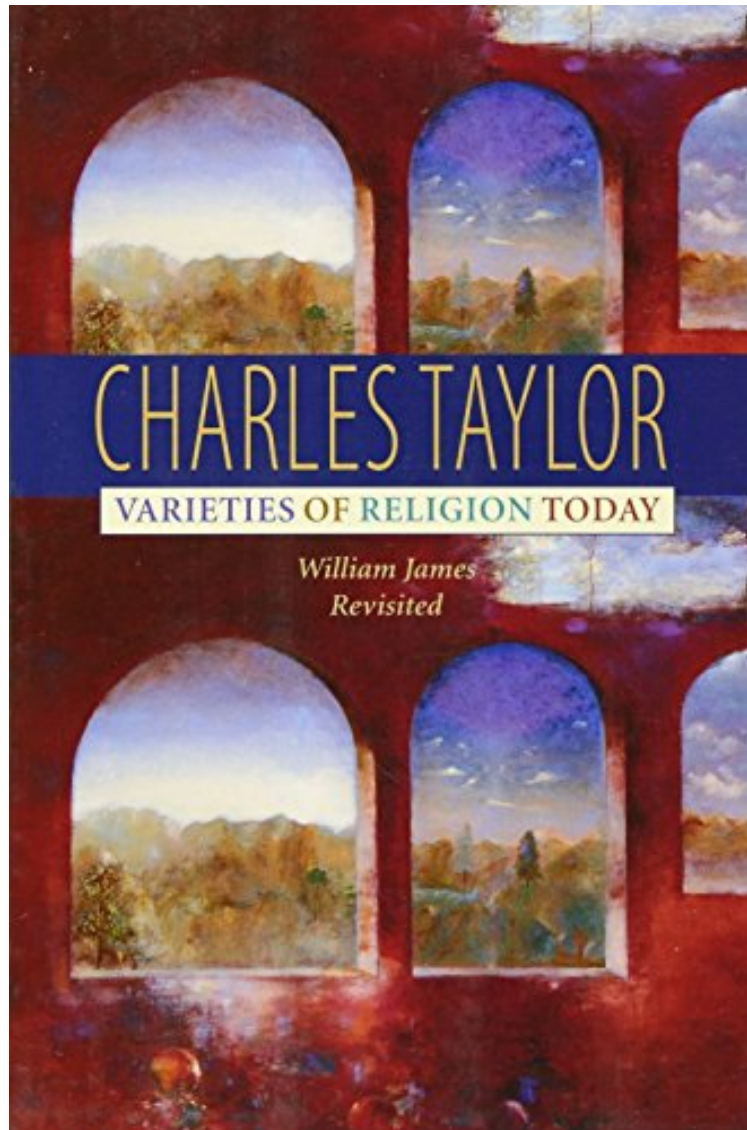


[Read and download] Varieties of Religion Today: William James Revisited (Institute for Human Sciences Vienna Lecture Series)

Varieties of Religion Today: William James Revisited (Institute for Human Sciences Vienna Lecture Series)

Charles Taylor

**Download PDF / ePub / DOC / audiobook / ebooks*



[Download](#)

[Read Online](#)

#777736 in Books Harvard University Press 2003-11-30Original language:EnglishPDF # 1 7.78 x .39 x 4.80l, .35 #File Name: 0674012534142 pages | File size: 35.Mb

Charles Taylor : Varieties of Religion Today: William James Revisited (Institute for Human Sciences Vienna Lecture Series) before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Varieties of Religion Today: William James Revisited (Institute for Human Sciences Vienna Lecture Series):

0 of 1 people found the following review helpful. InspiredBy Plato CamusAn inspired update and application of

William James.⁹⁴ of 94 people found the following review helpful. A reflection on religious belief and the state
By Sammy Jo
This book is a collection of a series of lectures Charles Taylor gave reflecting on the legacy of William James. In thinking about James' work, Taylor reflects on the tensions between private religious experience and public religious expression; the problem of belief and unbelief; and the implications our religious beliefs have for our political organization. It is almost impossible to do justice to the richness of Taylor's thought in a short review. Taylor's first task is to situate James within his own religious context. James inherited the strand of religious belief that was quintessentially Protestant -- with an emphasis on private feeling as against public expression. For James, the ultimate religious experience is private and fundamentally individual. This precludes James from fully grasping the types of religious expression that are more communally-based. Taylor's second task is to reflect on James' personal struggle with the question of belief and unbelief. In James' day a strong argument was being made that religious belief is intellectually dishonest. Taylor offers a good summary of James' defense of belief as a viable choice. Finally, Taylor integrates James' thought with the question of how our religious belief interacts with our political structures. Taylor offers an invaluable historical narrative of the variety of relationships between religion and state that we have seen in the past. In doing so, he makes our current dilemmas much clearer. We are moving from a country that has a broad consensus in some sort of belief, but which allows individuals to join whatever church best gives expression to that experience, to a country in which there is no such broad consensus. If there is no shared understanding of the sacred, we are forced to ground our political structures in the purely human. It is not yet clear whether the new project will succeed, but in his reflections on the tensions between belief and unbelief and their relationship to our political organization, Taylor can only enhance our discussions as we move forward into this virgin territory. Taylor's book does presume that the reader has a fairly sophisticated historical sense. And he often makes reference to the situation in France, which can be a bit opaque to those who lack a basic familiarity with French culture. Indeed, he often quotes from French writers without offering a translation. Still, the book offers valuable insights, even to those without the background to fully grasp everything he writes.¹³ of 14 people found the following review helpful. Charles Taylor and William James
By Michael D. True
Charles Taylor's "Varieties of Religion Today," is a superb reflection on the importance of William James' commentary on religion a century ago. In a precise, brief, and resonant book, Taylor conveys a vivid sense of James' insights, yet provides a valuable critique of his "Varieties of Religious Experience" and "Will to Believe," for the contemporary reader. In addition to being a incisive essay in its own right, "Varieties of Religion Today" is a useful introduction to several of Taylor's other books and principal concerns as a philosopher, including on the ethics of belief. I have already read the book three times, and look forward to returning to it, as each reading reveals another level of understanding and insight into the state of religion and secularism in the U.S. particularity and other Western nations. A virtue of the book for this reader, who isn't a philosopher, is the clarity of language and lack of professional jargon.

A hundred years after William James delivered the celebrated lectures that became *The Varieties of Religious Experience*, one of the foremost thinkers in the English-speaking world returns to the questions posed in James's masterpiece to clarify the circumstances and conditions of religion in our day. An elegant mix of the philosophy and sociology of religion, Charles Taylor's powerful book maintains a clear perspective on James's work in its historical and cultural contexts, while casting a new and revealing light upon the present. Lucid, readable, and dense with ideas that promise to transform current debates about religion and secularism, *Varieties of Religion Today* is much more than a revisiting of James's classic. Rather, it places James's analysis of religious experience and the dilemmas of doubt and belief in an unfamiliar but illuminating context, namely the social horizon in which questions of religion come to be presented to individuals in the first place. Taylor begins with questions about the way in which James conceives his subject, and shows how these questions arise out of different ways of understanding religion that confronted one another in James's time and continue to do so today. Evaluating James's treatment of the ethics of belief, he goes on to develop an innovative and provocative reading of the public and cultural conditions in which questions of belief or unbelief are perceived to be individual questions. What emerges is a remarkable and penetrating view of the relation between religion and social order and, ultimately, of what "religion" means.

From Publishers Weekly
In the early 20th century, Harvard sociologist William James delivered a series of lectures in Edinburgh that were eventually put together in book form as *The Varieties of Religious Experience*, still in print today. A century later, philosophy professor Charles Taylor spoke for the same lecture series, revisiting James's work for a postmodern audience. His *Varieties of Religion Today* is a provocative, witty and worthy conversation with James's timeless work. Copyright 2002 Cahners Business Information, Inc.
From Library Journal
In these lectures, delivered at the Institute for the Human Sciences in Vienna, Taylor (philosophy, McGill Univ.; *Sources of the Self*) reconsiders William James's *The Varieties of Religious Experience* (1902), a seminal text in American religious studies, examining whether the points James made are relevant today. While recognizing James's extraordinary insight into the spiritual needs of the modern world, Taylor makes one major criticism: that James rejected the legitimacy of communal religious experience, i.e., the experience of Church, and concentrated on individual religious experience as

paradigmatic. But even as he takes issue with the narrowness of James's focus, Taylor finds much of interest in his subject and uses James's works as a springboard for his own discussions of the current state of religion in America, which he sees as struggling with the same debate about religious faith and doubt. In doing so, Taylor offers a well-written, easily accessible overview of today's individualistic religious tendencies. Recommended for larger public collections and those with strong holdings in theology. Augustin J. Curley, Newark Abbey, NJ Copyright 2002 Reed Business Information, Inc. In the early 20th century, Harvard sociologist William James delivered a series of lectures in Edinburgh that were eventually put together in book form as *The Varieties of Religious Experience*, still in print today. A century later...Charles Taylor spoke for the same lecture series, revisiting James's work for a postmodern audience. His *Varieties of Religion Today* is a provocative, witty, and worthy conversation with James's timeless work. (Publishers Weekly 2002-01-28)Old-time religion had a story about these sources of despair, reinforced every Sunday morning, but James will have none of this--he cannot be so easily consoled. What he needs is a direct sensation of the presence of God. The trouble is that such experiences are rare, and fragile and isolating, not to mention questionable (even for a theist like James). Religion, if it is to survive, must be buttressed by more than fleeting sensation. The acute question raised by Charles Taylor's interesting book is whether the modern world has room for anything else. (Colin McGinn Wall Street Journal 2002-03-18)A century later, one of the world's most respected living philosophers, Canada's Charles Taylor, is taking a fresh look at James's classic. In his new book, *Varieties of Religion Today*...Taylor finds James's book both incredibly prescient and seriously lacking. Taylor applauds James for extolling the value of inner experience over empty ritual, and for predicting what would happen in 20th-century religion: a shift to a style of spirituality that rejects dogma, stresses emotional experience, emphasizes choice, promotes secularism and places highest value on personal authenticity. (Douglas Todd Halifax Daily News 2002-04-21)Now at last we have a book about...William James, and it has been produced by a religiously obsessed man himself. Charles Taylor has been writing philosophy for many years, and the scope of his achievement is extraordinary. He has written on ethics, epistemology, language, and politics. He has analyzed Greek, medieval, Renaissance, and modern thought in learned discourses on the history of ideas. Even more amazing, perhaps, is that a corpus of philosophy so wide should be so intellectually coherent. All of Taylor's writings are unified by a goal, a mission, almost a calling: to understand by philosophical means who we have become and who we ought to strive to become...[A] small but very stimulating book. (Erin Leib New Republic 2002-06-24)[A] compelling distillation in which we learn three primary things about William James. First of all is his individualistic and experiential definition of religion...Second, Taylor introduces us to James' psychology which shuns the sunny optimists of life and takes more respectful interest in people who face life's dread and overcome it by religious experience...Finally, we learn of James' battle with the rationalistic and scientific agnosticism of his day. (Larry Witham Washington Times 2002-05-12)Arguing that James's work has a striking topicality...Charles Taylor returns to James's arguments to shed light on the contemporary spiritual scene. *Varieties of Religion Today* is a rich, thought-provoking book, offering an incisive analysis of contemporary religious movements. (Peter Emberley Globe and Mail 2002-06-01)Charles Taylor's superb account of James's theology offers a powerful critique of the assumptions and consequences of this approach to religion. For Taylor, the rise of the religion of experience is, in no small degree, responsible for the increasing secularization of Western culture. James's religion is private religion, which has retreated from the public sphere and sets itself apart from the spirituality inherent within corporate life...Simply stated, without pretentiousness, yet underpinned by a great deal of philosophical sophistication, this is a must-read for all who are interested in the mission of the Church within an increasingly atomised secular culture. (Giles Fraser Church Time 2003-01-03)This short sparkling book contains a communitarian's reflections on the individualistic, experience-oriented religiosity of William James's *Varieties of Religious Experience*. Taylor's lectures wrestle with the question: "What does it mean to call our age secular?" They offer an account of "how we got to be that way"...It is a great pleasure to read a discussion of New Age spirituality by a gifted intellectual who eschews both sociological detachment and nostalgic, partisan jeremiads. This book is an excellent introduction to Taylor's more demanding volumes. (D. Christie Choice 2003-01-01)This short book by a great contemporary philosopher revisits William James's *Varieties of Religious Experience* and finds much of it still valid a hundred years later. (Tom D'Evelyn Christian Science Monitor 2003-12-23)