenuous mode of living for believing.¹⁵

¹³See Burkhardt's "Notes," in Will to Believe, p. 252, n. 7.15.

¹⁴Will to Believe., "Preface," p. 7.

¹⁵Will to Believe. See the essays "The Moral Philosopher and the Moral Life" (pp. 141-162, esp. 160-161) and "The Sentiment of Rationality" (pp. 57-89).

- (2) An argument for the individual's right to run the risk of belief, given the bare rationality of the enterprise.¹⁶
- (3) A precursive faith/risk argument, suggesting that the faith risk may be the only way to make the truth manifest (either epistemologically or metaphysically, depending on the instance).¹⁷
- (4) A religious experience argument, suggesting that religious experience provides the bare possibility¹⁸ or chance that makes such a risk a legitimate option for the individual.¹⁹

In this chapter, I present an interpretation of James's argument from religious experience (4), in order to construct a version on which to test some

¹⁶Especially pronounced in "The Will to Believe" (Will to Believe., pp. 13-33).

¹⁷Also offered in Will to Believe in the essays "The Moral Philosopher and the Moral Life"; "Will to Believe"; "Is Life Worth Living?"; "The Sentiment of Rationality".

¹⁸In "Appendix: Faith and the Right to Believe," Some Problems of Philosophy (Vol. 7 of the Works of William James, Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1979), p. 114), James defines an event as a 'bare' possibility "if we are entirely ignorant of the conditions that make a thing come." I am combining this Jamesian sense with a more standard notion of barely finite possibility. As I reconstruct James's arguments, either sense is sufficient. The more standard weaker sense is to be preferred (in virtue of its weakness).

¹⁹Varieties.; see pp. 526-527 (" . . . my only aim . . .").

psychological criticisms directed at religious experience arguments. I do not claim that my construction actually is the argument James intended to present,²⁰ but merely that it is a suitably strong version for the purposes of this essay, and that the credit for this strength probably belongs to James.

I first present James's general characterization of religious experience. I then reconstruct his argument from religious experience. After presenting and developing this reconstruction, I discuss some of the standard criticisms of James's arguments, focusing on aetiological criticisms and allegations of "wishful thinking." I then introduce different levels of psychological criticism offered against argument from religious experience. I discuss and evaluate James's responses to the kind of psychological criticisms available in his own day, and introduce the possibility that later developments in psychology may offer greater challenges. In particular, later psychodynamic theory (Freud's critique of religion) and behaviorism (a Skinnerian critique) may be telling against some

²⁰There is evidence that James himself vacillated as to the meaning of some of his arguments, e.g., those offered in the essay, "Will to Believe." See Robert J. O'Connell's William James on the Courage to Believe (New York: Fordham University Press, 1984), pp. 88-89, where O'Connell argues that James, despite his own later protestations and interpretations, was arguing for more than a "mere 'right' to believe."

arguments from religious experience, possibly including James's.

Before determining the adequacy of Jamesian responses to Freudian and Skinnerian psychological criticisms, I must spell them out. This is the task of the next chapter, where I reconstruct a strong version of these two kinds of criticism before considering a defense against them along the lines of the possible response: Aren't these psychological critiques instances of the fallacy of abusive *ad hominem* argumentation?²¹

IV. A Reconstruction of James's Argument from Religious Experience

A. James's Characterization of Religious Experience

James's interest in the unusual, the mystical and the supernatural extended so far as to include a concern with ghosts, apparitions, and mediums.²²

²¹Though James does not use the jargon of "genetic fallacy" or "abusive *ad hominem* fallacy" in responding to or anticipating his critics, he does attempt to defang similar possible aetiological criticisms in Varieties of Religious Experience, Lecture I, "Religion and Neurology," pp. 1-25. (All citations from Varieties of Religious Experience are from the 1963 Ratner edition unless otherwise indicated.)

²²"For James, research into telepathy, clairvoyance, mediumship, and even demonic possession was simply an extension of abnormal psychology," according to Gerald E. Myers in William James: His

According to James, "Mystical states, when well developed, usually are, and have the right to be, absolutely authoritative over the individuals to whom they come."²³ James allowed powerful mystical experiences great authority of over those who have them. I will argue that this limitation of their authority is intimately related to the design and force of his religious experience argument.²⁴

In Varieties of Religious Experience,²⁵ James characterizes mystical experience as ineffable, noetic, transient, and passive. Elsewhere in Varieties as well as in his later discussion, "A Suggestion about Mysticism,"²⁶ James also emphasizes the experience of unification, *relation*, and presence. These features

Life and Thought (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1986) p. 10.

²³James, Varieties., pp. 422-23.

²⁴James encounters with the powerful influences of religious experience are usually traced back to his father's interest in Swedenborg which was spurred on by Henry Sr.'s own "mental crisis." For a brief discussion of father and son's psychological crises and philosophical responses, see Jacques Barzun, A Stroll with William James (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1984), pp. 24-27.

²⁵Varieties., pp. 380-382.

²⁶"A Suggestion about Mysticism" was originally published in the Journal of Philosophy VII (February 17, 1910): 85-92. The text cited here is taken from James's Collected Essays and Reviews, (New York: Longmans, Green & Co., 1920. Reissued 1969, by Russell & Russell, a division of Atheneum Publishers, Inc.), pp. 500-513.

together satisfy the requirements for a state "of consciousness in all essential respects like the mystical." Such an experience may be brief though characterized by a sense of unification and enlightenment.

[W]e . . . have the conditions fulfilled for a kind of consciousness in all essential respects like the mystical. It will be transient, if the change of threshold is transient. It will be of reality, enlargement, and illumination, possibly rapturously so. It will be of unification, for the present coalesces in it with ranges of the remote quite out of its reach under ordinary circumstances; and the sense of relation will be greatly enhanced. Its form will be intuitive or perceptual, not conceptual, for the remembered or conceived objects in the enlarged field are supposed not to attract the attention singly, but only to give the sense of a tremendous *muchness* suddenly revealed.²⁷

B. James's General Argument Reconstructed:

As indicated, the reconstruction of James's argument from religious experience I offer involves two kinds of Jamesian argument which are here treated as two threads of a larger argument. The first concerns ascription of truth to propositions, the second admission of an entity into an ontology.²⁸ The former

²⁷"A Suggestion about Mysticism," p. 503.

²⁸It seems that either argument, if sound, would be sufficient to establish a cogent religious

relies on a general pragmatic acceptance of any belief which "stands us in good stead."²⁹ The latter turns on an unusual concept of *being as power*.³⁰ This concept

experience argument. Given that both arguments turn on the validity of some candidate truth or experience in terms of that candidate's accordance with and usefulness in integrating subsequent experience, I have knit them together in this presentation. Central in both arguments is the importance of consequences. According to the ontological principle, religious experiences are worthy of considering as "objective" due to their effects on other experiences. According to the pragmatic principle, religious hypotheses are to be accepted as true given useful consequences to us of so accepting them.

A dissertation on the general adequacy of Jamesian religious experience argument would have to consider the range of criticisms leveled at Jamesian pragmatism and process theories of reality, and carefully sort out the various arguments, weighing them independently. Both kinds of argument have generated a wide variety of philosophical criticisms. However, with the exception of the psychological criticisms which are at issue, presentation and evaluation of these criticisms will not occur in this essay. Given the reconstruction of abusive *ad hominem* developed in the previous chapter, it is sufficient for our present purposes to address the question of the adequacy of James's argument with respect to psychological criticism of argument from religious experience.

²⁹This is the view suggested in "The Will to Believe" and by James's "faith ladder" argument in the appendix to Some Problems of Philosophy (Vol. 7 of the Works of William James, ed. Frederick H. Burkhardt, et al, with an introduction by Peter H. Hare; Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1979), pp. 111-117.

³⁰It's "unusual" in this context. The concept of being as power is not unheard of in the history of philosophy. On the contrary, in Adventures of Ideas (Toronto: Collier Macmillian Canada, Ltd., Free Press Paperback, 1967, p. 129) Whitehead traces it back at least as far as Plato and quotes the Sophist. There Plato has his Eleatic Stranger state:

was developed by James in his later writings, particularly in the Essays in Radical Empiricism, though it is suggested throughout his works due to the nature of his thorough-going pragmatism.³¹ In order to sketch this reconstruction³² of James's theory, certain

I suggest that anything has real being that is so constituted as to possess any sort of power either to affect anything else or to be affected, in however small a degree, by the most insignificant agent, though it be only once. I am proposing as a mark to distinguish real things that they are nothing but power. (Sophist 247e)

(The above translation of Sophist 247e can be found on p. 992 in the Cornford-Jowett translation found in Edith Hamilton and Huntington Cairns's The Collected Dialogues of Plato (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1961). The translation Whitehead offers is, "and I hold that the definition of being is simply power.")

Conceptualization of being as a perfection and of perfection as a power (read "power" = "virtue", focusing on the act in actuality) is a commonplace of medieval theology and philosophy.

³¹Given James's later neutral monism in which we have a world of pure experience, it makes sense that experiences be classified in terms of their relations to other experiences and that fundamental distinctions such as "objective" and "subjective" are cashed out in terms of the consequences and influences of experiences on each other. In so far as pragmatism is a consequentialist theory, it is not surprising that the question of what it is to be an entity is itself determined by consequences and future influences.

³²The reconstruction offered here is an elaboration of that offered by Henry Samuel Levinson in The Religious Investigations of William James (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1981). Levinson points out the pervasive influence of religious issues throughout James's writings and

of James's assumptions, as well as some idiosyncrasies of his philosophical vocabulary, need to be presented.

1. Terminology and Assumptions

In Essays in Radical Empiricism,³³ James provides a historical process account of "objectively real" as that which is consequential in a significant and enduring way for future experience. As Levinson interprets:

As James construed subjectivity and objectivity, objective fires always burned sticks, whereas subjective fires might or might not burn subjective sticks and normally, did not burn physical sticks. But their "natures" were identical. The crucial distinction between experiences separated the forceful from the inert. Objective experiences were those that "act." Subjective experiences were those "whose members, having identically the same natures, fail to manifest themselves in any 'energetic' way". . . . a religious experience became merely subjective when it was shown to be demonstrably inactive over the long haul.³⁴

indicates the relevance of James's concept of being as active influence to James's philosophy of religion. Levinson is not to blame, however, for the more extreme version of the historical process theory of being as power offered here, though his interpretation seems to me to imply it.

³³Essays in Radical Empiricism, "Does 'Consciousness' Exist?", pp. 17-18.

³⁴Levinson, The Religious Investigations of William James, p. 184. The central passage, presented below is in Essays in Radical Empiricism, p. 17.

Elsewhere, In "On a Certain Blindness in Human Beings,"³⁵ James argues that individuals' different worlds of experience are ultimately self-sovereign in an epistemic sense with respect to certain strong affective experiences. He warns us about judging others when we have not stood in their place:

The subject judged knows a part of the world of reality which the judging spectator fails to see, knows more whilst the spectator knows less; and whenever there is conflict of opinion and difference of vision, we are bound to believe that the truer side is the side that feels the more and not the side that feels the less.³⁶

Among these strong emotional experiences James defines, in his Essays in Radical Empiricism, a certain class of experiences as borderline cases. These experiences, termed "appreciations," are characterized by sharing certain features with their objects in a relational bond not easily rent. In these cases, says James, "the adjective wanders as if uncertain where to fix itself." Among these, he includes experiences of pain, beauty, and wickedness. He claims, for example, that it is hard to decide

³⁵Talks to Teachers on Psychology and to Students on Some of Life's Ideals, pp. 132-149.

³⁶Talks to Teachers., p. 133.

between referring to an experience as a wicked desire or a desire for wickedness.³⁷

We add these borderline cases to James's claim that thoughts and things are ultimately homogeneous:

*[T]hey are made of one and the same stuff, which as such cannot be defined but only experienced; and which, if one wishes, one can call the stuff of experience in general.*³⁸

Combining this neutral monism with a pragmatic distinction in terms of consequences for future experiences, we end up with reconstructing a Jamesian recursive definition of "being": *To be is to be powerful enough to be consistently consequential for other beings.* James himself seems to make such a move in the first of his Essays in Radical Empiricism, "Does 'Consciousness' Exist?" He begins by pointing out that some of our experiences of fire and water effect others in certain reliable ways. Some burn us, and get our fireplaces going; others do not. Some are

³⁷Essays in Radical Empiricism, "Does 'Consciousness' Exist?" p. 18.

³⁸This is Salvatore Saladino's translation from the French from Appendix III of Essays in Radical Empiricism, p. 271. The original can be found in "La Notion de Conscience," Essays in Radical Empiricism, p. 117.

'energetic', having this kind of influence and power; others, though having the same qualities, do not.³⁹

I make for myself now an experience of blazing fire; I place it near my body; but it does not warm me in the least. I lay a stick upon it and the stick either burns or remains green, as I please. I call up water, and pour it on the fire, and absolutely no difference ensues. I account for all such facts by calling this whole train of experience unreal, a mental train. Mental fire is what won't burn real sticks; mental water is what won't necessarily (though of course it may) put out even a mental fire.⁴⁰

³⁹Following the Kantian principle that existence is not a predicate.

⁴⁰Cases such as hypnotic burns are strange phenomena. With these the subjective has effects which are objectively observable, and might lead us into the temptation to reformulate James's definition of real. James himself is aware of such phenomena and discusses them in his Principles of Psychology (p. 207). James cites M. Janet's work with two subjects given the hypnotic suggestion of a "mustard poultice" of a certain shape being placed on a given bodily region, who developed reddening and swelling in these shapes on the indicated skin surfaces.

Yet, since James's definition in Essays in Radical Empiricism coincides with a procedure for distinguishing the merely subjective quality of some reported X from other experiences that he gives in Principles of Psychology (pp. 213-214), I suspect that James would bite the bullet and claim that hypnotic experiences of mustard plasters are not like the unreal experiences which we can fabricate and control like the imaginary fire in "Does Consciousness Exist?"

There may be some puzzlement here. One may be tempted to ask, "Will physical water put out a mental fire? What are the underlying criteria of distinction here?" I suspect that James would answer in two ways: (1) Mental events do not have the same stability and order with respect to consequences as real objects. (2) Physical water can put out a mental fire, at least in the general sense that water can terminate the

James concludes by claiming that what characterizes real things is the baggage they consistently carry in terms of consequences, which he claims "always accrue."⁴¹

2. Preliminary Reconstruction of Jamesian Argument

We have presented a Jamesian notion of what it is to be an objective experience. We have sketched James's four-fold characterization of religious experience as ineffable, noetic, transient, and passive. We have summarized his view concerning what it is for something to be real. We are now in a position to offer an interpretation of the argument James offers in Varieties of Religious Experience. In Varieties, James describes one powerful, influential, life changing mystical experience after another. Many of the cases in Varieties⁴² are conversion experiences marking a fundamental revolution in the life styles and belief systems of those experiencing them. Concerning the enduring effects of such experiences, James cites

physical life and brain activity of the organism having the mental experience. He might point also out that a bucket of real water in the face might eliminate thoughts of flame while provoking others.

⁴¹Essays in Radical Empiricism, p. 17.

⁴²See Lectures IX and X, "Conversion," and "Conversion - Concluded," pp. 189-258.

Starbuck's conclusion that these effects tend to persist through one's lifetime, "no matter how much their religious enthusiasm declines."⁴³

According to this interpretation, the religious experiences related in Varieties of Religious Experience, in conjunction with a concept of being as power, can be understood as providing the bare bones of a religious experience argument on the following lines:

1. These religious experiences are "appreciations" and not to be easily sorted out as either objective or subjective without regard to their consequences.

That such experiences might be initially, even if provisionally, classified as "appreciations" is suggested by one of the standard responses to any kind of religious experience argument, namely: Divine experiences seem to be like painful ones in so far as the claim "I had a religious experience" seems to be a claim about the experiencer.⁴⁴

⁴³Varieties., p. 258; James cites Starbuck's Psychology of Religion, pp. 360, 357.

⁴⁴One way of countering any religious experience argument, or any argument based on an extremely unusual experience, is to understand the unusual experience as symptomatic. Reports of strange voices not heard by others in the same room, for example, are generally viewed as data about the pathology of the hearers, not as data about invisible beings.

2. Many religious experiences are so strongly powerful for their experiencers that they restructure their entire lives, influencing much important subsequent perception and action in the world. This may be the basic point of the case-studies in Varieties of Religious Experience.

Certainly, many of the cases in Varieties can be cited as evidence for this claim.

3. In so far as these experiences have power over subsequent experiences, hang together with them, and seem to affect them, they are objectively consequential and, being so, have pragmatic title to being considered as real and authoritative by any whose future experiences stand to be so intertwined with them.⁴⁵ In so far as religious experiences

⁴⁵It is evident here that "x-experience" and "experience of x" are being conflated, and that a normally useful distinction is being blurred. This seems to be a consequence of a view in which the world is one of pure experience, where the only objects of experiences are experiences. It seems James would want to replace the distinction between e.g., "experience of red" and "red experience" with the distinction he previously introduced between subjective and objective experiences, since, in a world of pure experience our ordinary separation of experience from entities verges on collapse. In general, James seems to hold that for all z, influential z-experiences testify to the objective character of the z experienced, with the objectivity being a matter of degree as well as kind depending on the range and extent of the influence.

do not influence a given individual's or group of individuals' future experiences, there are pragmatic grounds for considering these experiences subjective and non-authoritative for those individuals.

Certain classes of religious experiences, e.g., the religious experiences in Varieties of Religious Experience, turn out to be fundamentally important to some range of future experience. Due to this, the experiencers may find that most, all, or their most important future experiences are rendered impossible or incoherent or unworkable if the objectivity of these experiences or their objects is denied. In such a

This is astounding and apparently false, the weakness seeming to parallel that of arguments that if (fill in a complex or simple modifier and predicate of your choice) "qualifier_variable predicate_variable" then "predicate_variable" follows. E.g., if one slowly runs, then one runs; or if one partially swims the English Channel, then one swims the English Channel.

To avoid parallels to such disastrous inferences (e.g., "God spoke to me in a dream, therefore God spoke to me"), the Jamesian position seems to be sensible only if "real" or "objective" is carefully and consistently understood as describing relations between experiences, where what it is for an experience to be real is for it to be potent with respect to other experiences. Now, since experiences sometimes come in cliques that get along well with and exercise influences on each other but not the general masses of experiences (e.g., the cliques constituted by consistent dreams, fictions, illusions, and delusions), we find ourselves in the position of turning "real" into a context dependent term, and possibly falling out of the one world of common sense into a multiverse.

case, then, one has the right to consider these experiences as absolutely authoritative over oneself when they have this ultimate character. Conversely, in so far as these objects of experience/experiences make no difference to future experiences they are unreal like hallucinations and interesting stories. In so far as they interfere with future satisfactions and accomplishments, they may be symptoms of pathology.

C. Further Argument Reconstruction and Expansion in Light of James's Writings

1. Genuine Options

One way of reconstructing the argument from religious experience in Varieties of Religious Experience along lines plundered from James's pragmatism and radical empiricism would be as follows:

- 1) The cases of life changing religious experiences presented are to be categorized as *appreciations*, existing in the shadowy realm between the clearly objective and the blatantly subjective.
- 2) Since such life changing experiences have enduring influence on some range or realm of subsequent experiences they are objectively

real with respect to those ranges or realms.⁴⁶

However, this argument, even if accepted, does not show that religious experiences are sufficient to have any value for those of us who do not enjoy them, whose realms of subsequent experiences are not influenced in any serious direct way by such experience.⁴⁷ All such experiences do is give us the bare possibility of their eventually settling out as objective. Yet, this bare

⁴⁶Again this move, in so far as it bears on admitting objects of experience into an ontology, requires for its credibility the granting of a systematic blurring of the distinction between entities and experiences of entities, the move of making the reality of some experience of x a function of x's influences on other entities. I agree with those who would point out that it is the experience of the entity which seems to have the efficacy and not the entity itself. I think that the later James, however, would refuse to countenance any entities but experience-entities. For this James, it seems the question "Is this experience real" is tantamount to "What difference does this experience make to other experiences?" Such a view seems liable to the criticisms traditionally leveled against coherentism.

⁴⁷Unfortunately, at times the effects of certain candidate experiences are for ill (as opposed to times we may benefit from other reported experiences). Then we have to deal with them indirectly: as when a mass murderer acts on what he takes to be divine orders to kill. In cases where putative religious experiences have such adverse effects, James could invoke for the rest of us the same kind of principle of liberty and rights to believe and live unmolested that he offered to the believer. The very extension of the realm of authority involved in the murderer's implementation of the putative communication excludes that communication from the protection of James's arguments which limit the authority of religious experiences to those who have them (see Varieties., p. 422).

possibility may constitute an important part of a Jamesian "Will to Believe" argument. Such argument allows us to make our risky ventures into the realm of religious belief on the basis of the live quality of the genuine option characterized as a real, if bare, possibility.

In the "Will to Believe,"⁴⁸ James defines a "genuine option" as one which is live, forced and momentous. An option of the form "A or B" is "live" if our training allows us to deem either disjunct worthy of consideration.⁴⁹ An option is "forced" when it is "based on a complete logical disjunction, with no possibility of not choosing."⁵⁰ The option is "momentous" if the opportunity to choose is unique and the stake involved significant.⁵¹ James argues that in

⁴⁸"Will to Believe," pp. 13-33.

⁴⁹James's defines "a living option" as "one in which both hypotheses are live ones." He points out that whether or not an option (he considers the choice between agnosticism and Christianity, contrasting it to that between Islam and Theosophy) is live is a function of our training. ("Will to Believe," p. 14.)

For further discussion of the relationship between character training and the "Will to Believe" argument see Robert J. O'Connell's study, William James on the Courage to Believe (New York: Fordham University Press, 1984), esp. pp. 96-100.

⁵⁰"Will to Believe," p. 15.

⁵¹James illustrates his definition with the following example. Suppose one is invited by Nansen to participate in the North Pole expedition. This option

the case of a genuine option, we have the right to decide, following "our passional nature." We must make a choice in these cases, James argues, for these are cases in which indecision is decision not to decide, and may forclose the possibility of attaining the truth.⁵²

2. Bare Possibility and the Ladder of Faith

The very bareness in the kind of possibility offered by the examples of powerful personal religious experience in Varieties of Religious Experience seems to call for more links in the Jamesian inference chain. I.e., the question needs to be addressed, "How does one legitimately move from the bare possibility of X to the the "live" possibility required for the strong personal affirmation of X which characterizes a willing acceptance of a genuine option?"

is momentous since it may well be the last chance for "the North Pole sort of immortality"; not accepting precludes its hoped for attainment. Trivial options are characterized by the contrasting features of being common, involving negligible stakes, and by being reversible if regretted. ("Will to Believe," p. 15.)

⁵²"Will to Believe," p. 20.

In order to make the possibility live, James can be understood as following through on the Pascalian⁵³ series of moves he makes in "Will to Believe":

(1) The existence of the divine is a bare possibility. One of the ways of encountering this possibility and thus making it live in the sense required for a genuine option (i.e., allowing this possibility to qualify as a disjunct in an option of the form "A or B" where our experience and training allow us to deem it worthy of consideration) is through powerful life-changing religious experiences.

(1a) If the experiences are my own, the divine hypothesis is live for me,⁵⁴ and I am entitled to choose it as argued in the "Will

⁵³It is interesting that in "Will to Believe," James earlier gives severe criticism of Pascal's famous wager argument (pp. 16-17), but then later suggests that Pascal's argument "seems a regular clincher" (p. 20). Finally, towards the end of his article, James cites Pascal's famous "La coeur a ses raisons que la raison ne connaît point" in support of the legitimacy of passional decision (p. 27; according to Burkhardt, Bowers and Skrupskelis' editorial notes (pp. 254, 259), James is citing the Pensées (Paris: Charpentier, 1861), p. 209). For more information about the curious relation between James and Pascal, see Robert J. O'Connell's William James on the Courage to Believe, especially Chapter 3, "James and Pascal," pp. 33-52.

⁵⁴It is important to note the limited power of James's argument turns on limiting the universe of experience, liveness, etc., to the individual making the choice concerning the religious hypothesis.

to Believe." I am entitled, since the situation is one in which the option is genuine. Since the decision is live, forced, and momentous, it comes under the purview of the "Will to Believe" argument.

As we will see below, towards the end of the section devoted to the "faith-ladder" argument, the decision is momentous since on it may turn, according to James, the perfectibility of the world, as well as our own personal chances at salvation. For James, this perfectibility turns on our own behavior which may be a function of our belief (at least our ability provisionally to accept the possibility of the perfection of the universe). Further, since the enduring possibility of physical death makes choices affecting afterlife the kind of choice that may exclude the individual from a certain "sort of immortality," the decision is momentous.

(1b) Suppose the religious experiences belong to another and the possibility is still not personally charged enough for it to be a live option. If I suspect I would be the better for accepting this possibility and I realize (as in "Will to Believe") my acceptance of it may bring it into being, I nonetheless may have the live (second-order)

option of making the Pascalian move of acting as if I believed it.⁵⁵ I could develop a "James-Lange" feeling for the possibility. This Pascalian "acting as if," understood through James's theory of habit and emotions (explained below), could constitute the retraining that would eventuate in the possibility being a live option, faith in which may constitute a case "*where the faith in a fact can help create the fact.*"⁵⁶

Having generated this kind of faith, the bare chance may begin to act in my life; in so far as it acts in my life, it objectifies.⁵⁷

(2) Since the situation is ambiguous, the Pascalian move of (1b) is licensed.

⁵⁵And then again, I may not. Whether or not there is enough appeal (even at this second-order level) will depend on my own ability to be inspired by such an option, my character training, and my "temperament"-- i.e., where I fall among the "tough-minded and tender-minded." (See James's Pragmatism, "Lecture I: The Present Dilemma in Philosophy," esp. pp. 8-18.)

⁵⁶James, "Will to Believe," p. 29.

⁵⁷It is interesting to note that this apparently unlikely combination of James's later Radical Empiricism with the earlier "Will to Believe" argument is itself suggested by James in his 1896 preface to Will to Believe. James says of these essays that their "philosophical attitude" could be called "radical empiricism."

James would accept the psychological possibility of self directed retraining of an attitude on the basis of behavior. This is borne out by his theory of habit and the James-Lange theory of the emotions James presents in Principles of Psychology.⁵⁸ These together seem to account for the advice he gives on the cultivation of emotional dispositions by means of going through the motions of the contrary dispositions. James there attempts to undermine the common-sense view of emotions before showing how acting as if we feel a certain way can lead to that feeling. He argues contrary to the common view that crying, trembling, and striking are caused by their associated emotions; rather, "we feel sorry because we cry."⁵⁹

Given this view of the emotions, James accepts as a corollary that "voluntary and cold-blooded arousal of the so-called manifestations of a special emotion ought to give us the emotion itself."⁶⁰ This view, which James initially considers as an objection to his position, he revises to be a confirming consequence, once we realize that "In the majority of emotions this

⁵⁸Principles of Psychology, Chapter XXV, "The Emotions," pp. 1058-1097. See also Chapter IV on "Habit," pp. 109-131.

⁵⁹Ibid., pp. 1065-1066.

⁶⁰Ibid., p. 1077.

test is inapplicable; for many of the manifestations are in organs over which we have no voluntary control."⁶¹ James argues our daily experience supports his view; it is, as a matter of fact, a well known and reliable principle of moral training:

Refuse to express a passion, and it dies. Count ten before venting your anger, and its occasion seems ridiculous. Whistling to keep up courage is no mere figure of speech. . . . There is no more valuable precept in moral education than this, as all who have experience know: if we wish to conquer undesirable emotional tendencies in ourselves, we must assiduously, and in the first instance cold-bloodedly, go through the outward movements of those contrary dispositions which we prefer to cultivate. The reward of persistency will infallibly come . . .⁶²

James's "faith ladder" also helps show how he could see such a peculiar series of movements from bare possibility to confirmed personal acceptance as legitimate. Such a possibility could bring an individual to the bottom rung of this "ladder." The

⁶¹Ibid.

⁶²Ibid., pp. 1077-1078. There is a similarity to Pascal's "Go, then, and take holy water, and have masses said; belief will come and stupefy your scruples" (According to note 16.6, pp. 254-255, Will to Believe, James, on p. 16 of "Will to Believe," is translating from Charles Louandre's edition of the Pensées, (Paris: Charpentier, 1861, ch 11, sec. 1 (pp. 229-230). As the note states, "The advice to take holy water is given . . . to one who is convinced by the wager argument but is still incapable of faith because of moral weakness" (Pensées, p. 232 is cited).

ladder of faith is a peculiar inference chain that allows an individual to move from the bare possibility of some view X to allowing X authority in his or her life. This kind of inference is allowable only in certain rare instances where other evidence does not countermand its use. James's statement of the seven rungs of this faith-ladder occurs in "Faith and the Right to Believe":

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.⁶³

After James presents his ladder of faith he offers the following argument for it:⁶⁴

James defines an event as a 'bare' possibility "if we are entirely ignorant of the conditions that make a thing come." James identifies the religious alternative as that of holding a view towards the world

⁶³"Appendix: Faith and the Right to Believe," Some Problems of Philosophy, pp. 111-117. The faith ladder appears on p. 113. Also see James's A Pluralistic Universe (New York: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1909), pp. 328-330.

⁶⁴"Faith and the Right to Believe," pp. 114-116.

such that life is moral in its essential meaning. He argues that a certain wholeness, as opposed to half-hearted hesitation, in our faith is necessary since our faith is connected to the event in which it rests. There are times when intellectual hesitation may lead to epistemic loss. Leaning on social analogies about whether or not one should meet a friend in Boston if the probability is .5 that the friend is waiting there and what to do when one has to decide how to deal with a partner who may be a villain, James claims that since the universe is unfinished, it too, may be influenced by our actions and decisions. The "total character" of the universe "can be expressed only by *hypothetical* and not by *categorical* propositions."⁶⁵ Acknowledging that our response is but part of what issues in the consequences, James claims that we must take one of four attitudes towards "the other powers" of the world. The first seems to be aimed at describing agnosticism; the second, a pessimistic atheism; the third, a pragmatic theism; the fourth seems to reflect the kind of "abulia" troubling those to whom James addressed his work.

- (1) We can "follow intellectualist advice"
and simply await sufficient evidence;

⁶⁵Ibid., p. 115.

(2) we can assume the worst concerning "the other powers"

and not even get involved in attempting to make the universe succeed;

(3) we can put our trust in such powers and attempt to do our part at improving the world despite "the if"; or

(4) we can "flounder," vacillating between the different possibilities.⁶⁶

James argues that the claim that *if we do our best and the powers do theirs then the universe will be perfected* does not express a fact but rather the "completion of a fact thought of as eventually possible."⁶⁷ Though one cannot deduce a conclusion from it, one might produce one: He explains that this "original proposition *per se* has no pragmatic value whatsoever, apart from its *power to challenge our will to produce the premise of fact required*. Then indeed the perfected world emerges as a logical conclusion."⁶⁸ James concludes by claiming:

We can create the conclusion, then. We can and we may, as it were, jump with both feet off the ground into or towards a world of

⁶⁶Ibid., p. 116.

⁶⁷Ibid.

⁶⁸Ibid.

which we trust the other parts to meet our jump-- Only through our precursive trust in it can it come into being.⁶⁹

We can see that it is reasonable to claim that a necessary condition for a Jamesian precursive faith argument is the bare possibility of its hypothesis. Given James's view in the "Will to Believe" that for the religious hypothesis to have merit it need be live to the individual faced with religious decision, the presence of data rendering such a possibility "a bare possibility" is important to a Jamesian position on the legitimacy of a religious hypothesis about the existence or relevance of the divine. It is here claimed that the case histories of intense religious experiences and their fruitful life-saving and life-changing consequences found in the Varieties of Religious Experience can be read as providing just such data, yielding just such a chance or bare possibility of the legitimacy of the Jamesian religious hypothesis that there exist higher powers whose goals overlap our own. After pointing out that his sole goal was to "keep the testimony of religious experience within its proper bounds," James puts forth his view on the value of such bare chance in the concluding "Postscript" of Varieties of Religious Experience, saying, "the chance

⁶⁹Ibid.

of salvation is enough. No fact in human nature is more characteristic than its willingness to live on a chance."⁷⁰

Pragmatically, Varieties of Religious Experience also offers the individual an account of a kind of experience that energizes the possibility of a religious reality. This possibility is enough to allow the risk of acting for and with it along the lines of that discussed by James in "Is Life Worth Living?" There James suggests that the risk taken is, in its own strange way, licensed by the kind of life one leads when one is willing to take risks.⁷¹

3. Summary Evaluation of James's Argument

James's view is always weak in its assumptions. The argument is not coercive; it only makes room for

⁷⁰Varieties., pp. 526-527.

⁷¹Or, as James puts it after quoting Salter's claim that as courage is being willing to risk one's life for a possibility, so faith is the belief in the possibility itself:

These, then, are my last words to you: Be not afraid of life. Believe that life *is* worth living, and your belief will help create the fact. The "scientific proof" that you are right may not be clear before the day of judgment (or some stage of being which that expression may serve to symbolize) is reached. (William James, "Is Life Worth Living? in The Will to Believe), p. 56.

Here, also, we see signs of the relationship between acting with the religious hypothesis and actively trying to improve the world.

faith. Religious experience enhances, energizes, shows the bare possibility of religious truth, a chance that there be something behind nature of which nature is an expression.⁷² This possibility, even for those who have not experienced such higher powers, may open up the route of Pascalian retraining.⁷³ As reconstructed here, these arguments seem to boil down to the argument that there is a genuine risk here to be taken, that the individual has the right to take it, and that such risk-taking may lead to its hoped for fulfillment. Given this, the religious experience of others can be taken to show there is a genuine chance there may be higher powers with purposes overlapping our own.⁷⁴

⁷²For examples of this kind of Jamesian interpretation of the role of the higher powers, see Some Problems of Philosophy, pp., 112, 115, and 116.

⁷³Such retraining, based on a belief in a higher power, may be at the heart of the Alcoholics Anonymous program discussed in the following footnote.

⁷⁴It may be useful to note that this "higher power" kind of talk, along with its limited sovereignty over the individual believer, and in conjunction with an effort to change one's own life, is characteristic of many self-help programs. The paradigm case of this is Alcoholics Anonymous (AA). Part of this program involves individual acceptance of some higher power (HP), vaguely specified. As a matter of fact, William James's work on religious experience is cited to explain the role of the HP in AA by what some have termed the "Bible" of AA, Alcoholics Anonymous: The Story of How Many Thousands of Men and Women have Recovered from Alcoholism (New York: Works Publishing Inc., 1951), e.g., pp. 38, and p. 399. Others have found the antidote almost as distasteful as the

V. Some Standard Psychological Criticisms of Jamesian Argument from Religious Experience:

A. Introductory

James was a controversial writer whose ideas and arguments and vivid style easily lent themselves to severe and serious criticism as well as to satiric caricature. The "Will to Believe," for example, was called the "Will to Make-Believe."⁷⁵ James himself

disease, wanting to have neither a drug nor an HP dependence.

For the more secular among the secular humanists, this presents certain difficulties discussed in recent issues of Free Inquiry; see, for example, Robert Meyers "Can a Secular Humanist Coexist in Alcoholics Anonymous?" (Spring 1987, Vol. 7, No. 2) 7. Meyer provides further references. In the same issue of Free Inquiry (pp. 7-8) in "Secular Sobriety Groups: A Thriving Alternative," James Christopher argues for establishing an AA type program without the assistance of HP.

James, himself, throughout the course of Varieties, points out an interesting correlation between religious conversion and lifestyle changes including abstinence from alcohol (p. 268), tobacco (pp. 270, 290), and sexual vice (p. 270). See also pp. 387-393, where James finds drug euphoria to have an interesting overlap with religious experience. For more concerning James's own experiments with psychoactive drugs, these pages in Varieties are quite useful. Also of interest is his discussion at the end of "On Some Hegelianisms," (Will to Believe., pp. 217-221) where James goes so far as to urge his readers to repeat his own experiments with nitrous oxide (p. 217).

⁷⁵By Dickinson Sergeant Miller in his article, "'The Will to Believe' and the Duty to Doubt," International Journal of Ethics, 9 (January 1899), 169-195; the caricature occurs on p. 187 (according to note 7.23 on p. 253 of Will to Believe).

admitted that the title was misleading, and later regretted that the piece had not been entitled "The Right to Believe"⁷⁶ or "a 'Critique of Pure Faith.'"⁷⁷ According to Levinson, "'The Will to Believe' caused such a scandal in philosophical circles in England and America that James was saddled with its defense for the last fifteen years of his life."⁷⁸

It is neither my goal nor desire to defend James's arguments for the "religious hypothesis" against all possible or actual criticisms, but rather, to point out that James does provide a first line of defense against basic psychological criticisms of the kind that would and do occur to those of us suspicious enough to question human motives and objectivity with respect to religious issues. One need not be committed to a

⁷⁶In a letter of August 12, 1904, James describes another's work as ". . . a beautiful duplicate of my own theses in the 'Will to Believe,' essay (which should have been called by the less unlucky title the *Right to Believe*)" This is from a letter to L. T. Hobhouse, quoted in Ralph Barton Perry's The Thought and Character of William James, Volume II, Philosophy and Psychology, (Boston: Little, Brown, and Company, 1935), p. 245.

⁷⁷In a letter of October 24, 1901, to J. Mark Baldwin, James expresses his chagrin: "It seems to me absurd to make a technical term of the 'Will to Believe.' Would God I had never thought of that unhappy title for my essay, but called it a 'Critique of Pure Faith!'" (Perry, The Thought and Character of William James, Volume II, p. 244.)

⁷⁸Levinson, The Religious Philosophy of William James, p. 56.

formal or professional psychological system to voice concerns about the possible pernicious influence of wishful thinking and selfish motives on reporters of religious experience. One might also speculate about physical pathology and aetiology of the religious experience. James does, as matter of record, anticipate criticisms based on basic psychological allegations of wishful thinking, selfishness, physical pathology, and insanity. Before presenting and evaluating the more sophisticated Skinnerian and Freudian criticisms of argument from religious experience, it seems proper to let James's defense against these basic psychological and aetiological criticism be heard. First I will present some of James's responses to basic psychological charges of wishful thinking, then I will turn to his anticipations of charges based on aetiology and pathology.

B. Wishful Thinking

The charge of wishful thinking with respect to James's arguments is probably as old as his arguments. There does seem to be something very suspicious in choosing to accept a conclusion on the basis that the thesis advanced suits one's own personal needs. There may be many things which I would like to be true, which

it would be better if they were true, even better if I believe them true,⁷⁹ which are barely possible but nonetheless false. The wishful thinking criticism can be expressed at the lay-level in terms of proverbial expressions about wished-for horses and the beggars who would ride if wishes and their objects were one. James anticipates criticisms based on allegations of wishful thinking in at least two ways. The first way is his counterclaim about the influence and role of wishful thinking in general. In the second, James aims a particular counter-charge of wishful thinking at those who leveled the wishful thinking criticism in the first place.

1. James's General Response to the Charge of Wishful Thinking

James anticipates the charge of wishful thinking in the course of the "Will to Believe" argument itself.

⁷⁹As a philosophical-psychological position it has been seriously argued that some illusions are requisite for optimal human existence. See "Positive Denial: The Case for not Facing Reality" (Richard S. Lazarus interviewed by Daniel Goleman in Psychology Today, November 1979, pp. 44ff.). It is to be noted, however, that this is not an argument for the truth of the beliefs in question but rather, an argument for believing certain propositions. Of some interest here is the precursive role of such beliefs (paralleling some of James's arguments). Lazarus argued that people actually increased their chances of recovery over what was reasonable to expect by expecting more than was reasonable.

James argues that all thinking is reflective of the thinker's passional nature. He claims we all let our "non-intellectual nature . . . influence our convictions."⁸⁰ According to James, "as a rule we disbelieve all facts and theories for which we have no use." James claims that most scientists, for example, deny telepathy, refusing to "even look at the evidence," since they have no present use for such in their theories. Those, "logicians," James claims, who think that following our "willing nature" is always a mistake are themselves following their own wishes as logicians.⁸¹

On the surface, James's counter-argument here may only show that all stand in glass houses with respect to scientific, philosophical, and religious positions; it gives no one unbreakable walls. This appears to be an *ad hominem* counter-charge of the *tu quoque* variety (James replying that the scientific pot is calling the religious kettle black). What James's reply does, if true, is show that the fact that one is

⁸⁰"Will to Believe," p. 19.

⁸¹*Ibid.* Here James seems to indulging in the same sort of abusive *ad hominem* argument that he is criticizing. As James would himself be quick to point out, the motivations of the logicians, like his own, do not resolve the issue of the validity of their objections. It could be hoped that James's argument here is being given as an example of why abusive *ad hominem* argument is not adequate for a refutation.

motivated to believe a thesis is not in itself evidence for or against the thesis, but rather that further argument and evidence is required to rule on the point at issue. James believes, it would seem, that the arguments he offers in Will to Believe and Other Essays in Popular Philosophy, and the varieties of religious experience presented in Varieties are such argument and evidence.

2. Second Particular Response

James's second kind of response to charges of wishful thinking at the level of basic psychology may be more interesting to those who want other than meta-level claims about the process of this argument. This response suggests a way in which rejection of the religious hypothesis may itself be wishful thinking. For some, James points out in "Is Life Worth Living?", there is a certain satisfaction in "emancipation from monistic superstition," a certain comfort in the absence of a certain kind of divinity: "The certainty that you may step out of life whenever you please and that to do so is not blasphemous or monstrous, is itself an immense relief."⁸²

⁸²"Is Life Worth Living?", Will to Believe., p. 45.

James argues that Epicureanism offers some genuine comforts. There are many who fear hell more than they have ever longed for heaven. Many would derive an "immense relief" from the believed absence of an omniscient, punishing divinity.⁸³

In order to show that the charge of wishful thinking is of no moment, James provides what appears to be some kind of *tu quoque*, along the lines of, "the non-believer is also thinking wishfully."⁸⁴ Yet, as in his above "challenge" concerning the motivations of the logicians, James seems to be pointing out that *ad hominem* criticism on the basis of folk-psychological

⁸³If we take the allegation of wishful thinking here seriously while continuing to accept the Jamesian programme of belief and believability in terms of the positive consequences for our own lives, we find here the basic core of a "Will to Disbelieve" argument. This would be a pragmatic argument for atheism on the basis of atheism's useful contributions to our lives and the improvement of the universe. Such argument generates a different hypothesis, that of an atheistic, comforting, useful and world-improving faith. One who accepted the radical empiricist notion of being-as-power or the more general Jamesian pragmatic arguments for belief in that which furthers would have to weigh this pragmatic atheism against the religious option argued for by James. Interestingly, such a pragmatic counter-argument is suggested and developed to a significant extent in both the Freudian and Skinnerian psychological criticisms of argument from religious experience (discussed below in Chapter Four).

⁸⁴There is a similarity between a *tu quoque* argument of this kind and the example of "that's your opinion" given in Chapter II, *supra*. One of the dangers involved in this kind of move is demonstrated by James's reply. "That's your opinion" can invite itself as a rejoinder.

motivation may work too well: it counts against too many hypotheses. The power of a rejection of this kind of crude folk-psychologism is furthered by James's argument against those who would reject religious experience based on serious pathology, psychopathological defects, insanity, etc.

Here, William James, the great psychologist, inveighs heavily against illicit psychologism at its cruder levels.⁸⁵ In his response to aetiological criticisms of religious experience, James carefully distinguishes between the logic of discovery and the logic of verification.

C. James's Response to other Basic Aetiological Criticism

James directly addresses other possible aetiological criticisms in Lecture I of Varieties of Religious Experience, "Religion and Neurology."⁸⁶

Crudely put, the general aetiological criticism can be stated as follows: People who have religious experiences are crazy; they are suffering from physiological and psychological pathology; therefore we

⁸⁵The cruder psychologism here being the attempt to resolve normative epistemological issues by an appeal to standards of psychological norms and normalcy.

⁸⁶Varieties., pp. 1-26.

need not pay their experience any regard. James offers several responses, depending on the particulars of the criticism offered. Among the views he addresses are (1) a general kind of organic aetiology and (2) particular charges of pathological origins.

1. Response to General Organic Account of Religious Experience

To the objection that such experiences are neurally conditioned, James points out that all experiences are neurally conditioned.⁸⁷ More than a general aetiology is required. He argues that organic causation is not meaningful refutation, "unless one has already worked out in advance some psycho-physical theory connecting spiritual values in general with determinate sorts of physiological changes."⁸⁸

James continues by arguing that the only way to "play fair" here is to admit that we never decide the issue of the superiority of a state of mind on the basis of its causes, but rather, "because we take an immediate delight in them; or else it is because we

⁸⁷Ibid., pp. 13-14.

⁸⁸Ibid., p. 14.

believe them to bring us good consequential fruits for life."⁸⁹

2. Response to Charge of Experiencer Insanity, Pathology, etc.

James grants that the religious often suffer from eccentricities and pathology.⁹⁰ Rather than cause his defense of religious experience to depend on the psychological well-being of the those who have religious experiencers, James provides a dual line of defense against such criticism. One line (a) is hinted at in the first two lectures in Varieties; the other (b) is suggested by the "Will to Believe" and the Postscript at the end of Varieties.

⁸⁹Ibid. p. 15. James's criteria of good fruit here are, "*Immediate luminousness, . . . philosophical reasonableness, and moral help-fulness*" (Varieties., p. 18)" James claims that Saint Theresa could have been as placid as a cow and this would not justify her theology; but, if her theology is fruitful by the above standard, "it will make no difference how hysterical or nervously off her balance" she was (Varieties., p.18).

Suppose "immediate delight" could be understood as allowing the affirmation of a substantive conclusion based on the sheer nature of an experience. This view could be construed as flouting both James's pragmatism and his radical empiricism, each of which requires an investigation of and concern with other experiences--the former for ascription of truth; the latter for the attribution of objectivity.

⁹⁰Varieties., pp. 6-9.

a. Response 1: the crazy may see better

Towards the end of his first lecture in Varieties,⁹¹ James argues that a little bit of psychological imbalance in conjunction with intelligence will enhance one's ability to make a religious contribution. He then quotes Maudsely's argument that the pathological may be better, more reliable, observers in this area.

Maudsely begins by reminding us that nature may work in strange ways, that "an incomplete mind" [may be] a more suitable instrument for a particular purpose." Maudsely also argues that it is the work done that is at issue, that ultimately it is not very important if the worker was "singularly defective."⁹²

James continues arguing that it is not the origin which is at issue when we consider the value of something. Rather, he claims, it is "the way in which it works on the whole This is our own empiricist criterion; and this criterion the stoutest

⁹¹Ibid., pp. 22ff.

⁹²Ibid., p. 19; James cites, "H. Maudsely: Natural Causes and Supernatural Seemings, 1886, pp. 257, 256."

insisters on supernatural origin have also been forced to use in the end."⁹³

Further, in his second lecture, "Circumscription of the Topic,"⁹⁴ James directs his attention deliberately to the more extreme, less reasonable, population. James claims that the essential qualities by which religious experiences must be judged "will be of course most prominent in those religious experiences which are most one sided, exaggerated, and intense."⁹⁵

One way of making sense of James's reply to this objection is in terms of his thorough pragmatism. Nothing, no experience or belief, is going to be accepted or rejected except on grounds of its integration with and consequences on future experience. In general, it may be a useful rule of thumb for just such reasons to reject theses with pathological origins. However, in the particular case, there may be factors which outweigh such rejection. Given that pathology is occasionally linked with extra-sensitivity in perception and sensitivity to features in the environment of which most normal observers may be

⁹³Ibid., pp. 19-20.

⁹⁴Ibid., particularly pp. 40-57.

⁹⁵Ibid., p. 45.

unaware,⁹⁶ and given the importance of religious experience, religious experience is a case requiring particular investigation.

b. Response 2: the bare chance

Another kind of response is available to James even if the experiences in Varieties of Religious Experience do not give us a straightforward probability of reliable data. In his "Postscript" at the conclusion of Varieties,⁹⁷ James suggests that the existence of the data alone provides a bare chance of

⁹⁶The migraine sufferer's sensitivity to light, and the hang-over victim's conscious awareness of previously inaudible sounds and undetected odors are two obvious examples. For more unusual examples of pathologies that give as well as take away, see Part Two, "Excesses," (pp. 81-120) in Oliver Sachs's The Man Who Mistook His Wife for a Hat and Other Clinical Tales, New York, Summit Books, 1985. There are some analogous results from the Vietnam Head Injury Study: H. Gustav Mueller, in "An Auditory Test Protocol for Evaluation of Neural Trauma" reports an increase of accuracy in certain reports of right ear auditory data by subjects with hemispherectomies (Seminars in Hearing, Vol. 8, No. 3, Audiological Aspects of Head Trauma, edited by H. Gustav Mueller and Roy K. Sedge (August 1987): 223-239; this report can be found on p. 235). In "Comparison of the Efficiency of Cortical Level Speech Tests," appearing later in that volume (279-298), Mueller, William G. Beck, and Sedge suggest that the "improved score for the right ear when right temporal lobe injury is present" are "presumably because of a reduction in processing competition in the left temporal lobe" from left ear stimuli (282-283).

⁹⁷Varieties., pp. 524-527.

their veridicality.⁹⁸ This, as I have argued, allows one to offer, even at this bare level of religious experience, enough to run the rest of the Jamesian argument given above. In doing so, it causes the point to turn on issues other than psychopathology and aetiology of religious experience.

D. Later Psychological Criticisms: The Modern Challenge of Skinner and Freud

Suppose someone could offer reason to believe that religious experience is not exceptional with respect to origin. Suppose it were shown of religious experiences that their origins themselves contained the key to whatever basic value they had. Then, origin would be relevant to the Jamesian argument from religious experience. It is taken as a commonplace in textbooks

⁹⁸James "faith ladder" movement from the bare possibility of a belief to its affirmation requires only that there be a finite possibility, however small, and an incredibly important pay-off if one accepts the possibility as true. Taken in this fashion, James seems to be accepting a wager along the lines of Pascal's. Some see such risk-taking in the realm of truth as a form of immoral self-service reflecting a questionable deity. It should be pointed out in James's defense that he advocates such risk-taking not in terms of the pay-off to the individual risk-taker, but as a way to perfecting the world. James's own ambivalence (moral condemnation on the one hand, admiration of this kind of argument on the other) regarding the moral legitimacy of such alethiology is reflected in his discussions of Pascal in "The Will to Believe."

on the philosophy of religion, as well as other basic treatments, that certain modern systems of psychology do provide this kind of challenge to arguments from religious experience.

James's defense against the aetiological criticisms of his own day leaves us good reason for concluding that such criticisms may commit some form of the fallacy of abusive *ad hominem*, applying as they do a general rule of thumb concerning origins ("reject theses due to their pathological origins") to cases which James argues are exceptions.

Yet despite James's spry defense and the defenses provided by the Jamesian argument against the basic psychological criticisms of his own day, we may now have psychological criticisms of argument from religious experience that tell the entire story of the value of religious experiences. These criticisms may be telling with respect to religious experience arguments in general, including James's.

The particular psychological criticisms of Freud (dynamic psychology paradigm) and Skinner (behavioral psychology paradigm) of arguments from religious experience may be counter-arguments that do not trespass into the territory of abusive *ad hominem* criticism. Though James was contemporary with the originators of these theories, he did not have a chance

to reply to these criticisms directly. Nor, given his interests, did James provide an explicit account of what it would be for a psychological criticism to commit an abusive *ad hominem* fallacy.

Though James knew of Freud's work, he couldn't know Freud's later work on religion, because James died long before Freud was willing to let his views on religion be published. James also predates Skinner's work, though not Skinner's general positivistic style.

Before an *ad hominem* analysis of Freudian and Skinnerian criticisms of argument from religious experience can be undertaken, their views need to be set forth, the task of the next chapter (Chapter Four). In that chapter, I reconstruct a strong version of each of these two kinds of criticism, before addressing (in Chapter Five) a defense against them along the lines of the possible response: Don't these criticisms commit the fallacy of abusive *ad hominem*?

Chapter Four
 Freudian and Skinnerian Criticism of
 Religious Experience Arguments

No, our science is no illusion. But an
 illusion it would be to suppose that what
 science cannot give us we can get elsewhere.

--Freud, Future of an Illusion¹

I. Introduction

Freud and Skinner present psychological work that can be used by philosophers to criticize argument from religious experience.² Freud wrote explicitly and critically on the origins and future of religion, and even devoted some space to explicit discussion of

¹The Future of an Illusion, Newly Translated from the German and edited by James Strachey (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1961), p. 56.

²Later psychodynamic theorists and behaviorists vary greatly in their adherence to Freud's and Skinner's presentations. For the purposes of this study, these disagreements and alternative developments will be excluded in order to complete the task at hand. In later work, I hope to contribute to the interpretation of these disagreements by exploring some of the relations between psychologists' initial philosophical religious stances and subsequent theory development.

religious experience argument.³ Freud's position has directly influenced most subsequent philosophical treatments of argument from religious experience. It is generally regarded as meriting reply,⁴ is often presented as telling,⁵ and is usually put to use as an important step in "cluster" refutation of religious experience argument.⁶

³See, e.g., his discussion in Future., pp. 28-29, and in Civilization and its Discontents, Newly Translated from the German and edited by James Strachey, (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1961) pp. 11-20.

⁴This is the case in virtually every discussion of Freud's criticism of argument from religious experience including standard introductions to the philosophy of religion such as John Hick's Philosophy of Religion 3d. ed. (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1983), the treatments in the Encyclopedia of Philosophy (s.v., "Religion, Psychological Explanations of," and "Religious Experience, Argument for the Existence of God"), Louis J. Pojman's "The Argument from Religious Experience" in Pojman's (ed.) Philosophy of Religion: An Anthology (Belmont, California: Wadsworth Publishing Company, 1987) pp. 90-96, and ranging to Hans Küng's counter-critique, Freud and the Problem of God, translated by Edward Quinn (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1979).

⁵E.g., by J. L. Mackie in his The Miracle of Theism: Arguments For and Against the Existence of God (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1982), pp. 196-198 and Adolf Grünbaum in "More on Freud, Psychoanalysis, and Religion: An Interview with Adolf Grünbaum" Free Inquiry Winter 1985/86 Vol. 6, No. 1:30-36. For Grünbaum's own critique of Freud, see his Foundations of Psychoanalysis: A Philosophical Critique (Berkeley, Los Angeles, and London: University of California Press, 1984).

⁶By "cluster refutation" I mean a refutation that uses a variety of (often non-conclusive but suggestive) counter-arguments to weaken another position. The most

Skinner applies his psychological theory to the analysis of religion in Science and Human Behavior,⁷ and provides material for analysis of particular cases in Verbal Behavior.⁸ Skinner's behaviorism has not yet found its way into the center of philosophical debate over religious experience argument, but it probably will. His position is intimately linked to a certain

appropriate, and most convincing, cases of cluster argument are those refutations offered in response to rhetorical challenges and arguments from ignorance along the lines of "how else could one possibly explain X except by means of my position Y?" As Mackie points out, a Freudian view can combine with other natural histories of religion (e.g., Feuerbach, Marx). Concerning natural histories of this nature, Mackie grants James's objection that "no account of the origin of a belief can settle the question whether that belief is or is not true." Still, he maintains that it is "very likely that each of them correctly identifies factors which have contributed to some extent to religion, whether to the content of its beliefs, or to its emotional power, or to its practices and organization, both as originating and as sustaining causes," and, as such, "contributes indirectly and subordinately to the case against theism." (The Miracle of Theism, p. 197). If however, one refuses to grant the Jamesian point by allowing for the possibility of a naturalistic explanation that does explain why a belief is false or dangerous, then one will worry about natural histories that challenge the value of a religion on the basis of its consequences including interference with world-views such as Marxism which offer different remedies to our problems.

⁷B. F. Skinner, Science and Human Behavior, (New York: The Free Press, 1965; c. 1953 by the Macmillan Company), Chapter 18, "Religion," pp. 350-358.

⁸B. F. Skinner, Verbal Behavior (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1957).

school of analytic philosophers,⁹ the inheritors of what might be called the Russell-Quine tradition, since Skinnerian psychology was deliberately offered from its inception as a naturalized epistemology.¹⁰

Skinner and Freud both present complex, at times ornate, naturalistic theories that can be used to make sense of religious experience reports and to evaluate some basic religious experience arguments that depend on different accounts of these experiences. Even when denying the particulars of these psychological theories,¹¹ philosophers have accepted their gist, namely that religious experience reports are psychological evidence about the experiencers, not evidence for the truth of theology. Making of this a rule of thumb, e.g., "such experiences are evidence of individual or group psychology and psychopathology, not

⁹Important work done by Quine is explicitly conducted on the lines of Skinnerian behaviorism, e.g., Quine's theory of language acquisition in Word and Object (Cambridge, Massachusetts: M.I. T. Press, 1960). The influence is mutual: Quine cites Skinner's Science and Human Behavior and Verbal Behavior in Word and Object (pp. 80, 82), and we have Skinner's testimony in Skinner's, The Shaping of a Behaviorist, Part Two of an Autobiography (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, p. 151) to Quine's assistance in the preparation of Verbal Behavior.

¹⁰Shaping., p. 29.

¹¹See, for example, Grünbaum's "Interview." and Mackie's Miracle of Theism.

theology," philosophers¹² have applied psychological theory to reject religious experience argument, not only in its cruder forms but also in more sophisticated ones.

It will be clear that although the Freudian and Skinnerian critiques of religious experience argument presented here can be brought to bear even on carefully crafted, well-defended philosophical arguments such as James's,¹³ these criticisms purport mainly to attack religion as presented in the popular imagination. Freud specifically disavows criticism of any kind of sophisticated philosophical theology, particularly those of a non-anthropomorphic nature. It is made abundantly clear in Freud's depiction of the religious world view in The Future of an Illusion that it is popular, not philosophical, religious positions that are supposedly at stake. Yet, accompanying statements, including an attack on Vaihinger¹⁴ make clear that Freud is not only willing to reject or ignore philosophical theology on its own merits as philosophy,

¹²See note 3, supra, for a brief list of standard accounts of philosophical psychological criticism of argument from religious experience.

¹³See Mackie's section on psychological criticism of argument from religious experience in his Miracle of Theism for an example of this.

¹⁴Future., pp. 28-29.

he also refuses to give such work the honorific of the name 'religion'.¹⁵

A. Interlude: The Structure of Popular Religious Arguments

In popular imagination and non-philosophical discussion, religious arguments are neither as subtle nor as cautiously non-dogmatic as the Jamesian argument from religious experience reconstructed in the previous chapter. Perhaps the five most popular religious arguments are what could be classified as (i) argument from existence, (ii) argument from design, (iii) argument from morality, (iv) argument from despair, and (v) argument from religious experience. As popularly offered, these five kinds of argument have a similar structure. Each (1) presents a certain state of affairs the non-religious should be willing to

¹⁵Freud claimed that only the religion of the common man deserves the name (Civilization and its Discontents, p. 21). Though he also claimed not to be attacking the philosopher's watered-down deities, etc., he was willing on occasion to indulge himself in such attack, e.g., his criticism of Hans Vaihinger's work in Future of an Illusion. Yet, it should be remembered that Freud admitted he had little ability or desire to do philosophy:

Even when I have moved away from observation, I have carefully avoided any contact with philosophy proper. This avoidance has been greatly facilitated by constitutional incapacity. (Autobiography, Translated by James Strachey (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, Inc. 1935), p. 121.)

acknowledge, and then (2) presents some religious theory as the only (a) explanation or (b) remedy for that state of affairs. It is argued that if one accepts (1), then one is obliged to accept (2), under the penalty of being inconsistent (if explanation is at issue) or doomed (if remedy is at issue). The general form of such arguments is usually reducible to modus ponens by simple transformations (if p then q, p; therefore q). Examples follow:

(i) argument from existence:

1. The world would not exist without a creator;
2. The world exists;
3. Therefore there is a creator.

(ii) argument from design:

1. The only or best explanation of design and order in the universe is a designer God;
2. There is design and order in the universe;
3. Therefore there is a designer God.

(iii) argument from morality:

1. There is no source for objective morality but divine authority;
2. There is objective morality;
3. Therefore there is divine authority.

(iv) argument from despair:

1. The frail human person is doomed to a terrible fate (hell, insanity, . . . meaningless existence) in the absence of a divine redeemer from this plight;
2. this doom is unacceptable;
3. thus there is a divine redeemer.

(v) argument from religious experience:

1. The only good explanation for the existence of religious experiences is the existence of some divine source of these experiences;
2. religious experiences are widespread;
3. therefore the only good explanation is the existence of a divine source of these experiences.

B. Refutation Strategies for Popular and Pragmatic¹⁶ Religious Experience Arguments

1. Popular Religious Arguments

Given that popular argument from religious experience is of the form modus ponens¹⁷--

¹⁶By "pragmatic arguments," I mean here arguments deriving their support from future consequences of accepting their conclusion.

¹⁷(1) if there is religious experience (p), then there is a divine source of the experience (q); (2)

(1) if p then q, (2) p; (3) therefore q

--two strategies of refutation are immediately suggested.

i. show that q is not a necessary condition for p, i.e., that p can occur in the absence of q.¹⁸

ii. deny the assertion of p, i.e., deny that the phenomenon to be explained exists.

2. Refutation Strategy for Pragmatic Experience Argument

The basic refutation of any pragmatic argument from religious experience consists in showing that accepting such experiences as evidence does not work as advertised by the proponents of the pragmatic argument in question.

C. Freudian and Skinnerian Critique of Argument from Religious Experience

Freud and Skinner each provide material for attempting two-prong refutations of religious experience arguments. The first prong, the aetiological, focuses on the premises of the popular modus ponens argument from religious experience; the

there is religious experience (p); (3) therefore there is a divine source of the experience (q).

¹⁸In non-deductive versions of the popular argument (where it is argued that the most likely explanation for p is q), one needs show that some other explanation is more likely.

second prong addresses the pragmatics of belief based on religious experience.¹⁹

In the following sections of this chapter, I present reconstructions of Freudian and Skinnerian criticisms of argument from religious experience. I intend to show how they (1) bear on the popular kind of religious experience argument and (2) how they apply to the Jamesian reconstruction presented in Chapter Three.

II. Freudian Rejection of Argument from Religious Experience

A two-pronged Freudian attack on religious experience argument can be reconstructed. The first prong is aetiological; the second pragmatic. The former is akin to most philosophical uses of Freud's theory of religion in critical discussion of arguments from religious experience.²⁰ It attacks the first

¹⁹Or an interaction between "willed belief" and such experience, as suggested in the Jamesian reconstruction, where the bare possibility introduced by religious experience could function as the bottom rung of James's "faith-ladder."

²⁰This refers to philosophical accounts of Freudian psychological criticism of argument from religious experience such as that found in Hick, Mackie, Küng, Pojman, and articles in The Encyclopedia of Philosophy (s.v., "Religion, Psychological Explanations of," and "Religious Experience, Argument for the Existence of God"). One need not look outside the realm of psychodynamic theories to find criticisms of Freud's views on religion. As suggested in note 2, above, there are many who consider themselves orthodox

premise of the popular religious experience argument, namely, "The only good (or best) explanation for the existence of religious experiences is the existence of some divine source of these experiences." In order to defeat this premise, Freud's critique of religion is portrayed as providing an aetiology of religion and religious experiences which shows that a divine source is neither a necessary condition nor the best explanation of religious experience. The second prong of this attack is based on the pathological consequences to both individuals and societies of accepting religious beliefs in the absence of scientific evidence.²¹ In the reconstruction offered here, neither prong depends on the definite and determinable falsehood of religious beliefs or on the non-veridical character of religious experiences.²² Rather, the power of this two-fold critique depends on the general truth of its alternative account of religious experience, and on the cogency of its

Freudians, as well as neo-Freudians and ex-Freudians who diverge from Freud on the issue of religion.

²¹This criticism figures prominently in Future of an Illusion (Chapters VII-X) and in the New Introductory Lectures on Psychoanalysis, Newly Translated and Edited by James Strachey, Lecture XXXV, "The Question of a *Weltanschauung*" (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, Inc., 1965).

²²This is not to deny that Freud may have thought these beliefs to be false, and such experiences deceptive.

pragmatic argument that belief based on religious experience is pernicious given the motives that tend to instigate and maintain religious belief.

A. A Freudian Critique of Religious Experience

The two prongs of this Freudian criticism can be presented as an aetiology and diagnosis (Prong 1) followed by a prescription and prognosis (Prong 2) regarding religion and religious experiences.²³ In order to present this reconstruction it will be necessary to show what Freud takes religion to be (i.e., which data Freud takes to explain). It will also be helpful to sketch some relevant parts of Freudian psychoanalytic theory²⁴ and provide definitions of related terminology.

These definitions and explanations should help make sense of the two prongs of Freud's criticism, both of which involve technical psychoanalytic terminology, including at least one "false cognate" in the term 'illusion'.

²³The first two begin with the present situation and include the past; the latter pair concern the future.

²⁴This sketch will of necessity be an abstraction and a reconstruction in its own right.

1. Freud's Notion of Religion

According to Freud, religion is characterized by a belief in the "rule of a divine Providence," "the establishment of a moral world-order," and "the prolongation of earthly existence in a future life."²⁵ According to Freud, the central characteristic of the religious world-view is a belief in a higher purpose and a higher power. According to this view, we are essentially spiritual beings who are part of a higher plan in which we play an important, even if presently obscure part. The higher power makes of our death not an end, but a beginning. The universe despite appearances is ruled by moral law, with one divine father in control. According to Freud, the move from many gods to one father-god was a great advance and a source of pride to its originators. "Fundamentally," he writes, "this was a return to the historical beginnings of the idea of God. Now that God was a single person, man's relations to him could recover the intimacy and intensity of the child's relation to his father."²⁶

²⁵Future., p. 30.

²⁶Future., pp. 18-19.

B. Prong 1--Aetiology & Diagnosis: Religious Experience is an Oedipal Projection with Roots Extending to the Pre-history of Our Species

1. Summary of Prong 1 (Aetiological)

According to Freud, the idealized and incorporated image of the parent as experienced by a young child lives on the adult as the *parental imago*. Religious experience is a function of the subject's perception of his or her projected parental imago, the characteristics of which were produced by the inherited trauma of the pre-historic experience of humanity along with the subject's resolution of the Oedipal crisis. This psychological crisis results when a young child's sexual desire for the parent of the opposite sex collides with the competition, rivalry and overwhelming power of the parent of the same sex. According to Freudian theory, the ghosts of this Oedipal crisis haunt us our entire lives. The experience of the projected imago as real is a function of wish-fulfillment, i.e., it is tied to illusory beliefs accepted on the basis of their conformity with the subject's

wishes.²⁷ The resulting condition, religion, may be diagnosed "as a universal obsessional neurosis."²⁸

2. Prehistorical Roots of Religious Experience

According to Freud's reconstruction of the history of religion,²⁹ we humans once traveled in tribal bands

²⁷More discussion of the *imago* and the *Oedipus* occur below in the section "Transference, Projection, and the Oedipal Roots of Religious Experience."

²⁸Freud, "Obsessive Acts and Religious Practices," in Sigmund Freud: Character and Culture, edited with an introduction by Philip Rieff (New York: Collier Books, a Division of Macmillan Publishing Company, Inc., 1963), p. 25.

²⁹There are two primary sources for Freud's history of religion: (1) Totem and Taboo (in A. A. Brill (Ed.), The Basic Writings of Sigmund Freud (New York: Random House, Modern Library Edition, 1938)), for the pre-history of religion and his theory of primitive religions. (2) For Freud's understanding of the roots of Judaism and Christianity as well as his continued allegiance to the theory of the inheritance of acquired qualities with respect to the memory traces of religious experience Moses and Monotheism is invaluable (see below, note 30).

Major sources for his critique of religion include Future of an Illusion, Civilization and its Discontents, and the New Introductory Lectures on Psychoanalysis. Given that Freud was publishing criticisms of religion based on psychoanalysis at least as early as his 1907 paper on "Obsessive Acts and Religious Practices," and given that my reconstruction of his criticisms sees them as being closely tied to his later tripartite metapsychological division of the psychological person, works such as the Ego and the Id, Translated by Joan Riviere, Revised and Newly Edited by James Strachey (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, Inc., 1962) and Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego, Translated and Edited by James Strachey (New York:

or hordes. The method of social alignment was crude and based on power and size. For most of us, life was nasty, brutish and short. For the leader of the human pack, life was brutish and short, but not as nasty. Due to his domination of the others, he possessed the power, wealth, and women of the community. So long as this leader could beat or cow the rest, he was the all-powerful patriarch of the tribe, and progenitor of most of the children.

Eventually, the other denizens of this savage realm, the rest of us, realized that we could collectively accomplish that which was individually impossible--we could kill this patriarch, eat his body to gain his power for ourselves, and share the booty with each other.

We did so and found that the solution introduced its own set of problems, both practical and psychological. Left without a leader, the once unifying rebellion over, each of us was free to do what was right in his own eyes. Such a state of affairs threatened us with a "war of all against all" and provided a motivation for finding an external unifying and controlling force. Also, we were devastated psychologically. For many of us, the man we had killed

Liveright Publishing Corporation, 1967) also provide relevant source material.

was our own father; we were stricken with remorse, a remorse so powerful as to be mutagenic, to become a genetically inheritable acquired characteristic.³⁰

At this point primitive religion enters the scene as the answer, with its totemic representation of the deposed father. In this kind of religion, the totem is then worshipped and eaten with a ceremonious ritualistic cannibalism (as was the slaughtered father of the primal horde). We then identified with and

³⁰Freud continues to affirm his belief in the inheritability of this acquired characteristic as late as 1938 in Moses and Monotheism. This aspect of his theory has for the most part been overlooked, according to Jones (The Life and Work of Sigmund Freud, Vol. 3, p. 369). But even though people familiar with Freud find it hard to accept that Freud would maintain such a belief in the face of scientific opposition to the contrary, Freud himself held the belief to be important to the scope of the psychoanalytic method. Freud feels compelled to confess he has "argued as if there were no question that there exists an inheritance of memory-traces." He realizes this admission is a difficult one given the rejection of the inheritance of acquired characteristics by modern biology. Nonetheless, Freud insists on his position, saying that he, "cannot picture biological development proceeding without taking this factor into account." Freud goes on to state that it is in this perseverance of memory traces throughout the generations that bridges "the gap between individual and mass psychology," and argues that inherited memory is a necessary postulate for advances in mass psychology. (See Moses and Monotheism, translated from the German by Katherine Jones, at the end of Part III, Section One, Part 5, "Difficulties" (New York: Vintage Books, a Division of Random House, 1967, pp. 127-128)).

See also Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego, Totem and Taboo, Future of an Illusion, and Civilization and its Discontents.

placed ourselves under the authority of the totemic deity, which worked to assure our obedience to the first moral imperatives (imperatives which once came directly from the father leader) forbidding incest and requiring exogamy. In eating the totem god we gained his power; furthermore in identifying ourselves as the people of the totem god we regained the father we had killed; he was resurrected in enduring glory as the ensign of our tribe, the securer of our primitive morality, and our protector from the heavy sense of sin which not only stained us, but our descendants also, through all generations.

3. Transference, Projection, and the Oedipal Roots of Religious Experience

According to the Freudian reconstruction presented here, the aetiology of religious experience is compound. The divinity take its roots in our primitive perceptions of the father slaughtered by the primal horde. To a child (even before this prehistoric patricide) the father is perceived as the godlike omniscient and omnipotent source of the standards and rules the child must obey. These perceptions of the father survive in the unconscious. They there combine with the inherited memory traces of the primal

experience and continue to influence our behavior and perceptions.

a) Oedipus, Transference, and the Experience of Projected Divinity

As Freud is fond of relating in his various histories of the psychoanalytic movement, the fundamental concepts of psychoanalysis were derived from Freud's early encounters with the *resistance* discovered when attempting to get hysterical patients to recall their experiences. Freud inferred an inner repressor and deemed both repressing agency and repressed material unconscious. Psychopathology, slips of the tongue, dreams, and religious experience all were understood to be functions whose origins and energy resulted from this repressed material. In his later work, Freud interpreted the reports of his clients (reports offered under hypnosis, under verbal encouragement and suggestion, and finally, in the later work, reports given through free-associations) as revealing a universal Oedipal drama. Freud found what he took to be evidence for the universal existence of the Oedipus in the testimony of patients, in his analysis of the repressed in dreams, in slips, wit, the transference phenomenon, as well as in art, philosophy, and religion.

Briefly stated, the Oedipus complex is the preservation in the adult individual of the perceptions, strategies and scars of a conflict the individual underwent during his or her preschool years. According to Freud, these perceptions, etc., later color and shape the individual's future experiences: The individual relates to present experiences in ways appropriate to the child's perception of the preschool experiences endured years before. The adult projects these childhood experiences outward, and then experiences them as real. Relationships extensively colored by projections are called transference relationships. Sometimes the scars of childhood experience are too deep or improperly healed and an individual is among the walking wounded. These Oedipal struggles may then interfere with the healthy progress of psycho-sexual development. This interference cripples the individual's ability to enjoy life, diverts the energy needed to work whole-heartedly, and may make it impossible to develop mature sexual relationships.

b) Progression of an Individual's Psycho-Sexual Development from Oedipal Drama to Religious Experience

The child is born into the world with a certain quantity of psycho-sexual energy (termed 'libido')

which is initially attached to or cathected to the child's self. As the child develops out of this stage of infantile narcissism, libido is cathected to the primary organ of sensual pleasure in a stage-like progression. The preschool phases of this progression are oral, anal, and phallic. These three phases overlap the childhood Oedipal drama which seems to subside, along with expressions of sexuality, in the school-age child. During these preschool stages the child initially forms a strong libidnic attraction to the breast and the mother. As the child matures, s/he realizes that s/he has a rival for the maternal love object--the father. According to Freud, the child wants to possess the mother sexually, and is in such grievous rivalry with the father as to want to do away with him. The child realizes that the father is too powerful to contend with, since at this stage of development the parents are perceived as all-powerful, all-knowing beings, who know the secrets of the child's innermost heart. Furthermore, at this level of maturity, the child is still persuaded of the power of magical thinking, and believes that intentions and desires are as real, and as praise- or blame-worthy as actions carried through with those intentions. And given the repressed memories of the iniquities committed by the primal horde, magical thinking and

racial memory conspire to over-determine a state in which the child "knows" s/he is a murderer and fears punishment in the form of castration (a fear which was doubly charged by the parents of Freud's patients who threatened castration as a consequence of infantile masturbation).

One resolves the complex by a process of identification and renunciation. The child identifies with the parent of the same sex and renounces incestual desire. This renunciation is achieved and strengthened by the formation of a super-ego, a section of the child's ego identified with the childhood image of the parents (the parental Imago) perceived in consciousness as conscience and as the ego-ideal. When projected onto or into the world, the Imago is taken by the experiencer to be a veridical perception of a divine being. Depending on the child's sex, a full resolution of the Oedipus awaits many factors. These include successfully surviving the resurgence of the Complex in adolescence with the onset of adolescent sexuality and the libidnic excesses of that time of life, as well as the full identification made possible only through finding a mate outside the family circle and actually becoming a parent.³¹

³¹According to Freud (see his Lecture XXXIII, "Femininity," in the New Introductory Lectures on

Throughout life, these experiences of this childhood conflict are alive and present in the unconscious of the individual. This childish, magically thinking, ever-desiring, instinctually driven self is described topographically by Freud in his tripartite division of the person as the "id". That part of the individual responsible for maintaining connection and connection with reality and mediating between the id and reality is the "ego." That part of the ego, largely and usually unconscious, which bears and enforces the ego-ideal is the "super-ego."³²

Later in life, one tends to transfer or project one's Oedipal perceptions onto the universe and all that dwells therein. Unless one has enjoyed an

Psychoanalysis (pp. 112-135)), the situation is even more complicated for a woman. In the case of the female, full resolution is made possible only through the birth of a male child. Freud argues that this is necessary since the woman, from the time of the Electra (the female version of the Oedipus), perceives herself as a castrate. Given the resultant "penis-envy," successful resolution of this childhood drama is made possible only when she acquires a penis symbolically by giving birth to a son.

³²For the major features of this account, I have relied primarily on the 31st and 33d Lectures in Freud's New Introductory Lectures on Psychoanalysis, "The Dissection of the Psychological Personality" and "Femininity." It is also informed by Freud's The Ego and the Id, Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego, Five Lectures on Psycho-analysis, Translated and Edited by James Strachey (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, Inc., 1977), and Freud's histories of psychoanalysis including The History of the Psychoanalytic Movement (in Brill's Basic Writings of Sigmund Freud), and Freud's Autobiography.

extremely successful resolution of the Oedipus, problems and pathology may emerge, among them, religious experiences. This lack of resolution, including its powerful springs of guilt from childhood wishes, combines with the unconscious recollection of the drama of the primal horde.³³ Together these create a human being who copes by denying the childhood (in wish) and prehistoric murder (in deed) of the divine father, a person who experiences this god's continued

³³For those of us who find the notion of inherited memory totally incredible, its contribution to a Freudian criticism of argument from religious experience is an embarrassment, and an apparently unnecessary embarrassment at that. It seems unnecessary due to the over-determination of the religious experience by the Oedipal crisis and the pre-Oedipal experiences of relation and identity Freud briefly discusses in Civilization and its Discontents (pp. 11-20; see e.g., p. 19. Freud himself there states that he does not believe the infant's pre-Oedipal experience of unity and oneness with the mother is the "source of religious needs," hence the limited discussion here.). Yet, though Freud seems to be mistaken in his belief in the inheritance of acquired memories, and thus in error as an historiographer, there is still a possibility that future psychology will reveal something tantamount to the inheritance of bogus memories or basic fantasies. These might function as templates or scenarios (perhaps paralleling the crude common features of romance novels and fairy-tales, a sort of vestigial human counterpart to the instincts), which may influence human behavior, though false.

Whatever the scientific fate of these collective memories of dramas, Freud deems them central to his mass psychology, the classic source of his attack on religion (as indicated in note 30, above).

existence as an all-powerful, all-knowing source of both nature and morality.

4. Diagnosis

Freud claims that religious belief when allied with religious practices is a "collective neurosis" of humanity.³⁴ Although Freud fleshes out this view in later works, most particularly the Future of an Illusion and Civilization and its Discontents, this theoretical alliance of religion with neuroses and psycho-pathology occurs as early as his 1907 paper "Obsessive Acts and Religious Practices."³⁵

³⁴"Obsessive Acts and Religious Practices," p. 25.

³⁵Freud writes, "In view of these resemblances and analogies [between religious practices and behavior flowing from obsessive-compulsive neuroses] one might venture to regard the obsessional neurosis as a pathological counterpart to the formation of a religion, to describe this neurosis as a private religious system, and religion as a universal obsessional neurosis." (p. 25)

"Obsessive Acts and Religious Practices," pp. 17-26; this quotation is from the Freud anthology, Character and Culture. (This article also is found in Volume 2 of Freud's Collected Papers.)

C. Prong 2--Prescription and Prognosis: "Illusion" qua "Illusion" to be Rejected as Destructive to the Ego According to Freudian View

1. Summary of Prong 2: (Pragmatic)

An activity is ego-syntonic just in case it strengthens the ego in its function of mediating between the demands of reality, basic instinctual drives (of appetite, aggression, and sexuality), and conscience. As mediator, the ego needs to make adequate contact with both the external and internal demands involved. Thus, one of its main tasks is "reality testing"--making an accurate determination of the limits imposed on the organism by the external world including one's own body. *Illusory beliefs are not ego-syntonic and are thus ultimately destructive if allowed to control individuals and societies, even if they should happen, e.g., by accident, to be true.*³⁶

³⁶If they were known to be true on the basis of evidence, and accepted for that reason, then they would not be illusions.

2. Illusions: Nature and Effects

a) The Nature of an Illusion

Freud has an unusual definition of "illusion."³⁷ For Freud, although illusions are usually false, they are not false by definition. According to the definition Freud offers in Future of Illusion, what characterizes illusions is one's motivation for believing them. Freud begins by distinguishing illusions from falsehoods. Though illusions "are *derived from human wishes*," they, unlike delusions, are not necessarily false. A middle-class child's expectation of a royal marriage is one example Freud gives of an illusion; the belief in the coming of the Messiah is another. Freud is aware that, "*whether one classifies this belief as an illusion or as something analogous to a delusion will depend on one's personal attitude.*" In an attempt to focus on the motivation of the beliefs in question he defines a belief as "*an illusion when a wish-fulfillment is a prominent factor in its motivation, and in doing so we disregard its*

³⁷This is important to recall, especially with respect to pragmatic arguments for religious belief along the lines of Pascal's Wager or those offered by James in Will to Believe and other Essays in Popular Philosophy.

relations to reality, just as the illusion itself sets no store by verification."³⁸

b) Illusory Belief Destructive

Belief based on illusion undermines the ego's reality-testing function which is needed to deal with the environment. Such belief is thus destructive for the integration of individual persons and societies. The step from inadequate neurotic response to reality--as a function of transference and illusion--to

³⁸Future., (pp. 30-31; emphasis added); Freud later (in Civilization and its Discontents, pp. 28; and 31-32) portrays religions as delusion: "A special importance attaches to the case in which this attempt to procure a certainty of happiness and a protection against suffering through a delusional remoulding of reality is made by a considerable number of people in common. The religious of mankind must be classed among the mass-delusions of this kind. No one, needless to say, who shares a delusion, ever recognizes it as such." (p. 28)

I have focused on Freud's characterization of religion as illusion, however, not as delusion in order to reduce the assumptions presently required to defend a Freudian account of religion. If Freud's basic anti-religion argument can be carried through without making the assumption or attempting to warrant the claim that so many suffer from the extreme psychopathology of maintaining a delusional system, the argument is more easily defended with respect to implausibility. If it turns out that the millions of followers of world religions are deluded, the weaker argument which makes of religion a neurosis can be easily emended and will still do the job. Since I will later try to show that Freud provides the elements of a core argument that such religious illusions lead to psychoses, it will be seen that the Freudian position suggested here is not as self-contradictory as it originally appears.

a blatant and dangerous inadequacy in perceiving reality is a short one. The acceptance of illusions paves the way to living in a world of delusions.

Freudian psychoanalysis provides grounds for a pragmatic criticism of both popular argument from religious experience and "Will to Believe" type arguments. That Freud holds such illusory belief to be destructive is made clear in his New Introductory Lectures on Psychoanalysis.

Freud there rejects the use of non-scientific methods such as "intuition and divination," since they are wish-fulfillments. Science, Freud cautions us, leads us to be wary of emotional demands and wishes. Though such wishes may function in the production of (science's rivals) art, religion and philosophy, Freud claims, "it would be illegitimate and highly inexpedient to allow these demands to be transferred to the sphere of knowledge." To let wishful demands dictate that knowledge Freud holds evidence alone has the right to indicate would lead us down a path to insanity which would preclude us from finding the truths that are there to find. It would "lay open the paths which lead to psychosis . . . and would withdraw

valuable . . . energy from endeavors which are directed towards reality"³⁹

³⁹New Introductory Lectures., pp. 159-160; emphasis added.

It is interesting to note that this second prong is relevant not only to the popular versions of religious experience argument, but also bears directly on the "Will to Believe" features in the Jamesian reconstruction offered in Chapter III. The bearing is both historical and philosophical. James's arguments in the "Will to Believe" were offered explicitly in response to W. K. Clifford's "The Ethics of Belief" (in Clifford's Lectures and Essays (London: Macmillan, 1879); reprinted in Louis J. Pojman's (editor) Philosophy of Religion: An Anthology (Belmont, California: Wadsworth Publishing Company, 1987)). Clifford argues that, when we believe from motives such as wishful thinking, convenience, etc., that we harm ourselves as rational individuals as well as a species, that this is "to cry 'Peace' . . . when there is no peace" (Pojman, 387):

Every time we let ourselves believe for unworthy reasons, we weaken our powers of self-control, of doubting, judicially and fairly weighing evidence. . . . if I let myself believe anything on insufficient evidence, there may be no great harm done by the mere belief; it may be true after all, or I may never have occasion to exhibit it in outward acts. But I cannot help doing this great harm to Man, that I make myself credulous. The danger to society is not merely that it should believe wrong things, though that is great enough; but that it should become credulous, and lose the habit of testing things and inquiring into them; for then it must sink back into savagery. (Pojman, p. 387)

One of the things the Freudian argument shows, if accepted as an accurate pathology of illusory belief, is that Clifford's dramatic claims are true, that illusory belief is pathogenic for both individuals and societies.

That these remarks are directed particularly against the "illusions" of religion, Freud makes clear when he writes, "Of the three powers which may dispute the basic position of science, religion alone is to be taken seriously as an enemy."⁴⁰

III. Skinnerian Critique

As a second account and kind of criticism of religious experience argument, the Skinnerian merits consideration for at least two reasons. Skinner's views are closely tied to those of one major current philosophical school--the Russell-Quine tradition.⁴¹

⁴⁰This occurs in the next section of the New Introductory Lectures., p. 160.

⁴¹Quine and Skinner have been friends for over 50 years. The influence of Skinner's work on verbal behavior is documented in Word and Object, pp. 80, 82. Quine's influence on Skinner's work on verbal behavior is discussed in Skinner's, The Shaping of a Behaviorist: Part Two of an Autobiography (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, p. 151) and is documented in Verbal Behavior itself (pp. 18, 324, 342). In Shaping., Skinner claims that he was influenced towards behaviorism by Russell's work Philosophy, which with Watson's Behaviorism, and Pavlov's Conditioned Reflexes, "had," he thought as he entered his first year of graduate school, "prepared me for a career in psychology" (p. 4). Skinner also was motivated to extend his behaviorism into the complexities of verbal behavior and issues of epistemology by his discussions with Whitehead, whom Skinner once told, "we needed a psychological epistemology" (Shaping., p. 29). In 1934, Whitehead challenged Skinner to explain verbal behavior within the limits of behaviorism. The work that culminated in Verbal Behavior was then begun (Shaping., pp. 149-151; see also Verbal Behavior (pp.

Secondly, there is a sense in which the Skinnerian account arises in response to problems with Freud. Skinner's system can be seen as inheriting much from the mood of the Freudian.⁴² Though including many of the elements of Freudian psychology, the Skinnerian psychology inverts priorities. What was central to Freudian psychology moves towards the periphery; what was peripheral becomes central. Skinner's theoretical accounts begin with publicly observable behavior--the central theoretical terms in Skinner's theory concern observable stimuli and responses to such stimuli. It is only after the groundwork has been laid there that Skinner gives attention to behavioral interpretation of behavior within the skin, or "covert behavior."⁴³ The

456-460) where Skinner attempts to meet Whitehead's challenge).

⁴²This is, apparently, deliberate. According to Saul Rosenzweig ("The Impact of B. F. Skinner on Psychiatry," Medical World News: Psychiatry 1972, pp. 54-55, 59-60), while a graduate student at Harvard, Skinner "predicted that he would one day translate all of Freud into objective terms." (p. 59) Skinner's goal may account for the parallels between his psychological criticism of argument from religious experience and that of Freud. Both account for religious experience as misinterpretation of information about the self, in terms of needs satisfied as a result of taking and presenting these experiences as evidence of higher powers. Skinner, it will be seen, also criticizes this kind of move as interfering with mental health and societal development. See "The Dangers of Superstitiously Conditioned Experience," and note 72, below.

⁴³Freud on the contrary, places internal dynamics at the theoretical center, and overt behavior at the

gist of his theory can be presented in the following terms.

A. Conditioning and Schedules of Reinforcement

There are two kinds of conditioning processes useful in predicting and controlling the behavior of organisms: classical conditioning and operant conditioning.

Classical conditioning is the kind of conditioning process involved in cases such as that of Pavlov's dogs, wherein an involuntary response to a stimulus (in the Pavlov case, salivation in the presence of food) begins to occur in the presence of some associated stimulus (e.g., the dinner bell) even in the absence of the original stimulus (food).

The second kind of conditioning process, "operant conditioning," is the kind associated with what we would normally term teleological behavior. Skinner's operant theory states that non-reflexive non-Pavlovian behavior is a function of consequences of similar previous behavior--that behavior which is followed by reinforcing consequences recurs with greater frequency, whereas behavior is less likely to recur when not reinforced. The core of this view is suggested by

periphery. Skinner's view is a curious emulation and inversion--one might say that he stands Freud on his head.

E. L. Thorndike's law of effect:⁴⁴

Of several responses made to the same situation, those which are accompanied or closely followed by satisfaction to the animal will, other things being equal, be more firmly connected with the situation, so that, when it recurs, they will be more likely to recur; those which are accompanied or closely followed by discomfort to the animal will, other things being equal, have their connections with that situation weakened, so that, when it recurs, they will be less likely to recur. The greater the satisfaction or discomfort, the greater the strengthening or weakening of the bond.⁴⁵

1. Superstitious Conditioning

In Skinner's work on schedules of reinforcement, an interspecies regularity of effects of reinforcement schedules (how often and at what rate a behavior is reinforced) was discovered. Skinner discovered that by far the most enduring behavior (behavior the emission of which persists long after cessation of reinforcement) occurs when the one to one

⁴⁴It should be noted that there is a problem with making a precise distinction between these two kinds of conditioning. For the interested reader, this debate is explained in Ana Coelho's unpublished dissertation manuscript (Ph.D. dissertation in progress, Washington University in St. Louis; Chapter 2, Section 2, pp. 11-15, "The Operant-Respondent Distinction" and Section 4, "The Elicited-Emitted Distinction," pp. 16-21).

⁴⁵Robinson, Systems of Modern Psychology: A Critical Sketch, pp. 115-116, quoting E. L. Thorndike's Animal Intelligence. Facsimile of 1898 edition; New York: Hafner, 1970, p. 244.

correspondence between conditioned behavior and reinforcer is varied in what are termed variable ratio and variable interval schedules,⁴⁶ i.e., when a behavior is rewarded "intermittently" in a random fashion.⁴⁷

⁴⁶Other schedules of reinforcement include "fixed interval" in which an organism is reinforced after a response only after a specified time has elapsed since the last reinforcement; rates of responding increase shortly before the interval expires. Howard Rachlin suggests that an example of this in ordinary experience is the reinforcement of a teakettle boiling (Introduction to Modern Behaviorism, San Francisco, W. H. Freeman and Company, 1970, p. 115). In "fixed-ratio" schedules the organism is reinforced after some fixed number of responses, as in piece-work.

⁴⁷Jane Loevinger, in Paradigms of Personality (New York: W. H. Freeman and Company, 1987) explains:

For a variable-ratio schedule, the animal is reinforced after some number of responses, but the number varies from one reinforcement to the next in some random sequence. With that schedule, the likelihood of receiving a reinforcement is greater, the faster the rate of response; thus the animal is usually responding rapidly when reinforced and settles down to a uniformly high rate of responses . . . even when the frequency of reinforcement is no greater than for other schedules. . . .

Not only does intermittent reinforcement affect the rate of response; it also affects the persistence of a response for long periods during which it is not reinforced. In particular, a variable-interval or variable-ratio schedule will make the animal very resistant to experimental extinction of the response. With appropriate prior training, a pigeon may emit as many as 10,000 successive responses without reinforcement
(p. 83; she cites G. H. Bower and E. R. Hilgard's 1981 Theories of Learning (5th

In the case of what Skinner terms "superstitious" conditioning " the variable ratio is extremely effective in shaping and maintaining behavior" Skinner argues that this is true with respect to the kind of behavior which would ordinarily, on other schedules of reinforcement, have been eliminated from the repertoire due to a lack of environmental reinforcement.

His argument for this point begins with the assumption that reinforcers invariably reinforce some particular behavior or other of an organism. At any given time, an organism is behaving. Given the law of effect, the reinforcer will have an effect, and sometimes, given deprivation status and reinforcement history, "a single reinforcement may have a substantial effect." Skinner then defines superstitious behavior as that which occurs when "there is only an accidental connection between the response and the appearance of a reinforcer." When pigeons are reinforced at fifteen second intervals regardless of behavior, conditioning takes place. The modified behavior is then reinforced at the next interval. "Conspicuous responses which have been established in this way include turning sharply to one side, hopping from one foot to the other

edition; Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall) for the extinction data).

and back, bowing and scraping, . . . and raising the head." Once this kind of response has been established, Skinner points out, it is difficult to extinguish; "it will survive even when reinforced only infrequently."

Skinner claims that pigeons are not unusual in this regard, that much of human behavior is also conditioned in this way. Furthermore, "superstitious rituals" can be preserved by culture:

Superstitious rituals in human society usually involve verbal formulae and are transmitted as part of the culture. To this extent they differ from the simple effect of accidental operant reinforcement. But they must have had their origin in the same process, and they are probably sustained by occasional contingencies which follow the same pattern.⁴⁸

As Loevinger points out, the fact that these findings hold "almost regardless of the species studied, whether it be rat, pigeon or person," is remarkable. Findings like these she states, "justify a certain *hubris* There are not many psychological findings at once so specific in form and so general in application."⁴⁹

⁴⁸Skinner, Science and Human Behavior, pp. 86-87.

⁴⁹Loevinger, Paradigms, p. 83., cites Skinner's 1956 article "A Case Study in Scientific Method, American Psychologist," 11, 221-233.

Those whose religious experiences consist of having had some of their prayers answered at gambling tables or in fox-holes may be challenged by this account. Their behavior, praying, along with their feeling of an immediate answer, would probably be explained by a Skinnerian behaviorist as a paradigm case of accidental reinforcement leading to superstitious conditioning. A serious danger inherent in this conditioning process is the generation of patterns of behavior which are not adequate to important non-accidental contingencies. Superstitious behaviors, due to their being deeply ingrained, may prevent the development of or displace more appropriate responses to the environment.

B. Towards a Skinnerian Criticism of Argument from Religious Experience

Skinner, like Freud, does not confine his psychological speculations to individual cases, but also attempts to explain the workings and results of the wider cultural realm. Among the sorts of behavior he attempts to explain is "verbal behavior," which includes reports of religious experiences, and the activities of religious institutions and their followers. A Skinnerian criticism of religious

experience argument can be reconstructed on the basis of Skinner's view of verbal behavior, superstitious conditioning, and religious control. For Skinner, as for Freud, religion is thought of in terms of stereotypical Christian religiosity, with its churches, its heaven, its hell, and its saving God.⁵⁰ A Skinnerian critique, like the Freudian, can be presented in terms of aetiology and prognosis. This critique can be usefully introduced in terms of Skinner's reconstruction of verbal behavior--behavior which seems to include not only public reports of "covert" behavior, but also some of the covert behavior itself.⁵¹

⁵⁰This domain of the religious for Skinner is made clear in the 23d chapter of Science and Human Behavior, "Religion," pp. 350-358.

⁵¹In his discussion of "thinking" in Verbal Behavior, Skinner argues that we learn to restrict verbal behavior to the covert level. I.e., just as we learn how to read without moving our lips, we learn how to read without subvocalizing. The behavior becomes covert and is no longer accessible to direct observation. (Verbal Behavior, Chapter 19, "Thinking," pp. 434-438, "Covert Verbal Behavior." See also Science and Human Behavior, Chapter 17, "Private Events in a Natural Science," pp. 263-282.)

C. Suspicion Regarding Introspection and Private Experience Reports in Skinner's Theory of Verbal Behavior⁵²

Given Skinner's theory of language learning, it is

⁵²There is a sense in which Skinner's theory of verbal behavior is Skinner's first major attempt to carefully present and argue for the generalization of his experimental laboratory work to more complex and varied human behavior. In his early work, The Behavior of Organisms: An Experimental Analysis (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, Inc., 1938), Skinner wrote:

The reader will have noticed that almost no extension to human behavior is made or suggested. This does not mean that he is expected to be interested in the behavior of the rat for its own sake. The importance of a science of behavior derives largely from the possibility of an eventual extension to human affairs. But it is a serious, though common, mistake to allow questions of ultimate application to influence the development of a science at an early stage. . . . Let him extrapolate who will.

Whether or not extrapolation is justified cannot at the present time be decided. . . . the only differences I expect to see revealed between the behavior of rat and man (aside from enormous differences of complexity) lie in the field of verbal behavior. (pp. 441-442)

Yet, with Skinner, as with later behaviorists, restraint had its limits; he entered the lists of the extrapolators. According to his autobiographical writings, he did so in response to a philosopher's challenge. In Verbal Behavior (pp. 456ff., as well as in his autobiography, Shaping of a Behaviorist, Part Two., (pp. 149-51)), Skinner describes his theory of verbal behavior as a response to Whitehead:

In 1934, while dining at the Harvard Society of Fellows, I found myself seated next to Professor Alfred North Whitehead. We dropped into a discussion of behaviorism Eventually we took the following stand. He agreed that science might be successful in accounting for human behavior, provided one made an exception of verbal behavior. Here, he insisted,

clear that he will have to be suspicious of religious experience reports given their "private" character. According to Skinner, how a private or interoceptive experience is reported is a function of the reinforcement history of the reporter when responding to interoceptive stimuli. If the experience is not public and there are public stimuli available that allow us to make a case for disregarding the experience report, we have a right to do so.⁵³ E.g., if it is a headache, or an itch, or a feeling of presence or of a non-describable "higher power", then descriptions will suffer from at least two related problems--vagueness and uncorrectability verging on incommunicability with people who lack the experiences. In so far as these experiences lack public concomitants (a rash, a tumor, the sun standing still), then there is no public data for their subject matter as reported by them. Any kind of scientific or pre-scientific argument involving a logic of manipulable symbols with semantic counterparts will fail in its practical application if there is no way of fixing these counterparts. For Skinner's

something else must be at work. He brought the discussion to a close with a friendly challenge: "Let me see you," he said, "account for my behavior as I sit here saying, 'No black scorpion is falling upon this table'." (Shaping, pp. 149-51.)

⁵³E.g., the reports function as excuses.

language scheme, religious experience reports, like all other reports, are a function of the concurrent stimuli along with the reinforcement history of the organism in question by the relevant speech community. Headache reports followed by days off with pay, reports of itching that keep field workers inside air-conditioning during a St. Louis summer, reports of encounters with higher powers contained in best-sellers--all are reports a Skinnerian behaviorist might explain in terms of explicit and observable reinforcement contingencies.

Skinner sketches his theory of private experience reports in Verbal Behavior,⁵⁴ and in Science and Human Behavior.⁵⁵ It is not that Skinner denies the existence of the private experiences reported publicly (a denial sometimes attributed to him), but rather, he is suspicious of such reports and leery of accepting them as evidence appropriate to a science. He mistrusts them, as he states in Science and Human Behavior⁵⁶ (and restates in Verbal Behavior⁵⁷), since:

Everyone mistrusts verbal responses which describe private events. Variables are often operating which tend to weaken the stimulus

⁵⁴pp. 130-146.

⁵⁵pp. 257-282.

⁵⁶p. 260.

⁵⁷p. 134.

control of such descriptions, and the reinforcing community is usually powerless to prevent the resulting distortion. The individual who excuses himself from an unpleasant task by pleading a headache cannot be successfully challenged, even though the existence of the private event is doubtful. There is no effective answer to the student who insists, after being corrected, that that was what he "meant to say," but the existence of this private event is not accepted with any confidence.

Skinner continues his account by pointing out that we do not even have an "inside track" with respect to our own private experience reports, but that it is societal reinforcement and learned discriminations that govern our self-statements. "Strangely enough," he concludes, "it is the community which teaches the individual to 'know himself.'"

D. Prong 1 (Aetiological)

A Skinnerian two-pronged critique of religious experience argument, like the Freudian, contains an aetiological and a pragmatic component.

1. Summary of Prong 1

Religious experience reports can be explained in terms of: (1) external controls or pressures which shape and reinforce even given the absence of the stimuli reported, (2) more subtle conditioning of reports of

unusual private experiences, (3) superstitious conditioning, and (4) inaccurate descriptions of one's own behavior. These four factors provide non-divine sources for and explanations of reports of religious experience.

2. Multiple Causation and Variables Controlling Religious Experience Reports

According to Skinner, verbal behavior is overdetermined in the sense that it is a function of many variables, that these can sum, collide, or "vector." In the reconstruction I am offering here, reports of religious experience can be seen as a function of at least four variables: (a) extreme or more obvious cases of external control in the absence of the private or public stimuli reported, (b) subtle cases of external control determining the classification of unusual private experiences and cultural characteristics of perception reports, (c) superstitious conditioning, and (d) cases involving inadequate feedback with respect to one's own behavior.

a) More Obvious External Control

One of the consequences of Skinner's views concerning multiple causation⁵⁸ is that a behavior of class x, the topography of which is normally a function of discriminative stimuli u,v, . . . z, will in the absence of some of these variables tend to be a function of the others. Thus, in the absence of controlling discriminative stimuli, verbal behavior will increasingly be a function of the deprivation and conditioning history with respect to the audience in question. Conversely, as the role of these histories becomes more important to the functional analysis of a given individual's verbal behavior the function of concurrent stimuli will diminish. The audience (A) of an experiencer (E) consists of E and those members of E's community participating in or related to E's history of operant and classical conditioning in such a

⁵⁸Skinner devotes all of Part III of Verbal Behavior (pp. 227-309) to "Multiple Variables," and an entire chapter (Chapter 9, pp. 227-245) to the issue of "Multiple Causation."

Freud also claimed that events were "over-determined." Freud argues in Moses and Monotheism that the influence of a great man need not require the non-influence of other factors, e.g., economic. He claims that though one cause may satisfy our need for explanation, in truth, "each event seems to be over-determined and turns out to be the effect of several converging causes. (See Moses and Monotheism, pp. 136-38.)

way as to function as listeners to E's present verbal behavior.

Among the concurrent stimuli in a given E's experience will be rhythmic and musical backgrounds, parallel visual input of an ambiguous nature, as well as E's own covert verbal behavior. Other relevant factors will include E's history--various deprivations with respect to primary and secondary reinforcers and behavior which has been followed by changes in the level of deprivation; crucial here will be E's operant conditioning regarding attainment of reinforcers in similar cases of deprivation. Given the nature of responses to reports of religious experience, it would seem that "secondary deprivations"⁵⁹ would be important. In lay terms the question to be asked concerns payoff and record of payoffs.

In order to show the bearing of the above on religious experience reports let's consider a crude case:⁶⁰

⁵⁹For our purposes, a "primary deprivation" is a deprivation induced by depletion of a primary reinforcer, e.g., hunger, which is eliminated through the provision of the primary reinforcer, in this case, food. A "secondary deprivation" is a depletion of a secondary reinforcer (e.g., money or attention) which can be exchanged for a primary reinforcer.

⁶⁰Richard L. Kuhn brought this kind of case to my attention in 1986.

An eleven year old boy, Paul, is brought to religious services. According to the doctrine of Paul's family's church all of the saved are blessed with distinctive signs of their salvation. Among these signs are religious experiences consisting of "feeling the presence of God" that culminate in a kind of automatic speech wherein the divine takes over the speech apparatus and speaks directly through the member in a language unknown to the member. After the meeting has been under way for about an hour, one member begins acting in the fashion associated with this experience. Gradually, all the members present (except for Paul) act in like fashion and report having this experience and demonstrate it by means of incomprehensible utterances. It is clear that the meeting will continue until everyone present has had the experience.

Paul prays, Paul waits; nothing happens. He prays and waits some more. He slowly becomes the center of painful attention. He excuses himself to go to the bathroom. The other boys there have already reported having this religious experience. Among them are some of Paul's friends who explain to him that they faked it and that Paul should do so also or they will never get to go home.

The dynamics in Skinnerian terms of this case parallel those of a response to a threat.⁶¹ As the situation has developed, the audience A (of other church members) has become a discriminative stimulus (S^D) which is also an aversive stimulus (S^{av}) mandating a response to a threat R ("if you do not respond you are damned and we'll be here all day"). Given Skinnerian analysis, not only will Paul be reinforced by acceding to the threat, and therefore be more likely to succumb to similar threats in the future, but the threatening agency is reinforced by Paul's accommodating behavior and will also be more likely to threaten in this fashion.

b) More Subtle Control and Conditioned Perception

Cases need not be so crude. Studies have indicated that even ordinary perceptual reports can become distorted as a function of current community,⁶²

⁶¹This analysis is suggested by Skinner's formal treatment of a simple threat ("step aside") in Verbal Behavior, pp. 37-38.

⁶²The classic "observation sentence" studies in which group control seems to determine a response despite concurrent stimuli are Solomon E. Asch's. In the "Asch-Type Situation," a subject mis-describes the size of a vertical chalk line when confronted with the mis-description of others (confederates). These studies are summarized in Lawrence S. Wrightsman's Social Psychology in the Seventies (Monterey, California: Brooks/Cole Publishing Company, A Division of Wadsworth Publishing Company, Belmont, California,

and not all situations are so clear-cut as to make this kind of process so explicit.

As Skinner indicates repeatedly throughout Verbal Behavior, the influence of audience control is only one of multiple determinants of verbal behavior. Audience control is most pronounced when these other factors (such as concurrent stimuli, conditioning history of the speaker in question) are either congruent⁶³ or inadequate to determine the response. Interpretations of such cases that may be used to explain seeing things religiously, as well as to begin to make sense of the entire group of perceptions and experience reports referred to in terms of "seeing as" or "hearing as," have been suggested by Skinner. These views were

1972), pp. 463-464. Wrightsman (pp. 463, 615) cites the following Asch studies:

"Effects of Group Pressure upon the Modification and Distortion of Judgments," in H. Guetzkow (Ed.), Groups, Leadership, and Men, (Pittsburgh: Carnegie Press, 1951);

"Studies of Independence and Conformity: A Minority of One Against a Unanimous Majority," Psychological Monographs, 1956, 70 (9 Whole No. 416);

"Effects of Group Pressure upon Modification and Distortion of Judgments," in E. E. Maccoby, T. M. Newcomb, and E. L. Hartley (Eds.), Readings in Social Psychology (3d ed.), (New York: Holt, 1958), pp. 174-183.

This phenomenon is accounted for in certain procedural systems. In Talmudic legal process, for example, speakers were compelled to state their opinions in an inverse order with respect to seniority.

⁶³I.e., the facts are agreed upon by the audience, and evidence is not an important consideration.

developed in his evaluations of the results of experimental results from the "verbal summator,"⁶⁴ a kind of "auditory Rorschach" which "repeats a vague pattern of speech sounds at low intensity or against a noisy background The material sounds like fragments of natural speech heard through a wall."⁶⁵ The verbal summator decreases the influence of concurrent stimuli. In Skinnerian terms, it allows material from "supplementary variables" (such as the experiencer's conditioning history) to come through. One subject heard in these mumbled speech-like noises, "God of love, Come near the earth."⁶⁶

c) Superstitious Conditioning Again

The Skinnerian theory of the origins of religious experience due to superstitious conditioning is explained above.⁶⁷ The feeling that magical thinking is efficacious (as well as that of a protecting hand of a Higher Power), may occur, in situations of great good fortune (or avoidance of great misfortune), as in the cases where some say, "somebody up there likes me," or

⁶⁴Verbal Behavior, pp. 259-265.

⁶⁵Verbal Behavior, p. 260.

⁶⁶Verbal Behavior, p. 262.

⁶⁷See section III. A. 1, "Superstitious Conditioning."

with prayer. In their early work, for example, on varying schedules, Skinner's colleague, Fred S. Keller, compared conditioning under a variable-ratio schedule to human prayer.⁶⁸

d) Inadequate Feedback

Skinner claims that our ignorance concerning our own role in the production of behavior may lead us to attribute the behavior to another entity, whether a subpersonality or deity. This ignorance results from "inadequate feedback." Skinner states:

When feed-back from verbal behavior has been lacking at the time of emission and when the speaker or writer is then faced with evidence of that behavior, he is likely to attribute it to another person. He not only has no memory of having produced it, but the unedited material may be so strange or objectionable as to be unrecognizable. . . .

When evidence of personal participation is inescapable, there is a tendency to assign the work to supernatural forces. The Greek and Roman oracles, often apparently speaking in a trance state similar to that of automatic writing, were accepted as speaking for the gods. The modern spiritualistic medium often claims to be speaking with the

⁶⁸In his autobiography, Skinner discusses a 1936 letter where Keller "had mentioned the possibility of a variable-ratio schedule, the heart of all gambling systems." According to Skinner, Keller wrote, "Unless I can find where you did it already, I'm going to get data on extinction after 'haphazard' rather than 'fixed' ratios in reconditioning. You know, it's more like human prayer that way!" (Shaping, Part Two, p. 189.)

voice of a dead person. Great religious works are often said to be dictated by God.⁶⁹

Having provided the ingredients of a non-divine aetiology and explanation of religious experience by means of obvious and subtle kinds of external control, superstitious conditioning, and inadequate feedback with respect to one's own behavior, in the next section, we consider the second, pragmatic, prong of the Skinnerian critique.

E. Prong 2: (Pragmatic)

1. Prong 2: Summary and Sources

Two key sources for a Skinnerian pragmatic criticism of religious experience argument are his Beyond Freedom and Dignity⁷⁰ and Science and Human Behavior. There, the critique is based on the consequences of accepting such arguments, first (1) as a result of the deleterious consequences of the methods of control used by agencies whose authority might be buttressed by religious experience, and secondly (2)

⁶⁹Verbal Behavior, pp. 390-391.

⁷⁰(New York: Bantam/Vintage published by arrangement with Alfred A. Knopf, Inc.; Alfred A. Knopf edition 1971, Bantam/Vintage edition, 1972.)

due to the dangers of accepting evidence rooted in superstitious conditioning.

a) Pragmatics of Religious Control

Skinner argues on the basis of religion's failures. Institutional religious control does not seem to be giving rise to a golden age. In Beyond Freedom and Dignity, Skinner argues that traditional controlling systems contain too many false assumptions about the human person. Religion, among them, interferes with the attainment of the technology required to perfect the world. Since religion relies on factors such as superstitious conditioning, and overwhelming threatening contingencies (e.g., eternal hell) for its maintenance and support, it has and will come into conflict with the science of human behavior which Skinner takes to be the only way out of the dilemmas we face as individuals in need of behavior therapy and as a society in need of behavioral controls to prevent evils such as overpopulation and war.⁷¹

⁷¹This is the line Skinner offers in Science and Human Behavior and in Beyond Freedom and Dignity. He offers a similar argument, and makes similar claims for the need to give up old values and religious systems in "Walden Two Revisited," the 1976 Introduction to his utopia, Walden Two (New York: Macmillan Publishing Co., Inc., 1948, 1976, pp. v-xvi). (This parallels Freud's argument in Future of an Illusion, Chapters VII-X.)

b) The Dangers of Superstitiously Conditioned Experience

The conditioning process associated with experience related to religious control is that of superstitious conditioning (the report of feeling a divine hand in one's life due to accidental reinforcement; the feelings about one's prayers being answered; the false generalization from human controls to natural controls). Superstitious conditioning is an unreliable method and dangerous in the long run. It is virtually guaranteed to bring false information into one's *Weltanschauung*--this way leads to world-views permeated with dangerously false contents which can actually interfere with even pre-existing truths. Furthermore, superstitious conditioning thwarts more constructive responses to the environment and may interfere with an individual's adequate adjustment to his or her environment, i.e., may produce what is ordinarily termed psychopathology. Worse still, according to Skinner, not only can this cause such problems, it may preserve them, interfering as it does with psychotherapeutic attempts.⁷²

⁷²See Science and Human Behavior, pp. 358, 371-372. The parallel to Freud's criticism in terms of psychopathology at both the level of individual and society is striking. Both psychologists threaten those who believe on the basis of religious experience with a loss of contact with and ability to successfully

IV. Summary and Conclusion of Chapter Four

In this chapter I have provided a reconstruction of Freud and Skinner in which each provides the material for a two-fold critique of religious experience argument. Each presents an aetiology that does not require a divine source for religious experience; each offers pragmatic criticism based on the deleterious consequences of accepting religious experience as the basis of religious belief. Freud provides an aetiology of religious experience based on the Oedipus Complex, wishful thinking, and the pre-history of humanity;⁷³ Skinner finds the sources of religious belief in the vicissitudes of the conditioning process, stressing external pressure, public shaping of self-perception, and superstitious conditioning. Freud finds the consequences of accepting such experience a risk to both the sanity and progress of the individual and society; Skinner finds parallel dangers in accepting the results of superstitious conditioning as evidence, and in the pernicious control buttressed by such experience when

manipulate reality and truth. See note 42 above for more discussion of the Freud-Skinner connection.

⁷³It is worth noting again, given its controversial nature, that this pre-history is neither sufficient nor necessary for Freud's criticism of religion, given his theory of over-determinism. See notes 33 and 58, above, for related discussion.

taken seriously. Both object strenuously to the error of trying to find in such reports the solutions that only science can provide.

We now turn to the issue of the *ad hominem* status of these psychological criticisms. The analysis of abusive *ad hominem* found in Chapter Two, the Jamesian argument from religious experience reconstructed in Chapter Three, as well as the popular argument from religious experience sketched in Chapter Four, will all be brought to bear on these reconstructions of Freudian and Skinnerian criticisms of religious experience argument. This occurs in the next chapter, Chapter Five, where the question will be addressed and answered, "Do Freudian and Skinnerian criticism of religious experience arguments commit the fallacy of abusive *ad hominem*?"

Chapter Five
An Analysis of Freudian and Skinnerian Criticism
of Religious Experience Argument
with respect to
Abusive Ad Hominem

I. Introductory

In Chapter Two, abusive *ad hominem* fallacy was characterized as an over-extension of a rule of thumb concerning the relationship between persons and their utterances. This standard is now applied to the Freudian and Skinnerian critiques of religious experience arguments as reconstructed in Chapter Four. These psychological criticisms are to be evaluated in terms of abusive *ad hominem* fallacy with respect to two different kinds of target religious experience arguments: the popular argument from religious experience sketched in Chapter Four, and the more sophisticated Jamesian argument developed in Chapter Three. I evaluate these psychological criticisms not only in terms of the two target religious experience arguments, but also with respect to their sources. That is, these criticisms are considered as generally

presented in standard philosophical accounts,¹ in contrast to the presentations given by Freud and Skinner, themselves.

It is first shown, given the standard of abusive *ad hominem* developed in Chapter Two, that Freudian criticism as usually presented in standard philosophical accounts (i.e., giving only the aetiological prong of the critique) does not commit the fallacy of abusive *ad hominem* when used to challenge the popular argument from religious experience. The popular argument claims that a divine source is a necessary condition or the only (or best) explanation of religious experience. The aetiological prong challenges the claim to a divine authorship of religious experience offering, as it does, a natural explanation for these experiences. This mode of analysis applies also to Skinnerian criticism, if it too is considered just in terms of its aetiological criticism. Then, it is shown that one-prong aetiological Freudian and Skinnerian psychological

¹As indicated in Chapter Four, these accounts include standard introductions to the philosophy of religion such as John Hick's Philosophy of Religion 3d. ed. (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1983), the treatments in the Encyclopedia of Philosophy (s.v., "Religion, Psychological Explanations of," and "Religious Experience, Argument for the Existence of God"), and Louis J. Pojman's "The Argument from Religious Experience" in his (ed.) Philosophy of Religion: An Anthology (Belmont, California: Wadsworth Publishing Company, 1987), pp. 90-96.

criticisms of religious experience argument do commit the fallacy of abusive *ad hominem* when confronted with the more sophisticated Jamesian argument from religious experience presented in Chapter Three.

As the discussion progresses, however, it becomes evident that as Freud and Skinner themselves offer their criticisms as two-prong attacks, they do not commit abusive *ad hominem* fallacy with respect to either the popular or even the Jamesian argument. In the final analysis, their critiques of religion and religious experience argument are not only aetioloical, but pragmatic. They rely on the deleterious consequences of accepting Freudian "illusions" or Skinnerian "religious controls."

II. Abusive Ad Hominem

In Chapter Two, I argued that any argument or argument move is a candidate for an *ad hominem* analysis if it involves rules of thumb concerning the relation between individuals and their utterances. Candidates commit the fallacy of abusive *ad hominem* when they are not properly restrained in their application; i.e., when the principle which is good "as a rule" is treated as though it holds without exception. A fallacious abusive *ad hominem* was found to be an abusive *ad hominem* argument relying on an apparently plausible

universal generalization about the relationship between persons and their utterances. The generalization usually owes its falsity to the absence of a *ceteris paribus* clause or other hedging or weakening clauses which would have prevent collisions with counter-instances.

Abusive *ad hominem* arguments often include enthymematic premises concerning persons' qualifications to make or defend utterances, and rely on rules of thumb on the order of, "scoundrels and the insane are not to be relied upon for evidence."²

²Aristotle suggests in the Topics Book VII (155a) that one of the techniques to be used in attack is to treat one's opponent's claim as if it were a universal generalization of definitional scope (for then one counter-instance would be enough to defeat the claim), and to phrase one's own claims in terms such that they have the rhetorical force of a universal generalization (see Rhetoric, Bk. II:Ch. 21, 1395a concerning the force of false universal generalizations), but can be defended as statements about some part of the totality at issue (for one instance is enough to buttress an existential generalization; see Topics 155a). The example here, of the form "x's are not to be trusted" allows for such rhetorical employment. It can be used as abusive *ad hominem* in an attempt to discredit the testimony of an x in any given case; yet, it can be defended as a more limited statement, complete with a *ceteris paribus* clause. Successful convincing counter-attack would require that the defender show the *ceteris paribus* clause to exclude the case at hand (or, what amounts to the same thing, show that the x involved is an exception to the rule of thumb).

III. *Ad Hominem* Analysis of Freudian and Skinnerian Psychological Criticism

As indicated above, Freudian and Skinnerian psychological criticism of argument from religious experience can be employed against popular or more sophisticated religious experience arguments. Further, the two prongs can occur together (as Freud and Skinner used them) or separately. We have the following possibilities:

Argument	Criticism
1. Popular	aetiological alone
2. Sophisticated	aetiological alone
3. Popular	pragmatic alone
4. Sophisticated	pragmatic alone
5. Popular	aetiological & pragmatic
6. Sophisticated	aetiological & pragmatic

Of these six, the first two reflect the situation of the standard one-prong aetiological attack, the second pair indicate the possibility of a one-prong pragmatic criticism,³ the last two are two-pronged aetiological and pragmatic attacks along the lines of the Freudian and Skinnerian criticisms developed in Chapter Four. We turn now to the *ad hominem* analysis of these various critical combinations, in order to

³The purely pragmatic attacks present interesting possibilities, some of which will be discussed in the concluding chapter.

reach some decisions concerning these one- and two-pronged criticisms of the popular and the Jamesian religious experience arguments.

A. Freud's and Skinner's Views as Generally Employed as One-Prong Aetiological Attack

1. Target One: Popular Argument from Religious Experience

a) The Popular Argument from Religious Experience Reviewed

In Chapter Four, five kinds of popular argument for the existence of religious entities were set forth, each of which:

(1) presents a certain state of affairs the non-religious should be willing to acknowledge, and then (2) presents some religious theory as the only (a) explanation or (b) remedy for that state of affairs. It is argued that if one accepts (1), then one is obliged to accept (2), under the penalty of being inconsistent (if explanation is at issue) or doomed (if remedy is at issue).

The general form of such arguments is usually reducible to modus ponens by simple

transformations (if p then q, p; therefore q).

Of these, one was a popular religious experience argument:

1. The only good explanation for the existence of religious experiences is some divine being that is their source;
2. religious experiences are widespread;
3. therefore there exists some divine being that is their source.⁴

⁴This characterization of religious experience argument as popular may be somewhat misleading, if it is taken to exclude philosophical counterparts. Consider, e.g., Pojman's useful summary of C. D. Broad's version of the argument from religious experience:

- (1) There is an enormous unanimity [apparently, Pojman actually means something like a "great deal of agreement"] among the mystics concerning the spiritual nature of reality.
- (2) When there is . . . unanimity among observers as to what they believe themselves to be experiencing, it is reasonable to conclude that their experiences are veridical (unless we have good reason to believe that they are [all] deluded [observers]).
- (3) There are no positive reasons for thinking that mystical experiences are delusory.
- (4) Therefore it is reasonable to believe that mystical experiences are veridical.

(Philosophy of Religion: An Anthology, pp. 93-94.) Pojman is summarizing an excerpt from Broad's Religion, Philosophy, and Psychological Research (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul PLC, 1930), occurring in this Anthology, pp. 108-115. This philosophical version of religious experience argument, it is apparent, is as

b) *Ad Hominem* Analysis of One-Prong Aetiological Attack on the Popular Religious Experience Argument

The popular religious experience argument claims as one of its premises that there is no natural explanation for religious experience, or no natural good explanation. Both Skinner and Freud provide naturalistic aetiologies and in doing so directly attack this premise of the opposition argument which relies on the absence of such aetiologies to make its point. In so far as the Freudian and Skinnerian challenges are viewed as direct challenges to the sources of religious experience reports, they can be construed as being based on the plausibility they ascribe to their own accounts in conjunction with a rule of thumb, e.g., "reports of such experience are not to be taken for granted when there are more plausible accounts of their origins, *given the absence of other support.*"⁵ Given the nature of the popular argument,

liable to an aetiological critique as the popular form given in Chapter Four, and for similar reasons. It also seems to suffer from the infirmities of common consent arguments.

Something like this popular form of the argument is taken as paradigmatic by John Hick (along with the aetiological critique) when he writes, "It may be that he or she had the experience described but that the correct explanation of it can be given by psychology rather than by theology." (Philosophy of Religion 3d. ed., p. 30.)

⁵This can be understood as offering a two-fold challenge to such utterances. Suppose someone says, "I

this objection seems to hold. If these psychological criticisms are to be countered, it is not on grounds of abusive *ad hominem*, but in terms of their own plausibility.⁶

The popular argument from religious experience can be countered with this aetiological objection since the popular argument makes such a strong claim--that only a non-natural source is the reasonable or best explanation for religious experience. The Jamesian argument, on the other hand, makes no such claim.

2. Target Two: The Jamesian Argument from Religious Experience

a) The Jamesian Argument from Religious Experience Reviewed

In Chapter Three, a Jamesian religious experience argument was reconstructed along the following lines:

heard a divine being say 'p'." On one level, it is the source-attribution which is suspect; we may also reject the speaker's utterance as counting as a genuine observation report at all (see, e.g., Quine's, "Epistemology Naturalized," Ontological Relativity and Other Essays (New York: Columbia University Press, 1969), p. 87-88). In this rule of thumb, "Given the absence of other support" does the job of an explicit hedging clause or phrase (paralleling the role of "generally," "almost invariably," "all things being equal," "*ceteris paribus*," etc.).

⁶The issue of the plausibility of these accounts will be addressed in Chapter Six.

1. Future power or influence of some X for some Y shows that X has *being* with respect to Y; a *possibility of influence* carries with it a *possibility of being*;
2. Any individual or group of individuals has the right to believe a certain kind of "genuine" hypothesis (i.e., an hypothesis which has significant appeal to the decider, has serious consequences, and for which decision is forced) when the only way of reaching the truth is or may be accepting that hypothesis;
3. Religious hypotheses are genuine hypotheses;
4. The bare possibility of the object of religious experience is not secured by the experience's aetiology (which may indeed be pathological), but by the future effects of the experience on the experiencers and others who take it seriously enough to change their own lives due to it (e.g., by beginning their own individual journeys up the Jamesian faith ladder);
5. Therefore, religious experience provides grounds for the belief in related religious hypotheses.

b) *Ad Hominem* Analysis of One-Prong Aetiological Attack on the Jamesian Argument

The Jamesian argument requires only the bare possibility that natural (even if psycho-pathological) origins do not exhaust a religious experience's value and meaning, at least some of which is found in its consequences. James separates the question of the historical sources of the experience from the issue of its value. Sources concern past origins; value, future effects. Thus no aetiological attack (restricted with a *ceteris paribus* clause, etc.) will be strong enough to do the job of eliminating the Jamesian possibility. Any aetiological psychological attack on the Jamesian argument needs to address these future effects. Then, even without somehow showing the Jamesian possibility impossible, a psychological criticism of argument from religious experience could challenge the pragmatic buttress which allows the weaker Jamesian claim enough strength to do the job in the religious experience argument reconstructed in Chapter Three.

James, after all, claims that due to the pragmatic considerations of the *future effects of the experience and of accepting its related hypotheses*, and despite aetiological considerations, we are warranted in accepting the bare possibility that there is something to these experiences which is not exhausted by

diagnosis. This possibility (given the ladder of faith, etc.) is enough to justify postulating some non-natural source.

For this reason, an aetiological attack is not enough to refute James's position. Remember, he admitted in the first place that religious experience might be a function of psycho-pathology.

3. Why the Target Argument Makes a Difference

The difference between the two kinds of religious experience argument discussed here lies in the strength of the central claim relating religious experience, the non-natural, and the importance of aetiological explanation. The popular argument requires that there be no plausible explanation for religious experience other than the non-natural entity argued for; the Jamesian requires only that there be a bare possibility of a non-natural entity, no matter what the origins of the experience.

One can argue aetiological to refute the popular argument, even if one hedges,⁷ by allowing for a highly unlikely possibility that religious experience does

⁷The possibility of such hedging being taken as implicitly suggested in an enthymematic argument or of being explicitly stated allows the critic to avoid falling into abusive *ad hominem* fallacy, without weakening the criticism.

derive from some divinity or whatever. One can, nonetheless, seek to show that divinity is scarcely the only or best aetiological explanation.

To attempt, however, to refute the Jamesian position from aetiological lines alone requires the opposite of hedging caution. Neither a limiting *ceteris paribus* clause, nor any other restriction to the aetiological claim will do the job, only an aetiology which precludes the possibility of divine source. The carefully restricted claim that "evidence from religious experience is not (generally) reliable given the presence of Freudian or Skinnerian psychological theory," must be reconstrued to run "evidence from religious experience cannot (possibly) be reliable given the presence of Freudian or Skinnerian psychological theory." Such re-interpretation constitutes a clear violation of the restriction of the original, if enthymematic, hedging clause. The claim that the case can be dealt with in terms of aetiology alone ignores the pragmatic strengthening of the Jamesian argument, for James himself agrees that the aetiology may be pathology.

This is why Freud and Skinner's first aetiological prong is enough to counter the popular religious experience argument without exceeding reasonable limits. Freudian and Skinnerian critiques do not need

to say that psychopathological origins of an experience never yield a veridical experience report, just that such a report is highly unlikely.

But to refute the Jamesian position on aetiological grounds alone would require an aetiology that did preclude a veridical report, precluding even its bare possibility. Hence the temptation to over-generalize the *ad hominem* enthymematic premise concerning the relationship between psychological origins and the bare possibility of accurate perceptions.

Thus a prong 1 critique alone is insufficient to refute a Jamesian argument from religious experience, since refutation here requires the over-extension of a rule of thumb regarding the relation between an utterance and its human origins,⁸ and is as such a case of abusive *ad hominem*. Basically, the Jamesian argument points out that general rules of thumb do not apply here, since the pragmatic consequences of these experiences are what warrants embarking on a faith-journey.

⁸As stated above, "in so far as the Freudian and Skinnerian challenges are construed as direct challenges to the sources of religious experience reports, they can be construed as being based on the plausibility they ascribe to their own accounts in conjunction with a rule of thumb, e.g., 'reports of such experience are not to be taken for granted when there are more plausible accounts of their origins, given the absence of other support.'"

B. As Employed by Freud and Skinner (As a Two-Prong Aetiological and Pragmatic Attack)

**1. Against the Popular Religious Experience Argument--
Ad Hominem Analysis**

The aetiological prongs of both the Freudian and Skinnerian criticisms argue for a natural explanation of religious experience, concluding that it is not necessary to postulate a divine source as the only or best explanation. I have just argued that this kind of aetiological criticism is adequate to popular religious experience argument. Granting that the aetiological prong of a two-prong argument is not contradicted by its pragmatic prong, two-fold critiques will hold a fortiori with respect to the popular religious experience argument. After all, we have just seen that the one-prong criticism is sufficient to attack the popular argument, and that the two-prong criticism includes the one-prong.

2. Against the Jamesian--Ad Hominem Analysis

The two-prong attack does not commit abusive *ad hominem* fallacy with respect to the Jamesian religious experience argument. The Jamesian argument buttresses its weaker claim concerning "bare possibility" with pragmatic arguments concerning the consequences of

accepting postulates of a divinity, consequences that include both perfecting the world and improving the individual. James not only portrays religious experience as a source of energetic improvement of the world, but also as a means of integration for the individual believer working his or her way through crisis to commitment. As reconstructed in Chapter Three, James argued that this moral improvement at the level of character not only benefits society in terms of the fruits of religious experience but also opens up a route to knowledge that may be unavailable by other means. The second prong of the Freudian and Skinnerian critiques disputes this pragmatic support. Though Freud and Skinner offer their objections with appropriate hedges and qualifications, they both offer pragmatic criticisms which (if true) undermine the Jamesian claim that belief based on religious experience, even on its bare possibility given pragmatic consequences of that belief, is pragmatically justified.⁹ As we have just seen, in Chapter Four, Freud did not claim that illusions were necessarily false. He argued that belief based on them was destructive to individuals and society and could

⁹E.g., Freud's lengthy discussion of illusion in Future of an Illusion and Skinner's discussion of pragmatics in Science and Human Behavior and Beyond Freedom and Dignity discussed above, in Chapter Four.

preempt one's chances of ever learning the truth,¹⁰ and sketched his own psychoanalytic plan for a better world. Skinner also offers a pragmatic critique. He does not claim religious methods are totally without basis; only that they have had their chance and have not worked. He too, as reconstructed in Chapter Four, sees beliefs based on such grounds as interfering with the individual's successful response to the environment, as disruptive to society, as preempting natural self-corrective measures, and interfering with successful psychotherapy. Skinner, too, has plans to improve the world through the psychological system which bears his mark.

IV. Summary Statement Regarding Ad Hominem Character of Psychological Criticism of Argument from Religious Experience

Skinnerian and Freudian criticisms, as here reconstructed, give aetiologies and prognoses of religious experience. In doing so, each combines a natural history of religion and religious experience with pragmatic critique. Provided both aspects are included, the attacks do not seem to be cases of *ad hominem*; i.e., the prognoses redeem the diagnosis which would be insufficient if it were used alone to argue

¹⁰Since such belief paves the way for psychosis.

for rejecting more sophisticated pragmatic religious experience arguments such as the Jamesian.¹¹

Therefore, those who use either psychological aetiology as if it were sufficient alone to undermine argument from religious experience are either:

- (1) attacking only a simplistic, if popular, form of religious experience argument or
- (2) guilty of abusive *ad hominem* since they over-extend the rule of thumb by taking the aetiology of experiencer's utterances as precluding their truth. Particular rules of thumb may vary from argument to argument, but all seem to have in common a principle incorporating some qualification or hedge. A typical example is "typically, a pathologic of discovery leads to falsity." Such a rule, when over-extended, is inadequate on fallacious *ad hominem* grounds in cases where things, as James's argument suggests, may not be typical, i.e., where the conditions required by the qualification or hedge are not met.

¹¹This is with respect to *ad hominem*; charges such as *petitio* remain possibilities.

V. For Further Consideration

We have now completed our informal logic explication of *ad hominem*, religious experience arguments, reconstructions of Freudian and Skinnerian psychological criticism of such argument, and the *ad hominem* analysis of these criticisms. This explication has concerned just the logic of the debate, and has not touched on many fundamental issues. These issues, including the nature of truth in psychological theory and the relationship between psychological systems and philosophical schools, await discussion in Chapter Six.

Chapter Six

Epilogue

. . . even after the failure of all the ambitious schemes of reason to pass beyond the limits of all experience, enough remains to make us satisfied for practical purposes. . . . No, that conviction is not a *logical*, but a *moral* certainty; and as it rests on subjective grounds (of the moral sentiment), I must not even say that *it is* morally certain that there is a God, etc., but that *I am* morally certain, etc.

--Immanuel Kant¹

I. Part I: Introduction and Epilogue

A. Summary of Chapters One through Five

What is the nature of the relation between philosophy and psychology, proffered reason and motivating cause? Can psychology contribute to the tools of philosophical analysis or does any use of psychology in critical work constitute psychologism? How does this bear on individual reports of unusual experiences? Though modern philosophical dialectic may still bear traces of its origins in the Greek law courts and antics of the Sophists, is there any place

¹Critique of Pure Reason, translated into English by F. Max Müller (Garden City, New York: Anchor Books, Doubleday & Co. , 1966), p. 528 (= B857).

in philosophy for impugning individual testimony and rejecting arguments due to the qualifications of those witnessing to them? If so, when is such psychological disqualifying legitimate? If not, why not? Why should we ever accept the observations of the blind or the arguments of the irrational? What is the proper relationship between psychology and epistemology? Should we have an epistemology naturalized or should we continue to seek epistemology moralized?

These are the kinds of questions which set me to the investigation of the narrower problem of this dissertation: Is psychological criticism of argument from religious experience a case of abusive *ad hominem*?

In order to address this question, I provided accounts and reconstructions of "psychological criticism," "argument from religious experience," and "abusive *ad hominem*." I analyzed abusive *ad hominem* argument as argument which over-extends a rule of thumb concerning the relation between claimers and the truth of their claims (Chapter 2). Two kinds of religious experience arguments were presented: a Jamesian and a popular one. The reconstruction of the former was chosen due to William James's awareness of psychological criticism of religious experience, in light of the role future experience plays in the character of his arguments, and because his arguments

seem crafted to minimize assumptions liable to criticism (Chapter 3). The presentation of the popular argument was indicated since the popular argument is often the target of psychological criticism.

Psychological criticism of religious experience argument was limited to a Freudian and a Skinnerian critique.

I initially expected that the answer to the question (now narrowed even further to, "Do Freudian and Skinnerian criticisms of religious experience argument commit the fallacy of abusive *ad hominem*?") would be "yes." In verbal disputations, and in most philosophical treatments of psychological criticism, psychological critique has been presented as rejecting the claims of religious experience on the basis of non-divine aetiologies. As we have seen, this kind of criticism is adequate to very basic religious experience arguments that claim that the only or best explanation for religious experiences is a divine source. We have, however, also found that such critique fails to make its point when confronted with a Jamesian argument that requires only the bare possibility of the realization of religious experience, and goes beyond aetiology to prognosis.

After formulating the theory of abusive *ad hominem* as over-extension of a rule of thumb, I thought, "yes,

psychological criticism will fail since it will over-extend useful generalizations about aetiology and truth to the problematic cases James offers in Varieties of Religious Experience. I was mistaken. The critiques of Freud and Skinner can be reconstructed as two-prong attacks, with both a pragmatic and an aetiological thrust. Both Freud and Skinner explicitly tackle the issue of the future of religion, each offering a two-fold criticism of religious experience that begins with aetiologies but ends with prescriptions.

1. Contributions

There are, it seems, several interesting contributions made in this dissertation:

- (1) the new theory of *ad hominem*;
- (1a) the new sub-division of constructive *ad hominem*;
- (2) an emphasis on the role of "being-as-power" in the interpretation of James's argument from religious experience;
- (3) an interpretation of Freud and Skinner showing the importance of a pragmatic concern with the future in their criticisms of religion;
- (4) a solution to the question of the *ad hominem* character of Freudian and Skinnerian

psychological criticism of argument from religious experience.

(1) The notion of over-extension of enthymematic rules of thumb, introduced in Chapter Two, is developed in order to yield an explication of abusive *ad hominem* fallacy. But it may also be brought to bear on many other fallacies as well--perhaps even some of the formal fallacies. So long as a fallacy is persuasive or plausible, we may find it useful to look for some rule of thumb behind that plausibility. This is particularly clear, and possibly obvious, with respect to a fallacy such as "hasty generalization."² This kind of analysis might even be useful with respect to such crude formal fallacies as "affirming the consequent." The consequent, after all, accompanies the antecedent, and the former is often taken as *inductively* implying the latter in some plausible sense³

²Here the rule of thumb may emerge from a range of cases taken to be representative of the kind generalized to, when it was actually representative of a smaller range, and then over-extended. Equivocation on the range of generalization also can play a role in premises such as, "Great Marxists smoke Pall Malls," and "Great chess players are male," where the force of a universal quantifier is suggested, but where we have recourse to weaker (in this context) existential claims if challenged. For surely some great Marxists smoke Pall Malls, and some great chess players are male.

³E.g. "When Sherlock is thinking out a problem, he plays his violin. . . . why look, he's playing it now;

1a) Eliciting a new category of *ad hominem*, i.e., the constructive *ad hominem*, to accompany circumstantial and abusive may also be of importance in sorting out certain debates.⁴ This is often the case where arguments contain or seem to contain enthymematically suppressed premises concerning the moral or aesthetic improvement⁵ of an individual which will accrue if he or she accepts the conclusion at issue. Close to the theme of this essay, such an analysis might be of value in interpreting James's claims that we might be better, more energetic persons for believing in God. Among other arguments and claims to which such analysis might apply, there is Socrates' injunction in the Meno that we will be "better, braver, more active men" if we believe that ideals and

I wonder what he's thinking about" Given a certain inductive pattern, the playing might reliably (inductively) indicate such thought. On the one hand, formal deductive theory shows why this reasoning is deductively invalid. On the other hand, the rule of thumb, once elicited, shows why (psychologically) it occurred, and how it may work logically under the given elicited enthymematic rule. The relation of the over-generalization plus subordinate premises to the conclusion is often a valid one, though unsound, since it depends on a false over-generalization.

⁴E.g., arguments about theistic religions that point out the higher percentages of theists in prison populations and arguments about the issue "why be moral?"

⁵Or deterioration (in the case of a destructive ad hominem).

knowledge are worth seeking, than if we give up the quest and become misologists.⁶

(2) The emphasis on the role of "being-as-power" in the interpretation of James's argument from religious experience may be of utility in relating James's work to other "process" theories. Future work might be done, e.g., concerning Plato (where the concept of "being-as-power" seems to originate⁷). Problems could be addressed including relations between proposed pragmatic consequences of theistic belief, the consequent nature of the godhead in Whitehead's theology, and the attributes of action discussed by Maimonides. It might then be possible to highlight and relate the pragmatic/process aspects of theologies as varied as those of the many medievals who held to a

⁶In Meno 86b, Socrates argues this after acknowledging that he would rather not swear to the truth of the doctrine of recollection as shown by the uneducated slave's correct responses to Socratic interrogation. (W. K. C. Guthrie's translation in Edith Hamilton and Huntington Cairns (editors) The Collected Dialogues of Plato Including the Letters (Princeton: Princeton University Press, Bollingen Series LXXI, 1963, 1973), p. 371.)

⁷As noted in Chapter Three, Plato's Eleatic Stranger proposes, "anything has real being that is so constituted as to possess any sort of power either to affect anything else or to be affected, in however small a degree, by the most insignificant agent, though it be only once." (Sophist 247e; Cornford-Jowett translation in Hamilton and Cairns's Collected Dialogues, p. 992.)

parallel concept of "being" as "act" and recent process theologies such as those based on Whitehead.⁸

(3) The two-fold interpretation of Freud and Skinner's critiques of religious experience argument not only captures the familiar aetiological aspect of psychological criticism, but sheds light on their pragmatic prognostic and prescriptive aspects. This interpretation not only extends aetiological Freudian psychological criticism of argument from religious experience, but also helps structure the reconstruction of a Skinnerian criticism. The former might be useful for those who take Freud's critique of religion seriously. The latter might be useful for those in, for example, the Russell-Quine tradition, who find Skinner's views more in line with their own philosophical positions. Outlining the second pragmatic prong of these psychological criticisms of argument from religious experience also highlights this important aspect of their criticism of religious experience and religion, and makes clear the pragmatic motivations of both theorists.⁹

⁸A recent work dedicated to this kind of task is Nancy Frankenberry's Religion and Radical Empiricism (New York: State University of New York Press, 1987), which investigates relations among theories as varied as James's, Dewey's, Whitehead's, and Buddha's.

⁹These motivations might roughly be interpreted as the motivations to replace what are taken to be

(4) Based on this work, a solution has been developed to the problem of the *ad hominem* character of Freudian and Skinnerian psychological criticism of argument from religious experience that not only addresses the central question of this essay, but also provides a methodology generalizable to other candidates for an *ad hominem* analysis. One example of this lies in its potential extension to analyses of religious experience by other psychological schools. This potential generalization of method is a function of the emphasis taken here on sorting out the targets and tactics in an *ad hominem* situation. Targets and tactics decided, the various rules of thumb involved in a given criticism can be examined with regard to applicability to their particular targets.¹⁰

destructive religious arguments and remedies with psychological attempts at improving the world (different as their remedies are from one another).

¹⁰If the rules of thumb are explicit in the first place (e.g., "a logician is not to be trusted"), then we answer the question with respect to their over-extension to the target case at hand. If the rule of thumb is not explicit, then we need to enter the dangerous realm of determining the enthymematically suppressed premise, if any, before continuing our analysis. If there is a suppressed premise, and particularly if we can find support in the critic's other utterances for adherence to or promulgation of that premise (the easiest case being a critic's explicit assent), we continue as before.

II. Part II: Tasks

The question can always be asked, "But, where do we go from here?" Of course, there are many tasks left undone and questions unanswered, among them:

- i. consequences for constructing stronger religious experience arguments and better criticisms of these arguments;
- ii. the issue of the truth and scientific status of Freud and Skinner's aetiologies and prognoses;¹¹
- iii. the Kantian nature of the Jamesian religious experience argument (including the issue of sources and James's own stated admiration of Kant's work on religion);
- iv. Philosophy and psychology:¹²

¹¹The issue of the scientific status of various psychological theories is a paradigmatic question addressed by the philosophy of the social sciences. The issue of their truth is less obviously a philosophical matter until we recall that philosophy does rule against the truth of candidate claims when it points out that they are not of a kind to be true, e.g., when the philosopher of science offers a verifiability challenge. Further, and of some concern later in this chapter, philosophers often make or assume psychological claims and portions of various psychological theories.

¹²These issues concerning "Philosophy and Psychology" will be considered in Part III.

(a) philosophical presuppositions in psychological systems and the consistency requirement

(b) tentative constructionalist approach towards an explanation of some of the distinctions and relations between the various psychological schools.

In the following sections of this chapter, I sketch some possibilities for dealing with these questions in future work.

A. Considerations for constructing stronger religious experience arguments and better criticisms of these arguments.

What does the previous analysis of Freudian and Skinnerian psychological criticism of argument from religious experience suggest with respect to creating stronger religious experience arguments? If anything, given the adequacy of either of Freud's or Skinner's aetiological criticisms, it seems to be a mistake to take religious experience as compelling acceptance of a divine source as its only possible or best explanation. Any private or personal experience of such an unusual nature is going to be suspect, and will not convince cautious others to accept its authority. We did not

need to wait for Hume to teach us this lesson;¹³ we can use the fruits of our *ad hominem* analysis to interpret an older literary source for such suspicion of private experience reports:

Now Moses . . . came to . . . the mountain of God. And the angel of the Lord appeared to him in a flame of fire out of . . . a bush; and he looked, and lo, the bush was burning, yet it was not consumed. And Moses said, "I will turn aside and see this great sight, why the bush is not burnt." When the Lord saw that he turned aside to see, God called to him out of the bush, "Moses, Moses!" And he said, "Here am I." (Exodus, Chapter 3:1-4) . . . [God] said, ". . . I will be with you; and this shall be the sign¹⁴ for you, that I have sent you: when you have brought forth the people out of Egypt, you shall serve God upon this mountain." (3:12) . . . Moses answered, "But behold, they will not believe me . . ., for they will say, "The Lord *did* not appear to you." (4:1; emphasis added)¹⁵

As the story unfolds, Moses continues to discuss the matter with the source of his private revelation until the source identifies its history, its

¹³David Hume, "Of Miracles," in An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding from Selections From An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding and A Treatise on Human Nature by David Hume, with Hume's Autobiography and a Letter from Adam Smith, with an introduction by Eugene Freeman, second edition, (La Salle Illinois: Open Court, 1966), pp. 120-145.

¹⁴Apparently, one of the confirming signs is to be Moses's success in bringing forth the Israelites from Egypt.

¹⁵Revised Standard Version (New York: American Bible Society, 1952).

fundamentally moral nature, and future consequences of a public and empirical kind of accepting this source's revelation through Moses: a series of miracles under Moses's predictive control,¹⁶ and the people's liberation from slavery and exile. What is important to our discussion is that Moses realizes that, though he himself may find this experience persuasive, others will not be convinced, and that for the convincing, future experience of a non-private kind is necessary.^{17,18}

¹⁶Of some interest here is the fact that several of Moses's miracles are duplicated by the Egyptian magicians (Exodus 7:8-13;; 7:22, 8:7).

¹⁷"Persuasive" as used here is related to context. By "persuasive" is meant "capable of swaying a particular person in particular circumstances." It is thus evident that something can be persuasive without being acceptable (some are more easily led than others). Evidence is convincing, on the other hand, if it is of the kind any reasonable being would accept. The distinction is provided by Kant:

The holding of a thing to be true . . . though it may rest on objective grounds, also requires subjective causes in the mind of the individual who makes the judgment. If the judgment is valid for everyone, provided only he is in possession of reason, its ground is objectively sufficient, and the holding of it to be true is entitled *conviction*. If it has ground only in the special character of the subject, it is entitled *persuasion*. . . .

Kant is aware that the believing subject cannot subjectively tell, without attempting to publicize a judgment, whether or not it produces conviction. This, he explains, depends on its communicability and validity "for all human reason."

In view of this and the previous work in this dissertation, at least three lessons can be learned with respect to the construction and criticism of future religious experience arguments:

First, the strength of the Jamesian religious experience argument suggests that this kind of argument

The experiment . . . whereby we test upon the understanding of others whether those grounds of judgment which are valid for us have the same effect on the reason of others as on our own, is a means, though only a subjective means, not indeed of producing conviction, but of detecting any merely private validity in the judgment, that is, anything in it which is merely persuasion. (Critique of Pure Reason, Unabridged edition, translated by Norman Kemp Smith, (New York: Macmillan & Co., 1929; St. Martin's Press, 1965), pp.645-646 (= B848-850)).

Kant goes on to point out that aetiological explanation exposes illusion in cases where the *cause* was taken as the objective *ground*. (p. 646 (= B849)).

As Kant points out in his Logic (translated with an introduction by Robert S. Hartman and Wolfgang Schwarz (New York and Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill Company, Inc., 1974)), persuasion does not indicate an impossibility of conviction, rather, "Persuasion often precedes conviction." (Section IX, p. 80).

¹⁸Also of relevance is that the critics of Moses, e.g., the magicians in Egypt, and the "mixed multitude" in the wilderness, try to undermine the connection between religious hypotheses and pragmatic consequences by (in the case of the magicians) duplicating Moses's feats, and (in the case of the multitude) trying to show the consequences of adherence to the Mosaic position to be death. Consider, as an example of the latter the complaint to Moses, "Is it because there are no graves in Egypt that you have taken us away to die in the wilderness?" (Exodus 14:11ff; see also Numbers 21:5.)

can and should be developed with an eye to possible psychological criticism. By following James's example and turning the focus of the argument away from the history of the religious experience and toward its effects, religious experience arguments can reinforce themselves against aetiological psychological criticism.¹⁹

To parallel this change in argument from religious experience, psychological critics of the argument could learn a second lesson and further develop their own forward-looking non-aetiological emphases, along the lines of both Freud's and Skinner's attacks.

A third lesson is hinted at by the suspicious and non-compelling nature of private experience arguments highlighted by James's tentativeness and Moses's diffidence. A stronger argument could emphasize the public character of its promised pragmatic verifications, minimizing the importance of the private religious experience.²⁰

¹⁹If psychology with respect to aetiology is thus defanged, purely aetiological attacks can be charged with the fallacy of abusive *ad hominem* (if used directly against a participant in the debate) or with some other variation of genetic fallacy involving over-extending aetiological rules of thumb into regions where they are not reliably applicable, e.g., prescription.

²⁰This strength is purchased at the price of possible falsification.

Following this trend of limiting one's religious experience arguments more and more to pragmatic future concerns, one might develop purely pragmatic future experience arguments. Although this might make aetiological criticism irrelevant, critics wedded to psychological attacks could try in response to develop purely pragmatic counter-arguments, along the general lines of the second prong of Freud's and Skinner's psychological criticisms of argument from religious experience.

B. Concerning a third aspect of Jamesian argument from religious experience and its psychological critique.

As the reader will recall, James argues that the individual, the society, and the universe itself may benefit from religious belief pragmatically accepted. For the purposes of our analysis, promised gains for the individual and society were at issue, since, even by James's own criteria, evaluation of the fate of the universe must await the end of days. Yet, despite James's patience, the fate of the universe is among the considerations adduced for pragmatic faith.

If this fate is taken seriously, then a two-prong psychological criticism of James's argument from religious experience would be strengthened by

challenging this aspect of the Jamesian religious experience argument.

Though some of the more ambitious and messianic portions of Freud's and Skinner's works do address the challenge to perfect the world, the world they aim at perfecting seems to be the third planet in our star system, not the universe at large.

Skinner has written a terrestrial utopia in his Walden Two; Freud suggests his own sub-lunar scientific anti-dystopia in Future of an Illusion. To extend their views to fully challenge all three of the pragmatic promises Jamesian religious argument offers, there are at least two possibilities that could be explored.

The first would entail criticizing the very possibility of pragmatic successes of universe-wide scope. This kind of attack might argue that any universe-wide pragmatic promise is excessive and unwarranted. A second kind of reply would be to take on the challenge of showing how the alternative views, e.g., Skinner's or Freud's (or some other natural historical challenge such as Marxism), might be extended to promise universe-wide redemptive possibilities. For this we may await a Walden Three or Future of an Illusion, Part Two.

C. Issue of the truth and scientific status of Skinner and Freud's aetiologies and prognoses.

The attack on the aetiological prong of religious experience argument invokes the truth of the psychology used in the attack. Even if not taken as the whole truth, the psychological systems are taken as given, and their scientific status is usually assumed. Thus, critical problems related to the psychological theories involved will be relevant to those concerned with issues extending beyond determining the *ad hominem* character of the psychological criticisms.²¹

Skinner's work is the subject of a variety of such reviews ranging from those of his classmate and fellow psychologist, Saul Rosenszweig,²² to the linguist Noam Chomsky in his famous review of Skinner's Verbal Behavior.^{23,24} Criticisms run the gamut from arguing

²¹In questioning the truth or scientific status of the psychological theory in question, we continue the turn from issues of validity to those of soundness.

²²Saul Rosenszweig, "The Impact of B. F. Skinner on Psychiatry" Medical World News: Psychiatry 1972, pp. 54-55, 59-60.

²³"Skinner: Verbal Behavior" in Language: Journal of the Linguistic Society of America, Vol. 35, No. 1 (January-March 1959) 26-58.

²⁴For a useful discussion and summary of some of the major criticisms, with a focus on the charge of over-generalizing from insufficient data, see Daniel Robinson's Systems of Modern Psychology: A Critical Sketch (New York: Columbia University Press, 1979), pp. 93-142.

that Skinner over-generalizes hastily from lower species to higher, that he ignores the phenomena of consciousness and neglects heredity, to a charge that his work leads to dreadful pragmatic consequences including totalitarianism; furthermore, *the behaviorist is merely conditioned to assert the theory . . .* ^{25,26}

²⁵See Skinner's own list of twenty of these criticisms in About Behaviorism (New York: Vintage Books, A Division of Random House, 1974), pp. 4-5.

²⁶As stated, this kind of *ad hominem* attack with its allegations concerning behavioral conditioning seems to miss the point, appearing to claim that if the theory is true, then it is true. What critics of this ilk seem to be alleging is that behaviorism is inconsistent with its own justification in terms of reasons, not causes; in some of the more interesting kinds of argument, it might be suggested that if behaviorism were true, then it could not have emerged as a theory. Skinner has been responding to criticisms of this nature since his early work on Verbal Behavior and continues to do so in his autobiographical works. This last criticism of Skinner's theory, regardless of its accuracy in this case, suggests an interesting criterion for criticizing a psychological theory: Since theory construction and expression is, qua process, part of what a full psychological theory is to explain, we may ask, "Is the theory under question consistent with its own emergence and expression?" One might relate this kind of criticism to recent work in cosmology, where only those cosmological schemes consistent with the existence of beings like ourselves developing cosmologies are considered, i.e., work involving the "anthropic" cosmological principle:

Why, for instance, do we find that the universe is full of huge tracts of empty space? Because it is nearly 20 billion years old and has been expanding and thinning out all the while. But why is it so old? Because it took life a long time to evolve. Carbon-based organisms like ourselves require carbon atoms, and the atoms must first be brewed up inside stars that then explode to

In the case of Freud, such criticisms constitute a philosophical genre in themselves.²⁷ Possibly the most philosophically well-known recent examples of these are the criticisms offered by Grünbaum and Karl Popper.²⁸ Since the falsification theory of scientific integrity was developed and popularized by Popper, the status of Freud's theory qua science has been seriously impugned. Even generally sympathetic and careful exegetes such as D. N. Robinson have argued that Freud's theory has

make the stuff of new stars and planets, and all this takes time. Therefore, say proponents of the anthropic principle, our existence "explains" the great age of the universe. Were the universe substantially younger, it would not yet contain enough carbon atoms to support life as we know it and we would not be here to ask the question.

(Timothy Ferris, "I Think, Therefore the Universe Is," (New York Times Book Review, February 16, 1987 (pp. 20-21), p. 20). Ferris is reviewing John D. Barrow and Frank J. Tipler's The Anthropic Cosmological Principle (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986).)

²⁷For useful bibliographies with their own careful criticism, see Saul Rosenzweig's Freud and Experimental Psychology: The Emergence of Idiodynamics (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company; St. Louis: Rana House, 1987) and Adolf Grünbaum's Foundations of Psychoanalysis: A Philosophical Critique (Berkeley, Los Angeles, and London: University of California Press, 1984). Also see a valuable collection of shorter critiques of Freud, Philosophical Essays on Freud, edited by Richard Wollheim and James Hopkins (Cambridge, London, New York, New Rochelle, Melbourne: Cambridge University Press, 1982).

²⁸The Logic of Scientific Discovery (New York: Basic Books, 1959); Conjectures and Refutations: The Growth of Scientific Knowledge, second edition (New York: Basic Books, Inc., Publishers, 1965).

placed itself outside the region of scientific credibility by making itself immune to refutation.²⁹ Given the popularity of these criticisms in the current Anglo-American philosophical community, and given the resulting suspicion regarding the scientific status of Freud's work and hence its very candidacy for truth, we will expand on these criticisms at more length than on the Skinnerian enterprise where such charges are more likely to find their source than their target.

Freud's theory is taken to be scientifically suspect because it seems to explain too much. There is the familiar criticism that any Freudian interpretation can be pushed through by the Freudian interpreter. Either the subject who is being interpreted will assent or deny. If the subject assents, then we have it from the horse's mouth; if the subject denies, then this resistance is taken as evidence for the truth of the Freudian interpretation: a case of "heads I win, tails you lose"--a case of non-falsifiability.

Freud himself accepted the possibility and, on occasion, actuality of falsification.³⁰ He seemed to think that the fundamental scientific credentials of

²⁹Systems of Modern Psychology., pp. 225, 226, 236.

³⁰This is one of Grünbaum's over-arching theses in Foundations of Psychoanalysis.

his theory were beyond reproach, and that the data from his clinical work justified his fundamental claims concerning the repression aetiology, transference, and the Oedipus Complex. He even felt comfortable using his theory to explain objections to his theory.³¹ His very certainty concerning the clinical support of these basic aspects of his theory led him to discount experimental data offered in their support.³²

³¹E.g., Freud argues that the apparently non-wish-fulfilling dreams brought as counter-evidence to his theory of "dreams as wish-fulfilling" fulfilled the wish to show Freud wrong! (The Interpretation of Dreams, translated from the German and edited by James Strachey (New York: Avon Books, 1965), p. 185). A more familiar example would be Freud's analysis of his opponents' disagreements in terms of "The Resistance to Psychoanalysis" in the 1925 paper of that name (in Sigmund Freud: Character and Culture, edited with an introduction by Philip Rieff (New York: Collier Books, a division of Macmillan Publishing Co., Inc., 1963), pp. 252-262).

³²Consider Freud's 1934 response to Saul Rosenzweig's attempts (experimentally) to verify the transition from the "pleasure principle" to the "reality principle" and the phenomenon of repression:

I have examined your experimental studies for the verification of psychoanalytic propositions with interest. I cannot put much value on such confirmation because the abundance of reliable observations on which these propositions rest makes them independent of experimental verification. Still it can do no harm. (Rosenzweig's translation from the German in his Freud and Experimental Psychology, pp. 36-37.)

Another treatment of this earlier letter can be found in Grünbaum's Foundations, pp. 5, 102-104.

A consideration of Freud's clinical grounds for his psychoanalytic theory has lead Adolf Grünbaum,³³ to conclude that Freudian psychoanalysis is falsifiable. It can be falsified by epidemiological studies based on certain general predictions derivable from Freud's theories,³⁴ by advances in the other sciences,³⁵ statistical analyses of the efficacy and results of various psycho-therapeutic enterprises including Freudian psychoanalysis, and by data from the life-histories of clients verified outside the clinical arena. Furthermore, even though Grünbaum is one of the most reputable defenders of the scientific status of Freudian psychoanalysis in the Anglo-American philosophical tradition, he nonetheless argues that

Later (1937), when Saul Rosenzweig contacted Freud regarding a journal for experimental psychopathological research, Freud again wrote, "Within the scope of my orientation, I cannot see that there is a need to create a special journal just for *experimental* research in psychopathology." (Rosenzweig's translation, Freud and Experimental Psychology, p 39.)

³³In his Foundations of Psychoanalysis: A Philosophical Critique, a work central to the debate concerning the interpretation and scientificity of Freudian psychoanalysis

³⁴E.g., that paranoia is a function of the strength of the societal taboo against homosexuality (Grünbaum, Foundations., p. 110).

³⁵E.g., progress in areas ranging from neurology to the study of the physiology of sexuality (Masters and Johnson's work has necessitated changes; see Grünbaum, Foundations., p. 270).

psychoanalysis has been shaken by some of these results; i.e., not only has the theory been shown to be falsifiable, but it has, at some junctures been shown to be false, and has been forced into revision. As a science, although Freud's psychoanalytic theory is "scientifically live, it is currently hardly well"³⁶

Adjudication of the scientific and factual credentials of both Freud's and Skinner's theories is not required for our analysis and determination of the question, "do Freudian and Skinnerian criticism of religious experience argument commit the fallacy of abusive *ad hominem*?" Yet, as we pursue the turn from formal issues to matters of soundness, these concerns will deserve their day in court.

³⁶Foundations, p. 278. There Grünbaum summarizes his findings along the following lines:

- (1) The clinical evidence is "remarkably weak";
- (2) Given Grünbaum's treatment of epistemic defects in Freud's arguments, extra-clinical studies of either an experimental or epidemiological nature are indicated;
- (3) Though Freud may be serendipitously right, and though "psychoanalysis may thus be said to be scientifically alive, it is currently hardly well, at least insofar as its clinical foundations are concerned. Nor is there a favorable verdict from such *experimental* findings as we have had occasion to canvas in chapter 3 (pp. 188-189), chapter 4 (pp. 202-205), chapter 5 (pp. 217-219) and chapter 9 (p. 270)."

After all, the power of these two psychologists' pragmatic critiques of religion depends on the descriptive adequacy and predictive power of their theories. Challenges to the scientific status and accuracy of their theories thus constitute challenges to both Freud's and Skinner's critiques of argument from religious experience. Therefore, those (on both sides of the religious issues) concerned with the potency of these attacks need to heed the serious criticisms that have been leveled at these theories.³⁷

D. Kantian nature of the Jamesian religious experience argument (including the issue of sources and James's own stated admiration of Kant's work on religion).

Historians of American philosophy have discussed the important influence of Kant on the development of

³⁷Those who take Freud's theory seriously may need to consider applications of that theory to the development of Freud's own theory of religion, paralleling the "anthropic" attack on Skinner suggested above in footnote 26. See, e.g., Hans Küng's Freud and the Problem of God, translated by Edward Quinn (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1979), where Küng traces Freud's critique of religion to events in Freud's childhood. There is also an extensive literature that attempts to connect Freud's theories with his Jewish identity. These range from David Bakan's Sigmund Freud and the Jewish Mystical Tradition which portrays Freud as a closet mystic (D. Van Nostrand Company, Inc., Princeton: 1958) to Peter Gay's A Godless Jew: Freud, Atheism, and the Making of Psychoanalysis (Yale University Press, 1987). Also of interest is Ernst Simon's discussion of Freud's family in "Sigmund Freud, the Jew" (Leo Baeck Institute Yearbook II (London: East and West Library, 1957), pp. 270-305).

American pragmatism. According to Murray Murphey, ". . . it was Kant who was the dominant influence upon the pragmatists. Indeed, Cambridge pragmatism was, and is, more indebted to Kant than to any other single philosopher."³⁸ James indicates some of his debt to Kant when he writes, "*Adopt your hypothesis, and see how it agrees with life--that is faith. As Kant says I have swept away knowledge in order to make room for faith; and that seems to be the absolutely sound and healthy position.*"³⁹

Further study is recommended regarding the issue of determining the Kantian sources of the James material used here in the reconstruction of the Jamesian argument from religious experience. Such study will, optimally, be undertaken by persons well versed in the history and divisions of neo-Kantianism and knowledgeable with respect to other pragmatic arguments for the existence of God, such as Pascal's famous wager, and Kant's moral argument.

³⁸"Kant's Children: The Cambridge Pragmatists," C. S. Peirce Society Transactions 4 (1968): 3-33, p. 9.

³⁹This is in a letter to Henry William Rankin of June 12, 1897, donated to the Houghton collection at Harvard by Richard Hocking, as quoted by Burkhardt's "Notes," to "Is Life Worth Living?" in The Will to Believe and Other Essays in Popular Philosophy (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1979), p. 252, n. 7.15., citing letter 24.

One insight which might have been transposed from Kant to James is that pragmatic argument with respect to issues such as God, freedom, and immortality involves the moral sentiment of the individual making the decision. As such, what is apparently being emphasized by both Kant and James is that the evidence involved, concerning as it does "subjective grounds (of the moral sentiment)," is not compelling to the degree that would license the exercise of dogmatic religious or moral compulsion.⁴⁰ The moral certainty licenses decision for oneself. One hopes to persuade others to follow the same path. But the limitation of the certainty to the "I" prohibits the replacement of persuasion by force.

For Kant, it would seem, the perfection of the world comes from the victory of moral persuasion over brute physical force. Given the nature of James's arguments as challenges to the individual to participate in a decision which may shape the future of the universe itself, there is parallel between his

⁴⁰See Kant, Critique of Pure Reason, p. 650 (= B857, quoted above as the proem to this chapter), and James's claim for the limitation of the authority of religious experience: "No authority emanates from them which should make it a duty for those who stand outside of them to accept their revelation uncritically." (James, Varieties of Religious Experience (New Hyde Park, New York: University Books, Inc., 1963), p. 422.)

position and Kant's belief that the future age can be brought in when individuals join Kant on the critical path:

If the reader has been kind and patient enough to follow me . . . along this path, he may judge for himself whether, if he will help . . . towards making this footpath a highroad, it may not be possible to achieve even before the close of the present century . . . complete satisfaction to human reason with regard to those questions which have in all ages exercised its desire for knowledge, though hitherto in vain.⁴¹

III. Philosophy and Psychology

In this section, after considering some of the relations between philosophies and psychologies, I suggest the possibility of developing a constructionalist approach towards understanding some of the distinctions and relations between the various psychological schools.

A. Introductory

Why are there so many radically different psychological schools? What makes both Freud's and Skinner's psychologies possible? Are these schools paradigms in the sense of being systematic ways of

⁴¹Critique of Pure Reason, trans. Müller, p. 543 (= B884).

interpreting a scientific realm? Or are they merely "paradigmatical"? What of the absence among them of a shared set of assumptions and interpretations and problems constituting "normal science" status?⁴² The very data that some schools find central (e.g., introspection among the Freudians) is peripheral or ignored by others (e.g., introspection among the Skinnerians). Given the range of data that each addresses, can a multi-paradigmatic view be developed? I tentatively suggest and attempt to sketch a *multi-paradigmatic methodological realism*, to be applied in response to such questions, by first arguing for a greater concern regarding squaring philosophical and psychological assertions. I then propose a constructionalist approach towards outlining a philosophical view of the relations between various psychological schools.⁴³ This sketch, informed by a

⁴²Thomas Kuhn characterizes "normal science" as "puzzle-solving," and seems to consider it a kind of scientific business as usual, proceeding on basically agreed upon lines, and not thought of as leading to any major revision in the background scientific theory. He contrasts it with revolutionary science, which he takes to be the producer of major novelties and portrays as a response to crises in accepted theory. (The Structure of Scientific Revolutions, second edition, enlarged (London and Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1970). A somewhat different understanding of normal science will be presented below.)

⁴³This approach stems from the above work and is along the lines of some of the work of the following psychologists and philosophers:

wariness derived from the previous *ad hominem* analysis, combines a *multi-paradigmatic* view suggested by Nelson Goodman with a *methodological realism* inspired by Kant.

Jane Loevinger, Paradigms of Personality (New York: W. H. Freeman and Company, 1987). Loevinger's work is based on using Thomas Kuhn's Structure of Scientific Revolutions heuristically. It is not that she commits herself to Kuhn's position; rather, she finds it of use in describing the different psychological schools; Saul Rosenzweig's 1936 study, "Some Implicit Common Factors in Diverse Methods of Psychotherapy" American Journal of Orthopsychiatry, 6, 412-415, discussed in his "Background to Idiodynamics," p. 87; his 1937 "Schools of Psychology: A Complementary Pattern," Philosophy of Science, 1937, 4, 96-106, and his recent book, Freud and Experimental Psychology; Nelson Goodman, Problems and Projects (Indianapolis: The Bobbs-Merrill Company, Inc., 1972); The Structure of Appearance, Third Edition with an Introduction by Geoffrey Hellman (Dordrecht-Holland/Boston-U.S.A.: D. Reidel Publishing Company, 1977); and Ways of Worldmaking (Cambridge and Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 1978).

I am also alluding to the following passages from Kant: Immanuel Kant's Critique of Pure Reason, Unabridged edition, translated by Norman Kemp Smith, (New York: Macmillan & Co., 1929; St. Martin's Press, 1965), p. 650 (= B857); Sections 87-91 of Kant's Critique of Judgment, translated, with an Introduction, by J. H. Bernard (New York: Hafner Press, A Division of Macmillan Publishing Co., Inc., and London: Collier Macmillan Publishers, 1951), pp. 298-339; and Kant's Logic, Sections IX-X.

B. Philosophical presuppositions in psychological systems and the requirement for consistency

1. Philosophies and Psychologies: Mutual Consistency

The basic requirement for a relation between a psychology and a philosophy⁴⁴ is mutual consistency between the two. That there are certain affinities between particular psychological and philosophical schools is a commonplace, e.g., the relationship between Quine and Skinner, between phenomenology and the Rogerian school.⁴⁵ A philosophical empiricism

⁴⁴Psychology can collide with philosophy whenever the philosopher makes or assumes psychological commitments. This is most evident, perhaps, in epistemology and metaphysics, where recent work has been done by philosophers whose naturalized epistemologies challenge traditional theories of mind. E.g., Quine in Word and Object (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1960) and Paul Churchland in Scientific Realism and the Plasticity of Mind (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979) invoke behavioristic and physiological psychology respectively. In recent ethical theory, Stevenson's acceptance of a theory of individual decision-making as internal conflict-resolution informs his views on the nature of ethical arguments (Ethics and Language (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1944), pp. 130-138, 238-239)). Various psychological theories, the best known of which are those of Freud and descendant theories, have been brought to bear in aesthetics; and psychological and social theories raise their voices in much recent discussion of the history and philosophy of science (e.g., Kuhn's work, referred to above).

⁴⁵As Herbert Spiegelberg points out, in his Phenomenology in Psychology and Psychiatry: A Historical Introduction (Northwestern University Press, 1972),

wedded to a behavioristic orientation might contradict psychological systems that thrive on notions of inherited conceptual schemes. One can argue that certain philosophers present certain psychologies, and certain psychologies are based in certain philosophies. This claim can be rephrased and tested as a claim about individuals; i.e., each philosopher has an affinity for certain kinds of psychology; and *mutatis mutandis* for each psychologist.⁴⁶ But this empirical generalization is not at the heart of my own position: I argue that even if this is not the case, it ought to be the case within certain broad limits:

At first sight it may seem far-fetched to claim Carl Rogers for phenomenology. Indeed, Rogers' interest in phenomenology was late and slow in developing. Nevertheless, in his . . . role as one of the two representatives of phenomenology at the symposium on "Behaviorism and Phenomenology" at Rice University in 1964, Rogers took the side of phenomenology as the main ingredient for the "third force" in psychology, between behaviorism and psychoanalysis. (pp. 148-149; Spiegelberg cites: "Towards a Science of the Person," in Behaviorism and Phenomenology: Contrasting Bases for Modern Psychology, ed. T. W. Wann (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1965).)

⁴⁶This was a central theme in Saul Rosenzweig's 1929 "Philosophy and Psychoanalysis." Rosenzweig discusses this early work in "Background to Idiodynamics," his revision of the address he gave at the American Psychological Association upon receiving the Distinguished Scientific Contribution Award in 1985. (The Clinical Psychologist, 1986, 39, 83-89; "Philosophy and Psychoanalysis" is discussed on p. 84.)

Since philosophical and psychological systems involve claims related to each other, these claims ought to be coherent. Since each will accept certain presuppositions from the realm of the other,⁴⁷ a minimal requirement is the mutual consistency requirement described above. Of the various psychological positions available to philosophy (and philosophical positions available to psychology), only some are consistent.⁴⁸ Each philosophy or psychology should have an affinity for just those psychological or philosophical positions with which it is consistent. So it is that most philosophers and most psychologists explicitly or implicitly make decisions with respect to what they take to be each other's realms. Their decisions in their home realm are reflected in the other, for better or ill.⁴⁹

⁴⁷E.g., that free choice is possible, that it is not possible: that all knowledge is ultimately based in sense-experience, that some knowledge is not based in sense-experience; that internal conflict ends after decision-making occurs, that internal conflict continues after decision making occurs, that internal conflict is not an appropriate concept for a scientific psychology; that psychology ought to seek a physiological explanation of mind, that . . .

⁴⁸E.g., to rely on an example made familiar in this essay, Skinner's psychology works better than that of Freud for Quine's epistemology.

⁴⁹Yet, most of us still remember when the allegation of "but that's psychology" could terminate an opponent's philosophical argument, and can

C. A constructionalist approach towards explanation of some of the distinctions and relations between the various psychological schools.

For individuals who have not yet reached certainty, or at least security beyond a reasonable doubt, with respect to relating philosophical and psychological systems, and for those who are not willing to think the various psychological schools to be altogether true or altogether false, I recommend a methodological realism.⁵⁰

This realism involves taking as a postulate of doing psychology or philosophy that there are conclusions to be reached, that as goal-directed endeavors these enterprises are not meaningless.⁵¹ In what follows, this approach is defined by way of an

understand why philosophers are sometimes reticent to expound on psychology.

⁵⁰This paragraph addresses many, but there are those it excludes, e.g, stalwart adherents to various psychological schools. There are still, e.g., Freudians who "know" that deniers of the truth of Freudian psychology are manifesting a resistance due to an improperly resolved Oedipus.

⁵¹Some are more interested in doing psychology as literature and as exegesis. Others can remind us that it is debated whether or not philosophy has ever made any progress after soandso. One need not, it is true, take a goal-directed approach to doing philosophy or psychology, paralleling the artists who are interested in their enterprise for its own sake. That too, however, seems to be liable to interpretation as doing something for the sake of something; it is just that, for such persons, the intrinsic value lies closer at hand.

interpretation of some of the work of Nelson Goodman. After his work is interpreted, I then apply it to the issue of the interrelation of psychological schools with each other and with consistent philosophical positions. This, of course, is done in an extremely sketchy and programmatic way, and is offered as the first tentative steps on a new journey, more prologue than epilogue.

D. Nelson Goodman and Multi-Paradigmatic Pluralism

1. Criteria for Systems in the Russell-Quine tradition

Given the absence of certainty in philosophy in general and of philosophical accounts in particular, the only kinds of accounts that we (qua philosophers who give accounts) can give are uncertain accounts. In so far as we prefer coherent accounts or systems describing the ways things might be, we have one criterion which allows choice between systems: coherent systems are to be chosen over incoherent ones. Granted that inconsistent systems are incoherent *a fortiori*, we have, in the formal machinery which determines inconsistency, tools that partially determine coherence by providing one necessary condition for it. Yet, given mutually exclusive individually self-consistent systems, we can rely on a

variety of other criteria to further evaluate any interesting available accounts. Such criteria include conservatism, modesty, simplicity, generality, and refutability.⁵² To these Goodman adds "psychological satisfaction"⁵³ and "what we care about."^{54,55}

2. Multi-Paradigmatic Pluralism

I term Goodman's view "multi-paradigmatic pluralism" and interpret it as follows:

Goodman's multi-paradigmatic pluralism has provided an interesting way of dealing with mutually exclusive self-consistent systems that cannot be judged solely on the basis of the criteria discussed above.

⁵²W. V. Quine and J. S. Ullian. The Web of Belief, second edition (New York: Random House, 1978), pp. 66-82.

⁵³Structure of Appearance, p. 99.

⁵⁴Structure., p. 9.

⁵⁵Of these criteria, Goodman explicates one, "simplicity". He does so by means of his calculus of complexity, which allows one who accepts this calculus to measure the complexity (and thus the simplicity) of a system in terms of complexity values of that system's primitive predicates or extra-logical basis. Of two systems, that system which accomplishes the most with the least complex basis is the simpler. When other criteria are equally well met, it is to be chosen. Furthermore, it sometimes seems that Goodman would deem it acceptable, perhaps admirable, procedure to subsume some or all other criteria to that of simplicity, as when he says (Problems and Projects, p. 346), "And I have argued that simplicity not only functions as a test of truth but sometimes outweighs truth."

According to multi-paradigmatic pluralism, more than one such system may be acceptable. It does not seem advisable to understand this position as claiming that the truth of one set of statements is somehow consistent with the truth of a latter set of statements that implies the falsity of the former. Rather, this position seems to claim that there are certain systematic descriptions of facets of experience that do not describe the same "parts" of the described in the same way as other descriptions. As Goodman would have it, these many world-versions do not interfere with each other; they describe different worlds.

One might read Goodman as claiming that such mutually exclusive constructions of experience are together true, despite their inconsistency. This reading seems to make sense if "true" is not read as "corresponding to the way the world is," but rather as "an adequate way of dealing with some facet or facets of the described with which one is concerned." This second interpretation is based on Goodman's discussion of constructional system-making⁵⁶ as mapping.⁵⁷

⁵⁶"Constructional system" is here being used to indicate a system formalized with clearly stated primitive terms, definitions, and other transformation rules. For the purposes of what follows, it is being assumed that for every informal system and interpretation, there is the possibility of constructing formal constructional analogues which vary

In this treatment, it seems that he is not arguing that constructional system-making is like map-making, but rather that constructional system-making is map-making as much so as is conventional cartography. Constructional systems are maps, enjoying the vicissitudes of maps. There is no need to read Goodman's argument as merely a heuristic analogy.⁵⁸ It can also be read as an eloquent description of what he takes to be the map-making function of constructional systems. It is not the purpose of a map to be a perfect counterfeit of its territory. It is not a defect in a map of Texas that we can fold it and take it with us on a train, for all that we can not do the same with the Lone Star State.

Though a map is derived from observation of a territory, the map . . . may be about as much unlike what it maps as can well be imagined. It may even be very little like other equally good maps of the same territory. A map is schematic, selective, conventional, condensed, and uniform. And these characteristics are virtues rather than defects. The map not only summarizes, clarifies, and systematizes, it often discloses facts we could hardly learn immediately from our explorations. We may make larger and more complicated maps or even three-dimensional models in order to record

in their accuracy (territorial), isomorphism (regarding the informal analogue), and utility (pragmatic).

⁵⁷"The Revision of Philosophy," Problems and Projects, pp. 15ff.

⁵⁸Though such a reading seems reasonable.

more information; but this is not always to the good. For when our map becomes . . . in all . . . respects the same as the territory mapped--and indeed long before this stage is reached--the purposes of a map are no longer served. There is no such thing as a completely unabridged map; for abridgment is intrinsic to map-making.⁵⁹

3. Multi-Paradigmatic Realism

This interpretation of constructionalist map-making suggests the possibility of a "multi-paradigmatic realism": "Realism" because of the central reference to "territory"; multi-paradigmatic" because of the importance of radically different representations of that territory. As it is understood in its broader sense, a multi-paradigmatic view is consistent with both a dogmatic relativism categorically denying the possibility of a unifying universe behind the cartography, as well as a non-dogmatic anti-relativism, depending on one's further understanding of the notion of "territory," and one's position on the possibility of experiencing territory without a map.

This realism is methodological in the sense that it is accepted for the purposes of maintaining a chosen task. It is the desire to pursue the activity of map-

⁵⁹Problems and Projects, p. 15.

making which requires the possibility of real territory to be mapped.

It is about here, with the assertion of any kind of realism, methodological or not, that I appear to part company with Goodman.⁶⁰ This may well be. Yet, as I read Goodman, he allows for truth within a world-version, and a territorial constraint on that truth, as when he says, "only if true does description make things; and making a true version can be hard work" in order to explain why a vivid description cannot produce a chair or well-cooked steak.⁶¹ Goodman seems to argue that we are eternally bound to particular world-versions, and that in his particular ones he finds, makes, and seeks many worlds. I am suggesting that others join in the search for (and perhaps precursively make) a world in which a unifying vision is possible. What I am postulating as "real" here is not the world sought (which Goodman seems to think well-lost), but rather the goal of a unifying world version.⁶²

⁶⁰See note 61, below.

⁶¹"Notes on the Well-Made World," Of Mind and Other Matters (Cambridge and London: Harvard University Press, 1984), pp. 34-35.

⁶²The following analogical shift may highlight the difference between my focus and that of Goodman. He focuses on the apparently less value laden aspects of cartography in the map-analogy, and his paradigm case of a "map" is a geographical map; my paradigm is a blue-print.

a) Reconstructing the Goodmanian Facts

The notion of "facts" becomes most peculiar under a more relativistic interpretation of multi-paradigmatic realism, unless "fact" is reinterpreted, e.g., is taken as "true statement", with "true" interpreted as above, not in a correspondence sense, but in terms of adequacy to the facets of the described with which we are concerned. This is not taken to be an absolutely determined interpretation of what Goodman meant; it is purported to be a self-consistent rational reconstruction of what he said.

But, is it consistent? Goodman certainly writes as if he (at least sometimes) believes that there are some bona fide ontological entities (called "facts") lurking behind predicates and maps. For example, he says, "What a faithful system must provide, as I have said more than once before, is not an epistemological diary but a precise, adequate, and integrated description of observed fact."⁶³ But other Goodmanian remarks seem to indicate that these observed facts are made by their maps.

In Ways of Worldmaking, Goodman states that claims like 'both are versions of the same facts' should not "be taken to imply that there are independent facts of

⁶³Structure of Appearance, p. 203.

which both are versions 'Fact' . . . is a syncategorematic term; for facts, after all, are obviously factitious."⁶⁴

So if Goodman seems to be inconsistently asserting and denying the existence of secure facts, it may be that the inconsistency can be dissolved by thinking of Goodmanian facts as an aspect of experience taken as territory within a world-version. I.e., a Goodmanian fact is any aspect of experience, *in so far as it is taken to require no further interpretation,*⁶⁵ or *in so far as it is taken as part of something mapped (territory), and not as part of some map (cartography).* Thus, what is taken as "fact" or "territory" is a function of what is taken as "interpretation" or map. "Fact" is what one attempts to do justice to in providing constructional explication. The notion of fact then plays the role of the primitive object of explication, whether it be an explication of "red spot there," the category of time, or of another constructional system, such as Goodman provided in Chapter Five of Structure of Appearance when he described the relevant features of Carnap's

⁶⁴Ways of Worldmaking, p. 93.

⁶⁵I.e., is sufficiently interpreted for the task at hand.

reconstruction in the Aufbau.^{66,67} Assertion of this interpretation of "fact" in no way intends to deny that this view is a troubling one; it merely intends to assert that it is a consistent and useful reconstruction of Goodman's claims.

E. Multi-Paradigmatic Realism and Different Psychological Schools

In line with the previous discussion, it is not initially implausible to maintain that a view is held to be true just in case it is considered to deal adequately with some facet or facets of the described with which one is concerned, without violating other adequate descriptions one maintains. A set of radically different descriptive systems, like contour, water table, and road maps of Missouri, may show information which could not be coherently bound together without some more general system (such as a general theory of geopolitical economics). Our maps might help us trace the path of a river which

⁶⁶The role here is systemic and formal for Goodman, not epistemological. As the examples of "primitive" here suggest, the primitive of one system can be the high-flown construction of another.

⁶⁷It is important to remember that the "facts" of one system might be patent falsehoods with respect to other systems. Hence Goodman, who sees no use for a unifying world-version, is always on guard against any candidate for an universal given.

determines a boundary, just as the river once helped us determine where to locate the boundary on our map. One could go further, and argue that multi-paradigmatic realism allows one to exercise conservative impulses where complete and adequate descriptions of the territory under consideration are notoriously lacking, where the explorers themselves sometimes regard their object as a "dark continent".⁶⁸

Consider the possible usefulness of multi-paradigmatic realism in the philosophy of the social sciences in general, as well as in particular. Skinner's theory of operant conditioning, psychodynamic systems such as Freud's, and physiological psychology (including neuro-psychology), might be then viewed not so much as in opposition, but as incomplete views concerning the best possible eventual description of human behavior.⁶⁹ This would explain how it is that therapeutic procedures, which grow out of and make

⁶⁸Freud used "dark continent" to describe the psychology of woman in The Question of Lay Analysis (Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud (London: Hogarth, 1959), p. 212, cited by Saul Rosenzweig in Freud and Experimental Psychology. (p. 44), as part of Rosenzweig's characterization of Freud as a "conquistador.")

⁶⁹For a discussion that anticipates this multi-paradigmatic approach, see Saul Rosenzweig's 1937 "Schools of Psychology: A Complementary Pattern," Philosophy of Science, 4, 96-106.

sense only in one of these apparently⁷⁰ mutually exclusive psychological systems, are used individually and collectively with success by therapists who are not themselves committed to the ultimate truth of any combination of the systems in question.⁷¹

On the multi-paradigmatic view, we may be here presented with a collection of rather primitive maps by

⁷⁰Sometimes the systems seem to be genuinely in competition with one another, as when a doctor with one (physiological) orientation performs a lobotomy while another (Freudian) opts for psychotherapy and another (new wave or Christian Science practitioner) preaches prayer and meditation. Sometimes the tension is less clear as when a behaviorist recommends desensitization while the physiologist prescribes drugs. In the latter case, the two practitioners might even agree with each other before the treatment to combine forces and share its burdens.

What needs to be worked out are criteria for determining when views are in competition, as opposed to cases where they are (at least possibly) two partial accounts of a (at this time still-sought) comprehensive view.

⁷¹Saul Rosenzweig, "Some Implicit Common Factors in Diverse Methods of Psychotherapy," American Journal of Orthopsychiatry, 1936, 6, 412-415 (discussed in his "Background to Idiodynamics," p. 87). For a parallel situation in another "harder" science, see the interesting results from differing schools of hearing-aid evaluation in Larry E. Humes's, "An Evaluation of Several Rationales for Selecting Hearing Aid Gain," Journal of Speech and Hearing Disorders vol. 51, no. 3, 272-281. Humes evaluated ten different procedures of which he stated "Each has an underlying theoretical framework, either explicitly stated, or implied, that would appear to be reasonable (p. 272)." He found that "any of the procedures could produce optimal aided speech recognition performance (p. 272)" For more discussion of this issue in psychology, see Rosenzweig's "Schools of Psychology.," cited above.

various psychologies, without being quite clear which one to use for what, or knowing how, if at all, they are to be eventually subsumed into some more general scheme. In the meantime, we have discovered that one does best to use different maps for different types of exploration. It is as if we noticed that it was better to take that blot in the corner of the map as a miserable approximation of a hill instead of an equally poor approximation of a city, and discovered as a result of such taking whether or not we were dealing with a primitive contour map, or a primitive highway map. Matters are exacerbated in clinical psychology by the fact that we are involved, at times, in life or death situations while confronted with dozens of ornate and appealing, if not terribly successful, maps.

On this view, Kuhn's "normal science" might be interpreted as science whose practitioners are not so much working out the interpretation of a system as working out the consequences of an accepted interpretative system. One difference between a multi-paradigmatic realism and a Kuhnian theory of scientific revolution is that the former prescribes a methodological pluralism (itself based in a certain kind of realism) for undertaking investigations in areas in flux (containing debates between schools, fundamental disagreements as to purposes and

procedures), whereas the latter seems to function better as a diagnostic, rather than as a prescriptive tool.⁷²

This evaluation of some of the various uses of these scientific, philosophical and psychological theories--normal and non-normal sciences, Goodman's and Kuhn's views, Skinner's and Freud's psychologies, etc.--is in no way meant to imply that they could not eventually be subsumed under one system, said to apply to one territory. The assumption/postulation of such an eventually unifying theory or ultimate territory is at the heart of methodological realism. With an acceptance of the genuine possibility of alternative mappings, and a genuine tolerance based in the awareness that, though the best theory may be waiting there at the end of days, we do not yet have it, we have multi-paradigmatic methodological realism. In future work, I hope to develop, refine and defend the multi-paradigmatic methodological realism suggested here. If this can be brought about, let Murray Murphey's concluding remarks be mine:

Goodman was [not] moved to this result by any personal religious motives, but rather by the impossibility of constructing an adequate

⁷²Assuming, of course, that the Kuhnian has a viable method for delimiting normal from non-normal or "revolutionary" science.

theory of knowledge on any other basis.
. . . the historical role of pragmatism
within the empiricist tradition has been to
insist that what we call knowledge is a
conceptual structure which interprets
experience in the interests of order,
stability, simplicity, and beauty, and that
any such system, whether a science or a
theology, has a cognitive function.⁷³

⁷³"Kant's Children," pp. 30-31.

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This article discusses Sigwart's prescriptive view on logic, as well as his position that we use science to help us to find what we are looking for, a view embraced by William James who cites Sigwart in "The Dilemma of Determinism" (p. 116, n. 3, Burkhardt edition of Will to Believe).