



S. T. Campagna-Pinto, *The Workshop of Being: Religious Affections and Their Pragmatic Value in the Thought of Jonathan Edwards and William James*

The Workshop of Being: Religious Affections and Their Pragmatic Value in the Thought of Jonathan Edwards and William James by Campagna-Pinto, S. T.

Review by: Anri Morimoto

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ording to which “there is a God who is the creator of the physical world and works actively in it to bring about his purposes as well as being omnipotent, omniscient, eternal (or timeless) and morally perfect” (13). In a rather dodgy move, Visala does maintain that he will not be arguing for the truth of such a view but “simply explore what consequences CSR would have for theism as if both were true” (13). However, he concludes that if the ordinary mental mechanisms that cognitive scientists of religion identify are “reliable in everyday contexts,” and “if beliefs in God are products of this machinery,” then “we should hold them *prima facie* justified” (183). In support of this “justification,” Visala follows Justin Barrett’s creationist argument for “supernaturalistic selection” in which our cognitive proclivities for a *sensus divinitatis* are the consequence of a divinely created cosmos “fine-tuned . . . to allow for life and for evolution and then [for] orchestrated mutations and selection to produce the sort of organisms we are” (186, citing Barrett, *Why Would Anyone Believe in God?* [Walnut Creek, CA, 2004], 123). However, this Deistic abstraction, whose veracity Visala wishes to allow, is far removed from his confessional belief in the historical-interventionist deity of “mainstream Christian theism.”

Visala opens his book by observing that while the claims of CSR research to explain religion “are based on new theories, the claims themselves are not in any way new: they echo the claims that have been made on each occasion a new explanation of religion has emerged since the time of Marx and Freud.” He then questions: “Is anything different this time” (1)? We might rather question whether there is anything different this time in the apologetic response of theists, however sophisticated their arguments, since their logic is already committed to (and intellectually constrained by) a *praeambula fidei*. Ironically, one of the findings of CSR research is that the naturalistic machinery of human brains does, indeed, operate in such a way that is conducive to exploitation by successful social institutions, such as religions, as a *sensus divinitatis*, and while this evolved propensity might be explained, it is unlikely that it will ever be explained away, at least in the minds of believers. Although Visala is quite right “that CSR writers are working with abstract models rather than historical descriptions of events” (127), his own ahistorical exercise in formal logic unfortunately presents nothing new to historians of religion and neither advances the understanding of philosophers of science nor contributes to those interested in pursuing a scientific study of religion.

LUTHER H. MARTIN, *University of Vermont.*

CAMPAGNA-PINTO, S. T. *The Workshop of Being: Religious Affections and Their Pragmatic Value in the Thought of Jonathan Edwards and William James.* Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2011. xi+171 pp. \$80.00 (cloth).

S. T. Campagna-Pinto’s *The Workshop of Being* is a book that requires strenuous efforts to read. The sentences are dense and rich in style, sometimes too ornate and winding to maintain clarity of the argument. It has no introduction at the beginning, no conclusion at the end, and no chapter summaries in between. Each of the five chapters begins without stating what is going to be discussed, why it is worth discussing at that juncture, or how it is related to the arguments of the other chapters to construct a coherent whole. In fact, the entire book challenges its readers to plunge in without chart or promise, and ultimately, the readers are left wondering whether they have ever reached the intended destination at all.

Obviously, this must be the result of deliberate choice. Given the two intellectuals the book intends to treat, it is at least half justified. At one point in the argument, the author quotes from a study on William James: “in the Jamesian account of consciousness, words keep us suspended, questions are left unanswered, theories re-

main open-ended" (63). The inquiries that James took on himself wander around "fact in the making" (8), "something there" (55), or "the vague" (67) that defies knowing reductionism and easy categorization. In James's critique of the philosophy of his day, it is precisely this human tendency to secure certainty and meaningfulness that troubles our psyche and dooms philosophy into a lifeless system of scientism. So I should say, just as George Santayana did after reading his mentor's *Principles of Psychology*, "it would be pedantry to regret the loss of logical unity in a book so rich and living" (*Atlantic Monthly*, April 1891, 556).

Campagna-Pinto joins the company of scholars who have traced the lineage from Edwards to James: Josiah Royce, Morton White, Andrew Delbanco, and the author's dissertation advisor, Richard R. Niebuhr, to name only the most notable. James himself tried to model *The Varieties of Religious Experience* as "a self-conscious sequel" to Edwards's *Religious Affections* (4, 137). Most of these earlier studies dwell on the psychology of religious experience, and while Campagna-Pinto's new attempt also argues for similarities between Edwards's sense of the heart and James's mystic sense of inner meaning, the book takes further steps to search for the ontological consequences their Puritan and pragmatist powers of imagination entail.

This ontological preponderance is evident in the title, *The Workshop of Being*. The concept is taken from James's *Pragmatism*, suggesting that individual human acts that aspire to meliorate the world actually grow and create the world as much as they engage in the process: "we catch fact in the making through the circulative efforts of the heart to impress affectional facts upon reality so as to transform experience" (111). It expresses James's conviction that religious experience is "ontologically productive of reality" (139). Edwards's philosophical view also developed especially toward the end of his life to hold that the consent of being to Being in General actually increases beauty of the creation and enlarges the glory of God.

Chapter 1 describes how the two intellectuals found traces of the sacred in the midst of the debilitating philosophy of their time, be it the hubris and self-righteousness of Northampton citizenry or the melancholy of scientific determinism. Edwards made use of biblical images to understand the sacred through types in nature and history, while James saw in Edwards's careful scrutiny of religious experience a convincing indication of spontaneous and purposeful elements of the human mind.

Chapter 2 compares the two in their respective efforts to defend creative and participatory freedom against the apparent persuasiveness of determinism. In arguing for the Edwardean narrative of freedom, Campagna-Pinto looks into Edwards's *Personal Narratives* and finds "a wonderful alteration of the mind" to be the key to "a new habit of vision" (32). I agree with the author that Edwards made a pragmatic distinction between signs and actual ideas as "the real affectional excitement" (33), but I would press him further to see Edwards standing close to Hume who, as another pragmatic experientialist, distinguished ideas from impressions as lively experience.

Chapter 3 associates Edwards's "heart" knowledge with James's "knowledge by acquaintance" (53). The distinction actually has a longer lineage reaching back to the Puritan definition of saving knowledge as opposed to historical knowledge. Here again, the author correctly points out the ontological basis of this new disposition: it originates in the perfect idea in the mind of God, which is emanated *ad extra* and then remanates (flows back) to God as divine self-communication through human participation. In the Jamesian paradigm, this is horizontally translated as "experiential engagement" (65).

Chapter 4 convincingly argues that both men ventured to expand the limits of "bare empiricism" to embrace forms of "enriched empiricism" that does not leave out "the ideal" or "the potential" (76). Edwards's philosophy of excellence enables

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him to correlate the natural and spiritual beauty of creation in proportional harmony, while James's description of consciousness using metaphors like "stream" or "field" suggests "the metaphysical and psychological ecosystem in which human beings grow" (103).

Chapter 5 presents James as one who "democratized" Edwards's vision by making what only regenerate saints could see enjoyable by anyone who engages in "the moral equivalent of war" (141, 121). The argument in the last few pages, referring to Edwards's disappointment in American exceptionalism and James's diagnosis of the religion's failure to be the creative power of transformation, drifts to the social critique of American imperialism and industrialism.

As I go through these semblances of chapter-by-chapter recapitulation, I am keenly aware of the pointlessness of my service. I find myself at a loss to draw any conclusion with which I could either agree or disagree. More than a series of chapters is required to make a book. I hope the entire scholarship will agree with me at least on this point.

ANRI MORIMOTO, *International Christian University*.

YOUNG, GEORGE. *The Russian Cosmists: The Esoteric Futurism of Nikolai Fedorov and His Followers*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2012. x+296 pp. \$24.90 (cloth).

George Young's book gives English-speaking readers the first comprehensive overview of Russian Cosmism. While the term has been used before, the idea of Cosmism as a unified school was put forward only in 1993 by Gacheva and Semenova (220). When one considers the disciplinary boundaries that Cosmism crosses, it is easy to see how this recognition was so long in coming: philosophy, political science, theology, painting, and astrophysics are a few of the old ones. And Cosmists have not been remiss in creating new disciplines of their own, such as Biocosmism, Scientific Immortalism, Hypoboreanism, and Neo-Eurasianism. The latter have emerged in the post-Soviet era, sometimes developed by thinkers who have now self-consciously adopted the name of "Cosmist," but they have strong roots in the original project of Nikolai Fedorov almost a century and a half ago. Part of Young's task consists in showing these continuities and demonstrating that these thinkers do indeed form a unity.

He devotes two chapters to Fedorov himself, and in the chapters on other thinkers Young highlights (often with detailed quotations) the obvious influence of Fedorov on their work. In so doing he makes explicit what many readers will have only dimly intuited before (especially with well-known thinkers like Soloviev, Dostoevsky, and Bulgakov). The methodological question of "what makes a Cosmist a Cosmist" (25) is raised in the introduction. However, Young defers answering it until the very end, when his account is finished. Although it occasionally seems tenuous to lump together a Russian Orthodox theologian like Sergei Bulgakov with an atheist Biocosmist like Alexander Agienko, when one goes back over the thinkers with Young's classification in mind, one finds it works surprisingly well and is persuasive, even if a particular thinker might lack one or another feature.

In his last chapter, Young bravely poses another question: Why should we (presumably non-Russians) care about Cosmism at all, other than as an academic curiosity? His own honest answer is that it can still offer suggestions for how to live today, such as scientific optimism, a type of "benign totalitarianism" that might be useful when the time for global unity arrives, and a vision of what and how such global unity might look like and be handled (237–41). An obvious attraction of Cosmism is indeed that it has been so fruitful in using old doctrines (scientific and religious) to grapple with modernity. However, the last two features Young pro-