William James on the Courage to Believe

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Is It “Wishful Thinking”? 

The relationship he thought he saw between Pascal’s Wager and James’s “will” to believe furnishes John Hick with the perspective he brings to his summary of James’s entire lecture. In a surprisingly brisk two pages, he states its central point this way: there are risks on both sides of any genuine option; the believer risks accepting falsehood, but the skeptic who refuses or indefinitely postpones belief risks losing out on the truth and whatever practical good may accompany believing. So, James is saying, we are entitled to view our “stake” in the matter as important enough to grant us the right to choose which of these two risks we shall run. And James, for his part, chooses to risk that his “passional need of taking the world religiously might be prophetic and right” (WB 27).

So, Hick summarizes, James is asserting “our right to believe at our own risk whatever we feel an inner need to believe.” “The Sentiment of Rationality” confirms Hick’s view, and he quotes: “In the total game of life we stake our persons all the while; and if in its theoretic part our persons will help us to a conclusion, surely we should also stake them there . . .” (SR 94). Life is a gambling proposition, and faith is a sporting wager: this, Hick assures us, is the “essence” of James’s argument (pp. 39–40).

Hick goes on to admit that James’s appeal to the workings of interpersonal relationships is both “sound and important,” but relevant only to faith in the sense of “trust,” not to faith as a form of “cognition.” Now his summary of James’s case takes more sweeping form: if James’s argument were essentially valid, then it would “authorize . . . us to believe (‘by faith’) any proposition, not demon-
strably false, which it might be advantageous to us . . . to have accepted” (p. 42).

“Any proposition” that is “not demonstrably false”: a number of Jamesian defenders, as we shall see, take issue with Hick at this point. For James insists that the option before the believer must be live, forced, and momentous; were we to attend only to those three properties, the class of propositions to which James’s thesis applies would be far more limited than Hick recognizes. But, Hick insists, that set of restrictions does not truly extricate James from the argumentative hole he has dug for himself. Consider, as a test of this, the manner in which James dismisses Pascal’s religion of “masses and holy water”: to him, as to his nineteenth-century Protestant hearers, this does not represent a live option—he even goes on to equate it with belief in the Mahdi! But, writes Hick, all sorts of “accidental” circumstances may account for any option’s being live for us and dead for someone else, by dictating the convictions, beliefs, or just plain prejudices that are “widely held in the society around us.” An option that could, and possibly should, be live can simply have the life pummeled out of it. Thus, were we raised in another culture, the Mahdi’s invitation could come at us with a more electric appeal than Protestantism, or Christianity more generally. Hence, any number of options that may be dead in one time and place may be live in another time and place; the restriction, Hick concludes, is “unwarranted.” For the fact that a particular belief represents a live option to this or that person “has no bearing on its truth or falsity” unless we are willing to surrender to the absurdity that “truth varies geographically with the liveliness of local options” (p. 43).

The restriction is “unwarranted”: we shall have to see whether this is the best expression for what Hick has in mind. For the moment, though, let us continue to follow his argument, for now it takes a revealing turn. A “purely rational mind,” he goes on to say, “liberated from the acci-
WISHFUL THINKING”? 55
dents of geography and illuminated by James’s [own] argument” would have to find it just as rational to accept the Mahdi’s invitation to faith as the Christian invitation which James just happens to find more live to his New England Protestant mind. By the logic of his own argument, Hick cannot see how James could “consistently refuse” the Mahdi’s invitation. Why? Because, says Hick, “the mere thought of what might be gained if a proposition is true will automatically render it a live option to us,” whatever part of the world we live in. All that is required is some “self-assertive person”—like the Mahdi—“who offers a heaven and threatens a hell” to make any option “live” for us; indeed, “the more stupendous the promises and threats, the more justified the belief” (pp. 43-44). Whatever James’s own intentions may have been, accordingly, the “logic of his argument” constitutes no more than an “impressive recommendation of ‘wishful thinking,’” authorizing the conclusion that “we should all believe in that religion or philosophy which we most desire to be true,” “we may believe what we like,” and “while we are about it we had better believe what we like most” (p. 44).

Whatever one may think of its value, Hick’s criticism has succeeded in provoking reams of impassioned discussion. For the moment, though, it should be noted that he arrives at his remarkably economical distillation of James’s argument, first, by ignoring a number of refinements that James considered important to making his case, and, secondly, by lifting his proof-quotations out of the refining contexts that lend them their exact point and bearing on the argument.

To convince us, for example, that the “essence” of James’s argument comes down to the quasi-Pascalian wager of risk vs. risk, Hick quotes (pp. 39–40) a paragraph in which, it must be admitted, the language of risk, stakes, and “getting on the winning side” (WB 26–27) features prominently. But the force of what James is argu-
ing in that paragraph cannot be appreciated unless one recognizes that he is now applying two points which he has previously made and which he considers vital to the conduct of his argument: (a) that the “scientific skeptic” may not be portrayed as the defender of intellectual sobriety as against the believer’s preference for passionate irresponsibility—for the skeptic has made an equally passionate choice: only it is one that erects as its primary epistemological rule “avoid error” as against the believer’s more positive rule “gain truth”—and (b) that, accordingly, the passionate side of our nature may be “prophetic and right”—noetically sounder—in its preference for taking the world religiously.

A similar distortion of meaning occurs in the reading Hick gives of the section from “The Sentiment of Rationality”: for there James is arguing that the whole person, not just the “theoretic part” of our natures, is involved in the kind of choice being made for belief or non-belief. So, if we trust those “inborn faculties” that belong to our passionate side, and those faculties are “good,” then we turn out to have been prophets, and our choice about a genuine option will then be “prophetic and right.”

But all Hick can see in these two paragraphs is, not the central point James is making in them, but the offending language of risks and gaming tables. In boiling James’s lecture down to this “essence,” Hick has boiled too much of it away. Instead of asking why James himself thought this or that argumentative turn important, Hick has taken the tack, always dangerous when dealing with a first-class thinker, of assuming that a host of details are mere window dressing that can safely be ignored. This will become plainer when my discussion focuses on the “friendship” metaphor and on the double service to which James puts it; but for now, a good illustration of such singleminded obloquy is what happens to James’s live option once Hick gets finished with it.
For when leading up to the climax of his refutation by *reductio ad absurdum*, Hick gives himself away: he has scored his triumph by working a gradual shift of meaning on the key term “live” option. What makes an option “live” for him? Hick answers: the “mere thought” of “what might be gained” or lost on one side or the other, the “heaven” that is promised or the “hell” that is threatened; so, the “more stupendous the promises and threats,” the more “live” the option becomes. For in Hick’s mind (and, he hopes, in the minds of his readers) an option is live in the exact measure in which the goods it promises make an “appeal” to our “likes” and “desires.” But virtually any proposition, like the Mahdi’s, can be fraught with such intense appeal: hence—to rephrase Hick’s earlier conclusion—it is “unwarranted” to consider “liveness” as a requirement that would limit and reduce the number of genuine options that may exist.

To reach this astonishing conclusion, though, Hick has distorted the meaning James repeatedly assigns to the “liveness” of any proposition. It is, James tells us, one which “appeals” to him to whom it is proposed, but in what sense? His opening definition is unmistakably clear: it appeals as a “real possibility”; it must be “among the mind’s possibilities” (WB 2). Hence, he can conclude by asking his auditors to reflect on whatever resistance they might still experience to his thesis that “we have the right to believe at our own risk any hypothesis that is live enough to tempt our will.” For his auditors may be “thinking (perhaps without realizing it) of some particular religious hypothesis which for [them] is dead . . . of some patent superstition.” But “living options never seem absurdities to him who has them to consider” (WB 29). The appeal to the “will” to which James is referring is limited, therefore, to options which, *prior* to having that kind of appeal, are real possibilities for the mind. Not any old promise will do, however stupendous, for it may require our believ-
ing a proposition which strikes our minds as “absurd” or a “patent superstition”; hypotheses like these, James asserts, are already dead for us, and “our willing nature is unable to bring [them] to life again” (WB 8). The proposition, to be live, must on the face of it appeal on the merits of its plausibility, in terms of the real possibility (which our thinking minds can recognize) that it may be true. Only then can that other range of appeals, to likes, desires, or dreads and fears, come into play. We are, then, pace Hick, “warranted” in viewing “liveness” as a characteristic that limits the number of genuine options that may exist. Wishful thinking may stretch very far; but James was lucid enough to see that its limits stopped well short of Hick’s “demonstrably false.”

And yet, Hick was on to something. He could have argued his point less maladroitly, but there remains a substantial point to his objection. For James admits that the liveness of any hypothesis is, not a property that is exclusively intrinsic to the proposition itself, but one that always involves a relation to concrete persons, living in a particular time and place. Moreover, he insists, those persons are not pure minds, abstractly theorizing intellects, but full human beings with a passional side to their natures: the whole “person,” he contends, goes into the acceptance of any hypothesis as live, and into the rejection of competing propositions as dead. Furthermore, he points out that what makes certain options dead for us is “for the most part”—perhaps not universally, but in the majority of cases at least—“a previous action of our willing nature of an antagonistic kind” (WB 8–9). Those previous actions are not limited to “deliberate volitions,” but include the less reflective acceptance of a welter of other influences which he groups under the label “intellectual climate.” To this point, James has been detailing the factual state of affairs that obtains for all concrete human thinkers.

But what factors create any such intellectual climate?
James contents himself with listing some examples: "fear and hope, prejudice and passion, imitation and partisanship, the circumpressure of our caste and set" (WB 9). Undoubtedly there are others, but even limiting ourselves to those cited, we cannot help thinking that when compared one with another, they are crazily uneven in value. More than that, any one of them can take a multitude of forms: fears may be great or petty, fantastic or real, and so on. James does not seem to notice the Pandora's box he has so casually pried open, but surely a reflective hearer is prompted to move from this depiction of the de facto situation to the obvious de jure question: How legitimate is the varied influence these various factors wield on the formation of our beliefs? When is an appeal to our fears a valid appeal? To what fears? What kind of appeal? One could go on to probe passion, partisanship, caste, and all the rest: James has half-attentively thrown out a question that calls for conscientious discrimination, and merely left it to lie there wriggling before our gaze.

But discrimination is called for from another quarter as well: What are the factors that go to make up our passioned nature? James alludes in passing to "wish and will and sentimental preference" (WB 8), but tells us very little more than that. But here again, even that incomplete enumeration raises similar issues of uneven value, unequal claims on legitimacy. May not my "will," for instance, sometimes rightly direct my mind to "sustain a thought" that runs counter to my "sentimental preference"? James's own formula for human freedom is on the line, and he scarcely seems to notice.

But could James have come up with a satisfying answer to these objections? Could he, for instance, reply to Hick that, once we discriminate the factors making up both our passional natures and societal climate of opinion, we can evolve norms for judging certain options as not only de facto but de jure live or dead? My suggestion in the follow-
ing chapters will be this: that James not only could, but actually did, go a long way toward answering these and a number of other objections that have been proposed to "The Will to Believe"; and that most, though not all, of those answers can be drawn from a careful reading of his other popular lectures from this same period. Those may seem large claims; how can one even begin to redeem them?

A good first step might be to confront the objection which Hick has raised in its most formidable terms: that James's lecture provides us with a shameless license for "wishful thinking." For Hick, as he surely knew, was far from the first to raise this objection; it has a long history. In one of its forms, it was first proposed by a good friend of James's, and an otherwise sympathetic colleague, Dickinson S. Miller, writing very soon after the publication of James's lecture.¹ Miller took his stand on grounds very close to those of W. K. Clifford, the main target of James's attack in "The Will to Believe": it is our "duty" as rational, intellectual beings to evince a greater "sobriety" toward evidence than James was recommending. For if James were to be followed faithfully, the will to believe could turn into a "'will to deceive—to deceive one's self; and the deception, which begins at home, may be expected in due course to pass on to others.' "² The philosopher, when it comes to such questions as God's existence, must consider not only his personal advantage or disadvantage, but the "'good or harm . . . for all those concerned' "³; for if he plays fast and loose with "'the conscience of the mind, . . . the duty of being as intelligent as we can,' "³ he can ignite a brush fire of like irrationality throughout society, and imperil the whole march of "'human progress' "⁴ whose advance presupposes just such intellectual honesty as he has called into question. No matter how live an hypothesis may be for us, accordingly, we must suspend our assent to it whenever the evidence fails to justify such assent.
It is not a mere irrelevancy to observe in passing that Miller was personally convinced that there was, in fact, "decisive evidence" with respect to the theistic hypothesis; and that C. J. Ducasse, who engaged him years later in an extended correspondence on James's contentions, was himself persuaded that the "gratuitous evils" of our world argued for his own atheistic position. This, however, did not dissuade Ducasse from defending James's main contention, but as it might apply to cases other than the theistic hypothesis. He set himself to dreaming up a case to which James's thesis would apply, and he proposes it to Miller; let him suppose himself

"on a street car going down a hill when suddenly the brakes fail. There are then two possible things for a passenger to do: to jump off, or to stay on. But he does not know which of the two is more likely to save him from injury, and he cannot put off deciding which to do until he has consulted the records of other accidents. In such a case decision is and has to be non-rational in the sense of being instinctive, impulsive, temperamental, instead of based on in your words 'a rational gauging of the exigency.'"

Now, the option involved here is clearly "genuine," Ducasse implies: the opposite alternatives are certainly "live," and the decision to be made a "momentous" one. And the option is "forced." Here Ducasse profits from the fact that the term "forced," even during the course of James's lecture, slides from its original "logical" meaning (involving two and only two mutually exclusive propositions) to the much more existential meaning arising from a situation "in which we cannot suspend decision between Yes and No . . . because to refuse to decide is then automatically to be deciding." We cannot, therefore, follow Miller's counsel to suspend assent. The streetcar example proves that "there are cases of this sort in which evidence" for deciding one way rather than the other "is either totally lacking to us or is equally balanced," and
yet decision is forced upon us. Ducasse is correct in what he says about this slide of meaning: the need for deciding now, and not delaying, James originally made part of the “momentous” option; but he later spoke of it as though it were entailed by the theistic option as, on the practical level, “forced.” Another imprecision in his lecture, if you will, but one toward which both Ducasse and Miller are ready to be indulgent, and rightly so. The real point for investigation, they implicitly agree, is whether the streetcar constitutes a paradigm in which James’s contentions prove out as valid, after all. Ducasse argues that it does: for “In such a case the decision is and has to be non-rational in the sense of being instinctive, impulsive, temperamental”—it cannot, given the conditions laid down, be based upon the “‘rational gauging of exigency’ ” Miller had demanded. But, adds Ducasse, “‘non-rational’ ” must not too swiftly be equated with the “‘irrational’ ” whose brush-fire propagation Miller so legitimately deplored. Miller might also take comfort from Ducasse’s additional conviction that a concession made about a case like this one “‘affords no basis whatever for choice one way rather than the other; for claiming, for instance, as I think James was temperamentally disposed to do, that the instinct of affirmation is sounder, wiser, more likely to pick on the truth, than the instinct of negation.’” Choices like these, Ducasse is saying, are like the streetcar choice in being “‘pure gamble[s].’” If we trust the “instinct of affirmation,” we shall opt for the theistic hypothesis: pure gamble on our part. If we trust the instinct of negation, we shall deny God’s existence: gamble, equally pure. But gamble we must, so gamble we may: such “‘wishful decision[s],’” even in religious matters, are “‘not merely legitimate but unavoidable.’” But Ducasse seems to be implying more: the side of the gamble James chose to bet on depended on his “‘temperament’”; temperament is decisive. When explaining the streetcar decision, he had broadened the alter-
natives: that “‘non-rational’” decision could be “‘instinctive, impulsive, temperamental,’” but no matter; whatever determined the decision one way or the other was a totally “‘non-rational’” factor. Ducasse has implicitly told us how he, at least, would unpack that slippery Jamesian term, the “passional” side of our nature.

Though he never seems to have convinced Dickinson Miller, Ducasse himself was persuaded that he had elaborated a defense of “wishful thinking”—or wishful decision; the difference in terms is of little consequence. Though he would not agree with the proposition himself, he acknowledges the right of someone else to decide for the theistic hypothesis, once such a person has concluded that there is no preponderance of evidence either for or against it, that the decision is “‘unavoidable,’” and that the promised comforts of religion are there to be enjoyed. A ticket to a “‘fool’s paradise’”? Perhaps; but one may legitimately judge a fool’s paradise preferable to a “‘fool’s hell.’” . . .

Some years later, Stephen T. Davis provided some fresh insights on this “wishful thinking” question. Davis was discontented with the fact that James gives no examples of “genuine options” that are “specific” and “real” enough for us to test them; “he only cites broad, general themes, e.g. what he calls ‘moral questions’ or ‘the religious hypothesis.’” So, by a slightly different route from Ducasse’s, he arrives at the same need to concoct a case amenable to analysis. By one of those freak coincidences one comes across in the history of thought, Davis hits upon a case that is an exact modern parallel to the “streetcar” case Ducasse had proposed: now it has to do with the very same predicament as it might affect a truck driver: his vehicle has gone out of control, and he must decide whether to jump or not. Davis later discovers that he had, quite independently, reduplicated Ducasse, and draws the conclusion that there may be, after all, only very few cases
that fit the requirements of the "genuine" option as James had laid them down.18 Perhaps Miller’s fears of a brush-fire “spread” of irrationality were ungrounded, after all!19 Perhaps, too, Hick had focused so closely on what James had written about the option’s being live that he failed to see how the other features of a genuine option imposed such tight limits on the one making the option as to obviate the danger of unbridled “wishful thinking” to which Hick had pointed.20 Instead of entitling us to believe “whatever we feel the inner need to believe,” James first enjoins on us the duty of ascertaining whether the proposition in question belongs to that very restricted number to which all the Jamesian criteria apply.21

But instead of there being only three, Davis points out, there are, in fact, four criteria required before we have a “genuine” option in the Jamesian sense. Alongside “live,” “forced,” and “momentous,” now write the term “ambiguous,” for in James’s description of such an option he states that “it cannot by its nature be decided on intellectual grounds” (WB 11; emphasis deleted). Take explicit account of this “ambiguity” criterion, Davis argues, and the number of cases fitting all four requirements is even more dramatically reduced.

But how ambiguous must such an option be in order to justify a Jamesian decision on passional grounds? Davis refers to Bertrand Russell’s epistemological principle in order to pursue that question: “Give to any hypothesis that is worth your while to consider just that degree of credence which the evidence warrants.”22 This brings him to outline the five different “evidence situations” Russell’s principle suggests, and to settle on the one that seems to fit the “ambiguity” criterion. Suppose that “There is no evidence available relative to the truth or falsity” of any proposition “p”; it follows that there is an equal absence of evidence for and against “non-p.” Or suppose that the evidence for proposition “p” is neither stronger nor weaker
than the evidence for "non-p." Russell's principle would enjoin, in such cases; the "refusal to commit oneself at all": Russell would proscribe any "right" to believe at all—would have us, in other words, suspend assent much as Miller would.

But, Davis argues, James's argument is aimed directly at the universal applicability of such principles as Russell's: when the option is not only ambiguous, but live, forced, and momentous as well, the thrust of James's position is that such epistemological principles as Russell has enunciated may legitimately be contravened! One may not, to overturn James's position, merely repeat Russell's principle!

Does the streetcar case argue, though, as Ducasse thought it does, that the situation was so totally ambiguous as to be decidable only on passional grounds? Davis is not ready to make that claim: scientists, for example, could after study probably determine which option—jumping or staying aboard—would likely be safer, even if not entirely safe; it could be argued that the passenger should make as quick a calculation of his reasoned chances as he can, instead of entrusting himself to the pure gamble involved in a blindly passional decision. That argument would, of course, be based on an assumption: that such a reasoned calculation, no matter how hurried, would assure fewer chances of deciding wrongly than the purely passional gamble would. But since we cannot be sure of that assumption, the passional method of deciding would seem, even on purely epistemological grounds, legitimate and defensible.

Now, there are a number of common assumptions running through this entire discussion of "wishful thinking." The first of them is that one can reach some clarity on the issue by reference to "The Will to Believe," and to that lecture alone. But we have seen at a number of junctures the vanity of all such attempts; we must be ready to range
not only through James’s other popular lectures, but elsewhere in his works as well, in order to understand what he is getting at.

That wider acquaintance with James, however, calls into question several other assumptions shared by most of the participants in this particular debate. The first of them touches on that central term “wishful.” Everyone seems to have assumed that all James had in view was the desirability of religion’s being true, the “advantages” and “comforts” its truth—or more precisely our belief in its truth—would provide. How the term “wishful” would apply to the pessimist’s decision to “trust” his “instinct of negation” rather than its opposite—a possibility raised by Ducasse, but never explored—is not immediately evident, to say the least. There is also that arresting remark James makes about “doing the universe the deepest service we can”; surely this suggests another side to the religious option that does not lend itself so easily to the more self-interested language of “wish,” “comfort,” and personal “advantage.” There is a track worth following here, but, again, following it entails spreading our net beyond the limits of this single lecture.

A second questionable assumption: the writers we have studied thus far give various interpretations of what James must mean by our “passional” or “volitional” nature, but each of them supposes his own ability to unpack that Protean term correctly. Will, wish, liking, instinct, impulse, temperament; irrational, non-rational—all these terms have been thrown about in the discussion without its having even once been suggested that their application might be highly problematic, after all. Would it be worthwhile to look further into James’s corpus in order to find out what he might have intended by that term? Not merely worthwhile, it seems the only conscientious thing to do.

Less commonly shared, but still pervading most phases of this discussion, is a third assumption: that James’s sybil-
line phrase about an "option that cannot by its nature be
decided on intellectual grounds" implies this scenario: the
intellect must first go through its (presumably) dispassion­ate examination of the evidence, come to the conclu­sion that the evidence is indecisive and the question before
it truly "ambiguous"—and then, but only then, the pas­sional side of our nature is entitled to tilt the scales. The
only epistemologically conscientious scenario, of course;
therefore, the one James must have had in mind. But the
unsettling truth of the matter is that James had quite
another scenario in mind, as a look into his other writings
will show. And he was serious about it.

That same phrase prompts another question: What did
James mean by an "option that cannot by its nature be
decided on intellectual grounds"? When Ducasse and
Davis feel compelled to excogitate a "case" which James
himself never offered as an example, their implied assump­tion is that James himself would have accepted that case
as one to which he intended his thesis to apply. Davis, to do
him credit, shows some tremors of uneasiness in this re­spect: James obviously had more "reflective" cases in mind
than the split-second streetcar decision; and the streetcar
decision itself may not be so "naturally" ambiguous—to a
scientist, say—as it might appear to the streetcar passen­
ger. But it behooves the scholar to ask whether James him­self has given us clearer indications of the kind of options
he was concerned with, and to which he meant his conten­tions to apply. Only then can we make any judgment on
the validity of those contentions.

Both critics and defenders of James have raised a final
question: Is he truly arguing for a "will," or merely for a
"right," to believe? Answering their own question, they
have then gone on to object that his commendation of the
kind of precursive faith that can "create" future facts not
only has nothing to do with proving our "right" to believe,
but really distracts from, and contributes only confusion
to, his main argument. Obviously, there is a close connection between these two issues; but so inextricably do they interweave with the preceding question about the kinds of option James is mainly interested in, that all three must be dealt with simultaneously. To that task I shall turn first.

NOTES


2. Dickinson Miller, “‘The Will to Believe’ and the Duty to Doubt,” International Journal of Ethics, 9 (1898–1899), 173, as quoted in Hare & Madden, “James, Miller, and Ducasse on the Ethics of Belief,” 120.


4. Letter of Miller to Ducasse, undated, given in ibid., 123–24.

5. Ibid.

6. Ibid., 124.

7. Letter dated January 18, 1943—when Miller was seventy-five years old!—given in ibid., 116–18.

8. Ibid., 117.

9. Ibid.

10. Ibid.

11. See above, chap. 1, note 9.

12. Notice that this shift in meaning comes naturally, so to speak, once James establishes the equivalence, in practical terms, of opting for either atheism or agnosticism.

13. The implication would seem to be that there is a “family” of such cases, even if a very limited one.


15. Dickinson Miller, A Philosophical Scrutiny of Religion (New York: Ronald, 1953), p. 13, as cited in Hare & Madden, “James,
Miller, and Ducasse on the Ethics of Belief," 121; emphasis deleted. At least, Ducasse goes on to argue, we gain the consolation of doing something when we gamble rather than not!

16. Ibid.


18. Ibid., 245n15; see also note 13, above.

19. Ibid., 235; see also Hare & Madden, "James, Miller, and Ducasse on the Ethics of Belief," 120–21.


21. Hick does enter the qualification (p. 42) that the believed proposition must not be "demonstrably false"; but Davis would be correct both in asking whether this limitation is sufficient to do justice to James's case, and in charging that Hick's final verdict (p. 44) is a wild overstatement.


23. Davis, "Wishful Thinking and 'The Will to Believe,'" 231; emphasis deleted.

24. Davis refers here to the distinction between a "right" to believe and a "will" to believe, drawn by Kennedy in "Pragmatism, Pragmaticism, and the Will to Believe," cited above, chap. 1, note 1. We shall see more on this distinction further on.

25. Notice that Davis has set himself the precise question whether passional decisions of this special type can be defended on "epistemological" grounds; that way of putting the question to James's lecture embodies a set of assumptions which call for examination.

26. Hick does refer to one section of SR, but that is where he stops.