

ASSIGNMENT 1 (4000 WORDS)

1. Assess the significance of the contribution to the study of religious experience by William James. What are the strengths and weaknesses of his approach and conclusions?
2. Assess the significance of the contributions to the study of religious experience by Alister Hardy. What are the strengths and weaknesses of his approach and conclusion?
3. Assess the significance of the contributions to the study of religious experience by Ann Taves. What are the strengths and weaknesses of her approach and conclusions?
4. Evaluate the view that of Ninian Smart's 'seven dimensions of religion,' the experiential dimension is the most important. What is the relationship between this dimension and the others?

ASSIGNMENT 2 (4000 WORDS)

5. What relationships, if any, are there between gender and religious experience?
6. Are religions based on religious experience? Use both Asian and European/American examples.
7. Are artists or scientists better able to communicate what we mean by 'religious experience'? Use specific examples, and define the terms 'artist' and 'scientist'.
8. Is a purely scientific study of religious experience possible, or even relevant?
9. Choose one of the major disciplines used in the study of religious experience (e.g. psychology, sociology/culture history, anthropology, philosophy, metaphysics, neuropsychology) and evaluate its contribution to the field.
10. Can the use of mind-altering drugs bring about 'genuine' religious experience? In what ways can such experiences be compared to spontaneous religious experiences, and those sought by other means (e.g. meditation)? Use examples from shamanism, and from modern western accounts (e.g. in the RERC archive).
11. What is the relationship between mental illness and religious experience?
12. Discuss the idea of religious experience as a feature of human evolution. How strong are the philosophical and biological arguments for such claims?