

## ИСТОРИЯ ФИЛОСОФИИ

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### THREE DISCOURSES ON RELIGION IN NEO-PRAGMATISM

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The presentation focuses, *first*, on Richard Rorty’s debate with the Italian philosopher Gianni Vattimo in *The Future of Religion* (2005): that is to say on a debate which – taking into account pragmatism’s attitude towards “the religious” as well as to the postmodern critique of those radicalized (post-Kantian) modes of Enlightenment that without much hesitation affirm “atheism” – *critically revisits* the standard verdict of modernity regarding the unstoppable demise of religion. The paper discusses, *secondly*, Hilary Putnam’s post-analytical conception of faith that he developed in his books *Renewing Philosophy* (1992) and *Jewish Philosophy as a Guide to Life. Rosenzweig, Buber, Levinas, Wittgenstein* (2008). Putnam’s elaborate interest in “the religious” is, as will be shown, inspired by William James as well as by late Wittgenstein and by (elements of) John Dewey’s social philosophy. *Part three* of the paper is dedicated to Charles Taylor’s (both sympathetic and critical) analysis of William James’s – individual-focused – survey of “religious experience” which was published in his 2002 Vienna Lecture, *Varieties of Religion Today: William James Revisited*. This segment of the talk primarily focuses on Taylor’s renewed emphasis on the communal aspects of faith. The *coda* deals briefly with Hans Joas’s pragmatist concept of the “optional” character of religious belief “in a secular age” (*Faith as an Option*, 2014). In the context of his (Taylor-inspired) analysis of modernity, Joas emphasizes (with reference to Robert N. Bellah, with whom he co-edited *The Axial Age and Its Consequences*, 2012), that in a globalized world no religion should insist, dogmatically, on the absolute validity of “its own take on the divine,” since such an insistence can easily trigger a fanatic rejection of “the other.” While avoiding abstract relativism, religions should rather mutually focus on their best sides, trying to learn from each other: from their different – and at all times fragile and unfinished – attempts to explore (as James put it) “the relation of man to the divine.” The *core thesis* of the paper is thus twofold. Firstly, neo-pragmatic attempts to explore “the religious” have the potential to critically distance the (strict as well as dogmatic) verdict of older secularization theories that (in view of today’s scientific progress) religion is (or will soon be) “a matter of the past.” Secondly, pragmatist as well as neo-pragmatist re-readings of religion – while focusing on the *individual* and taking a critical stance vis-à-vis *religious institutions* – do not (ultimately) shy away from a careful re-investigation of the *social embeddedness* of all religious experience, thought, and practice.

**Keywords:** neo-pragmatism, atheism, humanism, faith as an option, Rorty, Putnam, Taylor, Joas

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## 1. Rorty and Vattimo on *The Future of Religion* (2005)

In his essay “Anticlericalism and Atheism” which precedes his debate with Gianni Vattimo in Paris on 16 December 2000,<sup>1</sup> Rorty describes the contemporary intellectual situation in terms close to William James’s famous ending of Lecture 1, *Pragmatism*, where James argued that the controversies between the “tough minded” and the “tender minded” can be settled by means of a new post-metaphysical approach focusing on the analysis of human practice.<sup>2</sup> Reflecting on the (internally complex) “linguistic turn” which, in the decades after James, has dominated the philosophical discourse, Rorty writes: “The anti-positivist tenor of post-Kuhnian philosophy of science has combined with the work of post-Heideggerian theologians to make intellectuals more sympathetic to William James’s claim that natural science and religion need not compete with one another.”<sup>3</sup>

Does Rorty thus claim that the time when a rigid rejection of religion was considered a proof of “science-mindedness” and “intellectual honesty” is over – that the era of an (as Habermas once said) “Enlightenment not enlightened about itself” has come to an end? Yes and no. As a result of the crisis of rigid (neo-)positivistic takes on reality, the contemporary situation, for Rorty, has, on the one hand, changed. Recent developments, he notes, “have made the word ‘atheist’ less popular than it used to be. Philosophers who do not go to church are now less inclined to describe themselves as believing that there is no God. They are more inclined to use such expressions as Max Weber’s ‘religiously unmusical.’”<sup>4</sup> There are many old-fashioned “atheists” still around, however: those who, according to Rorty, “still think that belief in the divine is an empirical hypothesis and that modern science has given better explanations of the phenomena God was once used to explain.” Challenging this view, Rorty agrees “with Hume and Kant that the notion of ‘empirical evidence’ is irrelevant to talk about God... Neither those who affirm nor those who deny the existence of God can plausibly claim that they have evidence for their views. Being religious, in the modern West,” he continues, “does not have much to do with the explanation of specific observable phenomena.”<sup>5</sup>

This is not the whole story, however, since in another sense – that of “anti-clericalism” – ideas central to former “atheism” remain important. “For secularists like myself,” Rorty writes, “religion is unobjectionable as long it is privatized,”<sup>6</sup> that is to say tied to “the fuzzy overlap of faith, hope, and love” that he calls “romance.”<sup>7</sup> At the same time Rorty takes up what Dewey claims in his main publication on religion, *A Common Faith*: “Of course, we anti-clericalists who are also leftists in politics,” Rorty writes, “have a ... reason for hoping that institutionalized religion will eventually disappear. We think otherworldliness dangerous because, as John Dewey put it, ‘Men have never fully used the powers

<sup>1</sup> Rorty, R., Vattimo, G. *The Future of Religion*. New York, 2005, pp. 29–41.

<sup>2</sup> James, W. *Pragmatism: A New Name for Some Old Ways of Thinking*. Cambridge, Mass.; London, 1975, p. 23.

<sup>3</sup> Rorty, R., Vattimo, G. *The Future of Religion*, p. 30.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., p. 33.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> Rorty, R. “Religious Faith, Intellectual Responsibility, and Romance”, *The Cambridge Companion to William James*. Cambridge, 1997, p. 96.

they possess to advance the good in life, because they have waited upon some power external to themselves and to nature to do the work they are responsible for doing' ("A Common Faith," in *Later Works of John Dewey*, vol. 9, p. 31)."<sup>8</sup>

Post-secularist defenders of religion (like Vattimo) will find this thesis strange, insisting that it was never the point of religious teachings that lived up to their own best standards to encourage inactivity in situations that can be actively changed (as Dewey and Rorty assume). They see the power of religion, quite to the contrary, in its capacity to restore strength, in individuals as well as communities, in situations where they experience not just imaginary, but real limits.<sup>9</sup>

For Rorty, the approach to religion that Vattimo advocates in *Credere di credere*, is strongly influenced by Kant: "That we view God as a postulate of practical reason ... cleared the way for thinkers like Schleiermacher..., Kierkegaard, Barth and Lévinas." Vattimo's "weak" re-reading of the Christian faith has (inexplicit) connections with what Kant called "*Zweifelglaube*" ("doubting faith") and "*Hoffnungsglaube*" (faith, based on hope).<sup>10</sup> It culminates, as Rorty emphasizes, not in "knowledge" but in an action horizon that the modern secularist can, in significant parts, share with the believer: in those ideas of love, that, inelaborate mode, are expressed – as Rorty points out in agreement with Vattimo<sup>11</sup> – in the First Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Corinthians, chapter 13.<sup>12</sup>

If we take a closer look at the background to this horizon of action, we find, however, that it is split into two non-congruent pictures: on the one hand, Rorty argues, there is the religious, theistically-dimensioned image of hope, on the other (after Feuerbach's criticism of religion as a human "projection") a horizon of hope that is "humanistically" and "naturalistically" configured. Rorty strongly supports the second image: "The kind of religious faith which seems to me to lie behind the attractions of ... pragmatism is ... a faith in the future possi-

<sup>8</sup> Rorty, R., Vattimo, G. *The Future of Religion*, pp. 40–41.

<sup>9</sup> Milton R. Konvitz, in his "Introduction" to Dewey's *A Common Faith*, criticizes Dewey along these lines: "The record would show," he writes, "that many persons, believing in a transcendent God, worked on the earth to do what God had left undone; that a belief in the supernatural inspired them with the courage and strength they needed to fulfill their ideals, which they saw as goals set for them by God" (Konvitz, M. R. "Introduction", *Later Works of John Dewey*, Vol. 9. Carbondale, 1986, p. XXIX).

<sup>10</sup> For a close reading of these Kantian reflections see: Langthaler, R. *Geschichte, Ethik und Religion im Anschluß an Kant. Philosophische Perspektiven "zwischen skeptischer Hoffnungslosigkeit und dogmatischem Trotz"*, Bd. 2. Berlin, 2014, S. 555–570.

<sup>11</sup> Rorty, R., Vattimo, G. *The Future of Religion*, pp. 35, 40.

<sup>12</sup> "Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal. And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have no charity, it profiteth me nothing. Charity suffereth long and is kind; charity envieth not; charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil; rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth; beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things. Charity never faileth: but whether there be prophecies, they shall fail; whether there be tongues, they shall cease; whether there be knowledge, it shall vanish away. For we know in part, and we prophesy in part. But when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away. When I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child: but when I became a man, I put away childish things. For now we see through a glass darkly; but then face to face: now I know it in part: but then shall I know even as also I am known. And now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three; but the greatest of these is charity" (The King James Bible [Authorized Version], 1 Corinthians ch. 13, v. 1).

bilities of mortal humans, a faith which is hard to distinguish from love for, and hope for, the human community.” This “fuzzy overlap of faith, hope, and love ... may crystallize around a labor union as easily as around a congregation, around a novel as easily as around a sacrament, around a God as easily as around a child.”<sup>13</sup>

Rorty concedes that “we all” fluctuate between these two images of hope: “We fluctuate between God as a perhaps obsolete name for a possible human future, and God as an external guarantor of some such future.” Sometimes, Dewey’s naturalistically dimensioned “pious” humanism seems to offer enough hope, “sometimes it does not.”<sup>14</sup>

Ultimately Rorty, however, chooses the option of a (non-dogmatic) secularism: for the (“unjustifiable”) hope that “someday, any millennium now, my remote descendants will live in a global civilization in which love is pretty much the only law.”<sup>15</sup>

In his conversation with Vattimo in Paris, Rorty refers, in this context, to the metaphysics-distant re-reading of a core category of Christianity, “kenosis”,<sup>16</sup> offered by Vattimo: “the gradual weakening of the worship of God as power and its gradual replacement with the worship of God as love.”<sup>17</sup> In such a re-reading, Rorty argues, the genuine sense of God’s incarnation is better understood than in the older “triumphalistic” images of God, and “kenosis,” read in this manner, comes close to the “humanistic” detachment of our horizon of hope from all modes of transcendence.<sup>18</sup>

In contrast to Rorty, Vattimo points out that all religious views of the world express a sense of finitude that we cannot – either individually or collectively – overcome *in toto*. The various interpretations of this “feeling of dependence”<sup>19</sup> are (in their religious mode) interwoven with constellations of the “objective spirit” (as Vattimo, with recourse to Hegel, writes),<sup>20</sup> that is to say with socially mediated and historically structured explication attempts of faith.<sup>21</sup> All this tends to disappear, *in its rich detail*, in Rorty’s (as well as in Dewey’s) humanistically “naturalized” perspective of hope.<sup>22</sup>

<sup>13</sup> Rorty, R. “Religious Faith, Intellectual Responsibility, and Romance”, p. 96.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 98–99.

<sup>15</sup> Rorty, R., Vattimo, G. *The Future of Religion*, p. 40.

<sup>16</sup> The concept “kenosis” (which, as Vattimo explains, means the incarnation of God, his Entäußerung, i.e. his lowering to the human level) originates in the Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Philippians, ch. 2, v. 7. See in this context: Vattimo, G. *Glauben – Philosophieren*. Stuttgart, 1997.

<sup>17</sup> Rorty, R., Vattimo, G. *The Future of Religion*, p. 56.

<sup>18</sup> Vattimo does not follow Rorty at that point of his argument. For a short presentation of Vattimo’s philosophy of religion see: Vattimo, G. “Die christliche Botschaft und die Auflösung der Metaphysik”, *Religion, Moderne, Postmoderne. Philosophisch-theologische Erkundungen*. Berlin, 2002, S. 219–228.

<sup>19</sup> Rorty, R., Vattimo, G. *The Future of Religion*, p. 77.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 70.

<sup>21</sup> Most of these traditions of interpretation tend to be, as a careful investigation shows, deeply interwoven with theological as well as philosophical reflection and critique.

<sup>22</sup> “When I speak of the God of the Bible,” Vattimo writes, “I speak of the God which I know only through the Bible... My dependence on God is my dependence only on the biblical tradition” (*Ibid.*, p. 77). Religion, with necessity, takes on a concrete social shape, manifesting itself in communities, churches, etc.: “When we talk about the future of religion, I also think about another question,” Vattimo says: “What about the future of the Church, the visible, disciplinary, and dogmatic structure of the Church?” (*Ibid.*, p. 69). A careful analysis of the *social stature* of

Summarizing, we may note: while Rorty's horizon of hope (the idea that we can overcome finitude, collectively, by having recourse to the idea of a *social apotheosis* of mankind that keeps clear of all "supernatural transcendence") may, "in a secular age," sound plausible to many, pragmatists such as Peirce, Royce and James *actually* investigated our finitude and its religious perspective differently.<sup>23</sup> In the context of neo-pragmatism, Hilary Putnam revived James's complex analyses of religion, and this new interest in James was recently further strengthened by Charles Taylor and Hans Joas.

## 2. Putnam on religion as a guide to life

In his book *Renewing Philosophy* (published in 1992), Putnam started to investigate religious themes referring to James and Wittgenstein.<sup>24</sup> He continued these explorations in his essay "Plädoyer für eine Verabschiedung des Begriffs 'Idolatrie'" (published in Vienna in 2003),<sup>25</sup> and, in 2008, dedicated an entire book, *Jewish Philosophy as a Guide to Life. Rosenzweig, Buber, Levinas, Wittgenstein*, to questions of faith. In this study he develops, with reference to Buber's *Ich und Du*, an inter-subjectively dimensioned conception of religion, while exploring, at the same time, with (and beyond) Dewey, the deep structure of humanism. In his defense of the "right to believe," Putnam argues – following Wittgenstein's *Philosophical Investigations* – that the "speaking of language" as "part of an activity, or of a form of life" comprises a multiplicity of language games – for instance "asking, thanking, cursing, greeting, praying,"<sup>26</sup> thus allowing for the expression, as well as the exploration, of the horizons of hope which orient our (finite, frail and faltering) human actions. The religious language game – according to Putnam in agreement with Wittgenstein – "makes use of

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"the religious" is, for Vattimo, central to any in-depth analysis of religion. Within modern societies (that increasingly focus on individual self-aggrandizement) serious problems tend to occur. "Here I always come back to the example of Comte, who founded a sort of positivistic church," Vattimo writes, "because he wanted people to go somewhere on Sunday, at least to do something that had an attitude comparable to religious preaching" (Ibid.). That there exists a structurally deep connection between a living mode of religion and religious "communities" (which, in Rorty's concept of a privatized "religious," remains out of sight) was – within Classical pragmatism – carefully analyzed, by Josiah Royce. (See Nagl, L. "'Community': Erwägungen zum 'absolute pragmatism' in der Spätphilosophie von Josiah Royce", in: L. Nagl, *Das verhüllte Absolute. Essays zur zeitgenössischen Religionsphilosophie*. Frankfurt a/M., 2010, S. 221–258).

<sup>23</sup> For a detailed analysis of the special status of John Dewey's discourse on religion within pragmatism (a status which differs significantly from the views of Royce, Peirce and James on religion, and is defined by Dewey's "a priori negative wall" against all modes of a "super-human") see Oppenheim, F. M. *Reverence for the Relations of Life. Re-imagining Pragmatism via Josiah Royce's Interaction with Peirce, James, and Dewey*. Notre Dame, 2008, pp. 320–348, especially 324.

<sup>24</sup> See Putnam's defense of William James's argumentation in "The Will to Believe" in: Putnam, H. *Renewing Philosophy*. Cambridge, Mass.; London, 1992, pp. 181–187, as well as his two essays "Wittgenstein on Religious Belief" and "Wittgenstein on Reference and Relativism" in the same book (pp. 134–179).

<sup>25</sup> See Putnam, H. "Plädoyer für eine Verabschiedung des Begriffs 'Idolatrie'", *Religion nach der Religionskritik*. Vienna, 2003, S. 58.

<sup>26</sup> Wittgenstein, L. *Philosophical Investigations*, § 23.

a picture.”<sup>27</sup> Life-orienting imagologies of faith – while having cognitive contents – are, in their deep structure, *practical*, since for the believer the religious picture is, Putnam says, “a way of regulating all of [his] decisions.”<sup>28</sup> Along the lines of classical Pragmatism, Putnam argues as follows: “I believe that what Wittgenstein (in company with Kierkegaard) is saying is this: that religious discourse can be understood in any depth only by understanding the form of life to which it belongs.”<sup>29</sup> The actual motivating force of religion becomes manifest only in its practical consequences. The religious language game is not focused on the (vain) attempt to articulate (extra-empirical) quasi-objects that constitute the contents of faith. As Putnam points out, meaningful speech, in religious contexts, often resorts to modes of “indirectness.” Thus, Kierkegaard’s method of discursively encircling the divine while pointing out that it remains beyond all final (theoretical) explanation is of great importance for (most) neo-pragmatic attempts to investigate (the possibility of) religion.<sup>30</sup>

Putnam elaborates his reflections on hope and religion (which are significantly different from Dewey’s and Rorty’s “exclusively humanistic” images of hope) with reference to Buber’s *Ich und Du*. Like Buber he emphasizes that God cannot be understood as a mere aggregate of regulative ideals (i.e. not as a quasi-Feuerbachian projection of our own images of perfection): “God is not an ideal of the same kind as Equality and Justice. ... The traditional believer – and this is something I share with the traditional believer... – visualizes God as a supremely wise, kind, just person.”<sup>31</sup> This “personal,” as well as “theistic” picture – the picture of a divine *which we can understand* (albeit only in part, not *in toto*) – is for Putnam more convincing than the idea that the infinite which limits us is *a non-personal natural entity*, or the idea that – as a “negative theology” claims – any reference to the divine has to be kept free from *all* our (always already anthropologically contaminated) speech.

Putnam opts, with Buber, for a “personalistic” interpretation of the divine that imagines God, as the “traditional believer” does, as a “very wise, loving and just person.” In spite of the fact that “many intellectuals are afraid of this sort of ‘anthropomorphism’ because they are afraid ... that it will be taken literally,” Putnam says, “I feel that it need not to be ‘taken literally’, but is still far more valuable than any metaphysical concept of an impersonal God, let alone a God who is ‘totally other’.”<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> Putnam, H. *Renewing Philosophy*, 1992, p. 156.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 154.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>30</sup> To resort, in the investigation of faith, to the complex double-structure of “indirectness” (this should be mentioned here briefly) is not at all new, however: in modern times it was Kant who, after criticizing all “theoretical proofs” of God’s existence, resituated religion in the field of our (praxis-orienting) “postulates.” And even in premodern theological discourses (in Thomas Aquinas, for instance) the divine that we try to encircle in our thought, remains, ultimately, “veiled.” Aquinas expresses this in the core line of his Corpus Christi hymn: “Adoro te devote, latens deitas.” “Indirectness” characterizes most recent attempts (from Adorno to Derrida) to reintroduce (traces of) the “divine” as a topic for philosophy.

<sup>31</sup> Putnam, H. *Jewish Philosophy as a Guide to Life. Rosenzweig, Buber, Levinas, Wittgenstein*. Bloomington, 2008, p. 102.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.* In any of the three Abrahamic religions the relation between man and God entails a double negation: that the finite person and the divine person are neither identical nor *in toto* different, but stand to each other in the relationship of (partial) “likeness” (“Ebenbildlichkeit”).

Religions, for Putnam, are multifaceted non-relativistic horizons of action. Like James, Putnam insists on the importance of plurality:<sup>33</sup> no religion can legitimately claim a superior value that would allow it to dominate all others.<sup>34</sup> Religions misunderstand themselves, according to Putnam, if they act in a triumphalist manner, denigrate and even fight one another: they should, on the contrary, seek to learn from one another regarding those modes of religious sensibility that they themselves had not been able to develop fully.

### 3. Taylor's re-reading of James

In chapter 15 of his seminal study *A Secular Age* (2006), Charles Taylor looks back on his comprehensive account of the genesis of contemporary secularity,<sup>35</sup> that is to say on his attempt to answer the core question of his entire study: "Why is it so hard to believe in God in (many milieux of) the modern West, while in 1500 it was virtually impossible not to?"<sup>36</sup> Taylor explores the history of the formation of the modern idea that "the immanent order can slough off the transcendent,"<sup>37</sup> that is to say the idea that the human history can terminate, self-sufficiently, in an "exclusive humanism" (or, alternatively, in an anti-humanism/post-humanism in the manner of Nietzsche).<sup>38</sup> He does not stop there, however, but shows that the "immanent frame" – although it is, as Taylor writes, "common to all of us in the modern West"<sup>39</sup> – is nowhere, with necessity, closed: "Some of us want to live it as open to something beyond; some live it as closed. It is something which permits closure, without demanding it."<sup>40</sup> As Taylor shows, there exist, in advanced modernity, routes of thought that neither simply affirm today's civilization in a progressivist mode, nor reject it regressively, but rather – without distancing themselves from modernity's "immanent frame" – move towards a positive relation with "transcendence" (thus forming, *within modernity itself*, a "loyal opposition" to modern civilization).<sup>41</sup>

One outstanding protagonist of such a complex attitude, Taylor argues, is the American pragmatist William James who clearly saw that, in "a secular age," human beings with regard to religion face an existential choice.<sup>42</sup> James, according

<sup>33</sup> All religions, however, also suffer from dogmatism and, as James pointed out, tend to support "tribal instincts" under the cover of "religiosity."

<sup>34</sup> Putnam, H. "Plädoyer für eine Verabschiedung des Begriffs 'Idolatrie'", S. 58.

<sup>35</sup> Taylor, C. *A Secular Age*. Cambridge, Mass., 2007, p. 539. For a short overview of the different meanings of secularity in Taylor's study see: Nagl, L. "'The Jamesian open space'. Charles Taylor und der Pragmatismus", *Unerfüllte Moderne? Neue Perspektiven auf das Werk von Charles Taylor*. Berlin, 2011, S. 118–119, n. 4.

<sup>36</sup> Taylor, C. *A Secular Age*, p. 539.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 543.

<sup>38</sup> For a brief sketch of Taylor's three options ("exclusive humanism," "anti-humanism" and "faith") see: Taylor, C. "Die immanente Gegenauflklärung: Christentum und Moral", *Religion nach der Religionskritik*. Vienna, 2003, S. 60–85.

<sup>39</sup> Taylor, C. *A Secular Age*, p. 543.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 544.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 745. In his analyses of Ivan Illich's writings, Charles Taylor presents an impressive example of such an innovative "route to faith," Illich's advocacy of a "network of agape" (*Ibid.*, 737–743). See in this context also: Nagl, L. "'The Jamesian open space'. Charles Taylor und der Pragmatismus", pp. 120–121, n. 11.

<sup>42</sup> Taylor, Ch. *A Secular Age*, p. 549.

to Taylor, explores the deeply ambivalent character of our modern *condition*: the “open space” in which contemporary subjects are situated – a space “between belief and unbelief.” In his Vienna Lecture *Varieties of Religion Today. William James Revisited*, Taylor writes: James “tells us more than anyone else about what it’s like to stand in that open space and feel the wind pulling you now here, now there.”<sup>43</sup> It took “very exceptional qualities to do this,” Taylor continues: “Very likely it needed someone who had been through a searing experience of ‘moribidity’<sup>44</sup> and had come out the other side.”<sup>45</sup>

In defending the “right to believe,” James – as Taylor rightly points out – exclusively focuses on *the individual*, defining religion as “the feelings, acts and experiences of individual men in their solitude, so far as they apprehend themselves to stand in relation to whatever they may consider the divine.”<sup>46</sup> Accordingly, for James “churches play at best a secondary role in transmitting and communicating [religious experience].”<sup>47</sup> Since ecclesiastical institutions often are corrupted by the “spirit of politics and the lust of dogmatic rule,”<sup>48</sup> James notes that “to some persons the word ‘church’ suggests so much hypocrisy and tyranny and meanness and tenacity of superstition that in a wholesale undiscerning way they glory in saying that they are ‘down’ on religion altogether.”<sup>49</sup>

James’s focus on the individual, while being of great importance, is *at the same time* the weak point in James’s conception of faith. A) It is certainly true that in the context of the shared “immanent frame” which is constitutive of modern Western societies “religious experience” has to pass the test of authenticity, and is thus individualized to a high degree. This is the result of modernity’s focus on reason and ethical autonomy, as well as on the “romantic” affirmation of undistorted emotions. B) However, if authenticity is thereby not understood in a “trivial” mode<sup>50</sup> those very questions are bound to recur which James’s friend and discussion partner at Harvard, Josiah Royce, who was a fierce critic of any exclusively “individualized” approach to religion, had already posed. Do we not have to acknowledge the fact that (as Hegel put it) *all immediacy is mediated*, that all individual experience includes, in a non-thematic manner, “communal” presuppositions?

Elaborating the first aspect, Taylor argues that today no continuous tradition “warrants” faith in a stable manner: “Most of us (I speak for myself again) went through some period of break with the faith we were brought up in (in case we were brought up in a religious faith at all), before returning through a different route. We are ‘believing again’ rather than ‘believing still’ (W. H. Auden).”<sup>51</sup>

<sup>43</sup> Taylor, Ch. *Varieties of Religion Today. William James Revisited*. Cambridge, Mass.; London, 2002, p. 59.

<sup>44</sup> This, it seems, was the attractiveness of James for Wittgenstein. See: Nagl, L. “‘James’s book *The Varieties of Religious Experience* does me a lot of good’. Wittgensteins therapeutische James-Lektüren”, *Wittgenstein-Studien. Internationales Jahrbuch für Wittgenstein-Forschung*, Bd. 8. Berlin, 2017, S. 185–209.

<sup>45</sup> Taylor, Ch. *Varieties of Religion Today*, p. 59–60.

<sup>46</sup> James, W. *The Varieties of Religious Experience*. Middlesex, 1982, p. 31, quoted in: Taylor, Ch. *Varieties of Religion Today*, p. 5.

<sup>47</sup> Taylor, Ch. *Varieties of Religion Today*, p. 5.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 6.

<sup>49</sup> James, W. *The Varieties of Religious Experience*, p. 335.

<sup>50</sup> Taylor, Ch. *Varieties of Religion Today*, p. 101.

<sup>51</sup> Taylor, Ch. “Shapes of Faith Today”, *Renewing the Church in a Secular Age. Holistic Dialogue and Kenotic Vision*. Washington, D. C., 2016, p. 278.



With regard to the second aspect, Taylor notes that this process by no means leads of necessity to an abstract “authenticity” devoid of any historical roots. For any “believing again,” the collective history of religious creeds remains important, “not because we want to continue its structures or repeat all its solutions to our ethical problems, but rather because it is a rich field of seeds which are still working in us.”<sup>52</sup> What emerges from this “is new in some ways, but it also recuperates facets of [the] historical faith which have been relatively neglected”: for instance, “the notion that faith is a journey,” the recovery of “the value of doubt,” and an “oecumenism of friendship.”<sup>53</sup>

Thus for Taylor both traits of the contemporary understanding of religion, both the Jamesian, individualistic approach, as well as the emphasis on community, are of importance. In a post-Durkheimian world, the “new framework” of belief, Taylor writes, “has a strongly individualist component, but this will not necessarily mean that the content will be individuating.”<sup>54</sup> The second, communal trait is analyzed – more extensively than in Taylor – in the publications of the mature Josiah Royce, who, in his magnum opus, *The Problem of Christianity* (1913), argues (with critical reference to James, whose exclusive individualism he qualifies as “indeed chaotic”)<sup>55</sup> that, in the field of religion, “all experience must be *at least* individual experience; but unless it is also social experience, and unless the whole community which is in question unites to share it, this experience is but as sounding brass, and as a tinkling cymbal. This truth is what Paul saw.”<sup>56</sup>

### Coda: Hans Joas, *Faith as an Option*

Taylor’s (James-inspired) idea that religion – in a secular age – acquires the status of an “option” was further elucidated, in the past decade, by Hans Joas, the German pragmatism scholar who started his career with analyses of the work of George Herbert Mead, and in 2012, published the book *Glaube als Option. Zukunftsmöglichkeiten des Christentums*.<sup>57</sup> In his most recent essay, “The Church in a World of Options,” Joas writes: “I rely on two great religious thinkers..., on

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<sup>52</sup> Taylor, Ch. “Shapes of Faith Today”, *Renewing the Church in a Secular Age. Holistic Dialogue and Kenotic Vision*. Washington, D. C., 2016, p. 279.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid., p. 280. In many respects we, today, live in a post-Durkheimian situation which – as James rightly points out – puts strong emphasis on expressivity and individuality. James (over-)emphasized this trait of modernity, however, and, according to Taylor, left the “collective” side of religion un-analyzed. Even in a world characterized by the emphasis on individuality, so Taylor, “many people will find their spiritual home in churches” (Taylor, Ch. *Varieties of Religion Today*, p. 112). In the modern world, this allegiance – while being “unhooked from that to a sacralized society (paleo style), or some national identity (neo style)” – “will still be a collective connection” (Ibid.).

<sup>54</sup> Ibid.

<sup>55</sup> Royce, J. *William James and Other Essays on the Philosophy of Life*. New York, 1911, p. 25.

<sup>56</sup> Royce, J. *The Problem of Christianity (with a new Foreword and a revised and expanded Index by Frank M. Oppenheim)*. Washington, D. C., 2001, p. 41. See also: Nagl, L. “Avoiding the Dichotomy of ‘Either the Individual Or the Collectivity’: Josiah Royce on Community, and on James’s Concept of Religion”, *The Varieties of Transcendence. Pragmatism and the Theory of Religion*. New York, 2016, pp. 236–252.

<sup>57</sup> Joas, H. *Glaube als Option. Zukunftsmöglichkeiten des Christentums*. Freiburg, 2012. English translation: *Faith as an Option: Possible Futures for Christianity*. Stanford, 2014.

Charles Taylor and on William James. The main accomplishment in Charles Taylor's monumental work *A Secular Age* is to have studied the rise of the so-called secular option." For an in-depth analysis of this new situation, Joas continues, "we need conceptual distinctions originally introduced by William James. Options, James said, 'may be of several kinds. They may be: 1. living or dead; 2. forced or avoidable; 3. momentous or trivial; and for our purposes we may call an option a genuine option when it is of the forced, living and momentous kind'."<sup>58</sup> James and Taylor are right, because, as Joas puts it: "We are living today in a world of options."<sup>59</sup> This holds true in at least *two senses*: with regard not only to the confrontation between "faith" and "widespread irreligion in Europe," but also to the plurality of religions in a globalized world, in particular to the religions "based on the innovations of the Axial Age. All these religions," Joas maintains, "have a certain potential for a utopian order that they preserve in special types of institutions... In India, the tradition was carried by the hereditary caste of the Brahmins, while the Buddhists invented monasticism and the ancient Greeks and Chinese philosophical schools."<sup>60</sup> In the study he co-edited with Robert N. Bellah, *The Axial Age and Its Consequences*, Joas emphasizes, that the Axial Age (which, as Bellah points out, "has given us the great tool of criticism")<sup>61</sup> has left us a "heritage of explosive potentialities for good and for evil," since it has, *inter alia*, opened up the opportunity to "connect empirical research on the history of religion" with investigations that go far "beyond empirical questions" and concern "our contemporary self-understanding."<sup>62</sup> "The question of the Axial Age" – according to Bellah and Joas in the joint "Introduction" to their book – "is not just academic; the deep self-understanding of educated people of all the world cultures is at stake."<sup>63</sup>

Joas invites us to view the pluralism of religions not, primarily, as a danger: not as an appeal to insist, dogmatically, on "the own take on the divine" – an insistence that easily triggers a fanatic rejection of "the other." In a globalized world, religions should rather mutually focus on their best sides, trying to learn from each other: from their different – and at all times fragile and unfinished – exploration attempts of (as James put it) "the relation of man to the divine": a relation which today, while being *highly* "individualized," continues to be informed by the critical reception, as well as the re-affirmation, of *community-related* religious traditions.<sup>64</sup>

<sup>58</sup> Joas, H. "The Church in a World of Options", *Renewing the Church in a Secular Age. Holistic Dialogue and Kenotic Vision*. Washington, D. C., 2016, p. 90.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 82.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 95. See also Bellah, R. N., Joas, H. (eds.) *The Axial Age and Its Consequences*. Cambridge, Mass.; London, 2012, and Nagl, L. "Re-reading Traditional Chinese Texts: The Axial Age Debate, Various Forms of Enlightenment, and Pluralism-sensible (Neo-) Pragmatic Philosophies of Religion", *Songshan Forum On Chinese and World Civilizations 2014: Collected Papers*. Beijing, 2014, pp. 164–180.

<sup>61</sup> Bellah, R. N. "The Heritage of the Axial Age: Resource or Burden?", *The Axial Age and Its Consequences*. Cambridge, Mass.; London, 2012, p. 465.

<sup>62</sup> Joas, H. "The Axial Age Debate as a Religious Discourse", *The Axial Age and Its Consequences*. Cambridge, Mass.; London, 2012, p. 24.

<sup>63</sup> Bellah, R. N., Joas, H. (eds.) *Op. cit.*, p. 6.

<sup>64</sup> The concept of social practice, as a language- (or, in Peirce's terminology, sign-) mediated experience, remains of great importance in all (neo-)pragmatic conceptions of religion. Dewey's society-oriented "humanism" focuses primarily on a theory of politics, but this secular center of gravity (which forms the core, also, of Rorty's neo-pragmatic conception of "hope") is open to further specifications along the lines of Putnam's, as well as Taylor's and Joas's (James-in-

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formed as well as James-critical) community-related conception of the (pluralistically dimensioned) “option” of faith “in a secular age”.

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## Три религиозных дискурса в неопрагматизме

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Первая часть статьи посвящена философской дискуссии Ричарда Рорти с итальянским мыслителем Джанни Ваттимо («The Future of Religion», 2005), темой которой является прагматистская трактовка «религиозного» и постмодернистская критика радикализованных посткантианских форм просвещения, прямо ведущих к атеизму. Данная дискуссия позволяет критически переосмыслить распространенное представление о якобы неизбежном «закате» религии в современном обществе. Во второй части рассматривается постаналитическая концепция веры Хилари Патнэма, представленная в его книгах «Renewing Philosophy» (1992) и «Jewish Philosophy as a Guide to Life. Rosenzweig, Buber, Levinas, Wittgenstein» (2008). Эти тексты показывают, что интерес Патнэма к «религиозному» имеет в своей основе философию Джеймса, размышления о религии позднего Витгенштейна, а также некоторые социально-философские идеи Дьюи. В третьей части исследования основное внимание уделяется критической реконструкции и интерпретации Чарльзом Тейлором джеймсовской теории «религиозного опыта». В книге «Varieties of Religion Today: William James Revisited» (2002) Тейлор главным образом критикует Джеймса за излишний акцент на религиозных переживаниях отдельного индивида и недооценку «коллективной» (communal) составляющей веры. Заключительная часть статьи содержит краткий обзор прагматистской теории Ханса Йоаса, согласно которой религиозная вера в так называемую секулярную эпоху приобретает «факультативный» и плюралистический характер («Faith as an Option», 2014). Анализируя современное общество (вслед за Тейлором и вместе с Робертом Беллой, соредактором сборника «The Axial Age and Its Consequences», 2012), Йоас подчеркивает, что в глобализованном мире ни одна религия не вправе догматически настаивать на абсолютной

истинности своего «понимания божественного», ведь подобная установка может легко спровоцировать фанатическую нетерпимость по отношению к «другому». Избегая этого догматизма, но не впадая в другую крайность абстрактного релятивизма, религии, по мнению Йоаса, должны открыться друг другу, обратив взоры на лучшие стороны своих учений, чтобы расширить понимание верующими «отношения человека к божественному», понимание всегда ограниченное и неокончательное, как указывал Джеймс. Главный тезис/вывод статьи заключает в себе две констатации: 1) неопрагматистские исследования «религиозного» позволяют критически дистанцироваться от догматического секуляризма с его противопоставлением научного знания вере и убеждением в том, что время религий прошло (или проходит); 2) несмотря на сильный акцент на *индивидуальных* аспектах веры и в целом критическую позицию по отношению к религиозным институтам, прагматистская и неопрагматистская философия религии с полной серьезностью подходит к исследованию и описанию религиозного опыта, различных вероучительных и духовных практик *в их укорененности (embeddedness) в социальном.*

**Ключевые слова:** неопрагматизм, атеизм, гуманизм, выбор веры, Рорти, Патнэм, Тейлор, Йоас

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