

WILLIAM JAMES' MORAL PHILOSOPHY AND
PHILOSOPHY OF RELIGION

Po-wen Kuo

Abstract

This paper is an exposition of James' ethical and religious thought. Part one deals with moral philosophy, in which James' views concerning the origin of moral ideas, the essence of morality, and the criterion of moral judgments are explained and clarified. Part two deals with philosophy of religion, where James' definition of religion, his characterization of religious life, and his theory of 'finite god' are individually expounded. Throughout the discussion, an attempt is made to do justice to the scope and richness of James' views. The common mistake of treating his moral and religious theories as merely applications of his pragmatism is thus avoided. A few critical comments are included at the end of the paper.