



# TOWARDS A RENEWED MYSTICISM: EPISTEMIC STANDARDS IN THEORY AND PRACTICE

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# William Alston

- “Attached to each [doxastic] practice is an ‘overrider system’ of beliefs and procedures that the subject can use in subjecting prima facie justified beliefs to further tests when that is called for.”

–Alston, *Perceiving God*, 159

# Robert A. Oakes

- “The experiences in question are of such a nature that I do not *require* any criterion to be certain that they are veridical. Rather, I have *non-criterial* certainty that such is the case. . . . Accordingly, every such experience provides me with *infallible justification* for believing that it constitutes a veridical awareness of God’s presence.”

–Oakes, “Mysticism, Veridicality, and Modality,” 217-218

# Richard Swinburne

- 1) “the apparent perception was made under conditions or by a subject found in the past to be unreliable.”
- 2) “the perceptual claim was to have perceived an object of a certain kind in circumstances where similar perceptual claims have proved false.”
- 3) “on background evidence it is very very probable that x was not present.”
- 4) “S’s claim to have perceived x may be challenged on the grounds that, whether or not x was there, x was probably not a cause of the experience of its seeming to S that x was there.”

–Swinburne, *The Existence of God*, 311-314

# A New Standard?

## *Nonnegotiable:*

- 1) The doctrinal/intellectual element of the experience must conform to previously held beliefs *or those of an established religious tradition* to the degree that a subject could rationally accept its content.
- 2) The experience must be free from Swinburne's four special considerations, with minor alteration.
- 3) There ought to be an engaging or arresting of all of the subject's faculties.
- 4) The experience ought to be transformative, catalyzing effects in the subject that last beyond the experience itself.

## *Ancillary:*

- 1) The subject is reasonably predisposed to a mystical experience.
- 2) The experience is accompanied by a sense of indubitability concerning the veridicality of the experience and the accuracy of its content.
- 3) The experience is consistent with those of others.

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