

TOWARDS A GLOBAL PHILOSOPHY OF RELIGION: REPLY TO SCHELLENBERG AND DRAPER

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Abstract. This piece replies to a recently published article in the *European Journal for Philosophy of Religion* by J. L. Schellenberg and Paul Draper. They contend that the field of African philosophy of religion needs renewal, and they make several recommendations on how to achieve this. I agree with their recommendations, but I argue they have omitted a crucial problem and solution to renew the field; namely, a fundamental problem of the field is that it systemically excludes non-Western philosophies and scholars and, therefore, the field needs to be decolonised.

I. INTRODUCTION

In a recent article in this journal, J. L. Schellenberg and Paul Draper make an important argument for the renewal of the philosophy of religion.¹ They contend that the philosophy of religion has been too narrowly focused on certain religions and topics, and to enrich the field and make it more socially relevant, scholars in the field need to try to go beyond this. Schellenberg and Draper make several recommendations on how to achieve a renewal of the discipline. Central to their recommendations is the idea that scholars may be more diligent in considering objections and widen their scope of the study. Although I agree, in broad terms, with their diagnosis and recommendations, I think that they have omitted a central issue and solution; namely, I contend that Schellenberg and Draper have neglected that there is an exclusionary tendency in the field which partly grounds many of the problems they identify.

1 Paul Draper and John L. Schellenberg, “The Why and the How of Renewal in Philosophy of Religion”, *European Journal for Philosophy of Religion* 14, no. 1 (2022).

Further, Schellenberg and Draper neglect that the decolonisation of the field is part of the solution to problems they wish to address. The form of exclusion I focus on in this paper is mostly the exclusion of non-Western scholars and philosophies of religion. Nonetheless, it is important to point out that despite the Christian majority in the field in Western universities, there is also a tendency to treat Christianity as a homogeneous tradition and exclude different traditions within Christianity (e.g., Polish Catholicism, Scandinavian Lutheranism, Latin American Christianity).² Hence, although it is beyond the focus of my paper, it is worth mentioning that many of the solutions I present may also apply to diversifying the study of Christianity.

To further this thesis, I will outline Schellenberg and Draper's argument in section 1. Then, in section 2, I will present the case for understanding many of the problems Schellenberg and Draper identify as the result of exclusion and make the argument for a decolonised and globalized philosophy of religion, focusing on the African philosophy of religion. In the third section, I suggest a philosophy of religion syllabus that would be more inclusive.

II. SCHELLENBERG AND DRAPER'S THESIS

Schellenberg and Draper's primary goals are to explain why the field of philosophy of religion needs renewal and how to achieve this. Schellenberg and Draper consider that philosophers in the field are too focused on defending their philosophical views and have not given sufficient attention to what the field of philosophy of religion needs. In their argument, Schellenberg and Draper assume that there is a conflict between scholars' interest in advancing their philosophical views and advancements in the field of philosophy of religion. As they contend, philosophers of religion have given 'virtually all their attention to developing, refining, and defending against all comers their perspective in the field, rarely giving any thought to whether what's needed for the field as a whole to prosper'.³ They contend that philosophers of religion ought to pay more attention to what the field needs and make efforts to make it flourish.⁴

2 Schellenberg and Draper affirm that there is a Christian majority and I start from this assumption here which seems to me to be true.

3 Draper and Schellenberg, "The Why and the How of Renewal in Philosophy of Religion", 3.

4 Ibid.

Schellenberg and Draper outline eight causes for this problem: a) tribalism, b) familiarism, c) partitionism, d) recentism, e) inattention to foundational issues, f) ignorance about religion, g) too few non-Christians working in the field, and h) too few philosophers willing to describe their philosophical work on religion as a philosophy of religion. I am concerned here with the social aspects that lead to the problem that Schellenberg and Draper identify. So, for space questions, I will only outline the ones that can be understood under this umbrella of being related to a social cause of the problem Schellenberg and Draper wish to solve; these are, more specifically, reasons a), b) c) and g). I will also explain d) not because it can be understood as a social issue, but instead because I believe that Schellenberg and Draper's argument is that a significant part of the solution is to pay more attention to the history of the philosophy of religion; because I disagree that this solution is the fundamental thing that ought to be done, I outline it here too.

For Schellenberg and Draper, the problem of tribalism is that philosophers are deeply influenced by their religious affiliation and loyalty to religious groups; resultantly, their theories are likely to reflect this great pressure placed on them. In other words, because this pressure deeply influences their theories, then these theories are likely to be overly passionate and biased.⁵ Familiarism refers to the tendency to address themes in terms of the religion one is most familiar with. This is problematic in philosophical work because it gives a false sense of expertise, results in certain religions receiving a disproportional amount of attention in research, leaving some other religions neglected, and leads to false generalisations. Partitionism occurs when philosophers 'divide religion into its parts and focus only on one or another part (...) [and] assume that only particular religions are to be engaged'.⁶ Although there is no issue with focusing on specific religions when doing research, the *tendency* to do so often leads to leaving many vital subjects and areas unattended, and this 'prevents or limits the attainment by our field of its true potential',⁷ making the field less rich and socially relevant. Another social issue that Schellenberg and Draper identify is that too few non-Christians work in the field. They suggest that this is because many non-Christians do

5 Draper and Schellenberg, "The Why and the How of Renewal in Philosophy of Religion".

6 Ibid., 6.

7 Ibid., 7.

not wish to enter the field because it is perceived as overly religious or Christian. Finally, Schellenberg and Draper uphold that another issue is recentism, which can be understood as an over-focus on recent religions rather than having a broader understanding of the field.⁸

Taking this on board, what are exactly the solutions suggested by Schellenberg and Draper? They give seven of them, but some are related to the context of the United States and some seem secondary. The two central ones for the renewal of the field are a commitment among philosophers of religion to a balanced inquiry and broadening the education of philosophers of religion. Regarding the commitment among philosophers of religion to a balanced inquiry, what they mean is that philosophers of religion ought to be more fair-minded. Philosophers ought to look for objections against their views more diligently and expand their knowledge of the field. Where exactly to look for ways to expand one's knowledge and different views? The answer is in the solution that they call 'broadening the education of philosophers of religion'. Schellenberg and Draper contend that this broadening can occur through a shift from the philosophy of religion to the history and philosophy of religion. The study of history and philosophy of religion together is the core of how to broaden philosophers' perspectives. As they state, this would 'help future philosophers of religion become more familiar with the academic study of religion and not just by becoming more familiar with the history of religion. They might also encourage future philosophers of religion to address relatively neglected issues in the philosophy of religion per se.'⁹

III. GLOBALISING AND DECOLONIZING THE DISCIPLINE

The social problems outlined above are all connected to forms of exclusion. Tribalism is a form of excluding others who are perceived to be from a different 'tribe'. Tribalism may have many causes; one amongst them is the lack of exposure to those who are perceived to be from another tribe. One of the causes of tribalism is the lack of contact with others, which often results from

8 Given the solutions Schellenberg and Draper propose, I am convinced that they believe that they think that recentism is at the core of the narrow focus of colleagues in the philosophy of religion.

9 Draper and Schellenberg, "The Why and the How of Renewal in Philosophy of Religion", 19.

excluding these others from circles with which one can interact.¹⁰ Indeed, there is a lack of exposure to philosophical views outside the West, which may influence the tribal feeling amongst the philosophers of religion.¹¹ Likewise, familiarism in the discipline, as Schellenberg and Draper define it, occurs partly because there are traditions that have been neglected and excluded from syllabi. That is, part of the reason scholars of philosophy of religion are more familiar with some religions than others is that their training has excluded non-Western religions; the journals they read are unlikely to accept articles focused only on other religions and tend to publish only on mainstream Western religions. Partitionism in the philosophy of religion often focuses only on Abrahamic religions and excludes religions from Africa, Latin America, and other places in the Global South. Again, the reasons I have mentioned about training and publication requirements are telling to understand why this happens. There are, indeed, too few non-Christians working in the field, but this is not so much because non-Christians are reluctant to enter, but, instead, because there are barriers to entering which exclude them: editorial decisions not to have non-Western philosophy or to treat it as an exotic enterprise, reviewer evaluations that require the treatment of Christian philosophy along with non-Western one, and so forth. Some journals publish non-Western philosophy of religion, but the more visible venues rarely do so.

Note that this problem is also internal to Christian philosophy. Although the majority of philosophers of religion in the West address these issues from a Christian viewpoint, the Christian tradition is itself heterogeneous: several different traditions within Christianity hold different concepts of God, understandings of the problem of evil, the meaning of personhood, divine grace, what Omnipotence God has, the Trinity, or what it means to follow Christianity and so forth.¹² The Christian tradition is often treated as a monolithic and homogene-

10 Francisco Bethencourt, *Racisms: From the Crusades to the Twentieth Century* (Princeton Univ. Press, 2014); Matthew Cole and Kate Stewart, *Our Children and Other Animals: The Cultural Construction of Human-Animal Relations in Childhood* (Routledge, 2016).

11 Jun Wang and Luís Cordeiro-Rodrigues, "Pathways Towards a Global Philosophy of Religion: The Problem of Evil from an Intercultural Perspective", *Filosofia Theoretica* 11, no. 1 (2022); Luis Cordeiro-Rodrigues and Jonathan O. Chimakonam, "African Philosophy of Religion from a Global Perspective: Deities, Ancestors, Relationality and the Problem of Evil", *Filosofia Theoretica* 11, no. 1 (2022).

12 Mark Shaw and Wanjiru M. Gitau, *The Kingdom of God in Africa: A History of African Christianity* (Langham Global Library, 2020); Todd Hartch, *The Rebirth of Latin American*

ous whole when there are significant differences within the field. For example, in African Christianity, it is not rare to understand union with God as a mystical shared consciousness experience. This view is not so common in Western Christianity.¹³ Even within Western Christianity, there are significant differences: Greek Orthodoxy, Anglican Christianity, and American Calvinism do not share the same concepts of God. Thus, although my argument is not directed to the inclusion of the diverse neglected Christian views, it also applies to it.

I do not wish to challenge the proposals given by Schellenberg and Draper. I think that they are correct; but a fundamental point has been omitted in that discussion: there is a systemic exclusion of non-Western scholars and subjects in the field, and therefore the solution for the renewal requires that the field also needs to decolonise by focusing on non-Western neglect religions, subjects, and include scholars who have been placed at the margins.¹⁴ In several academic circles, there is a certain degree of scepticism on whether non-Western philosophy ought to be included in the syllabi and philosophical research.¹⁵ Hence, here I wish to provide a set of justifications for the inclusion of non-Western philosophy, with a special focus on the African philosophy of religion which is the one I am more familiar with and can offer more informed comments.

Regarding the epistemic reasons, my argument is that the idea that including a broader scope of views coheres with the way that the most salient philosophical methodologies work today. If one is an intuitionist, one holds the view that the wider one's intuition is shared, the stronger it becomes.¹⁶ What this

Christianity (Oxford Univ. Press, 2014); Peter C. Phan, *Asian Christianities: History, Theology, Practice* (ORBIS, 2018).

13 Luis Cordeiro-Rodrigues, "Mutability and Relationality: Towards an African Four-Dimensionalist Pan-Psychism", *Religions* 12, no. 12 (Multidisciplinary Digital Publishing Institute, 2021); John S. Mbiti, *Introduction to African Religion, Second Edition* (Waveland Press, Inc., 2015); *African Religions & Philosophy* (Heinemann, 1990).

14 Jonathan O. Chimakonam, *Ezumezu: A System of Logic for African Philosophy and Studies* (Springer, 2019); Thaddeus Metz, "Recent Work in African Philosophy: Its Relevance beyond the Continent", *Mind* 130, no. 518 (2021); Luís Cordeiro-Rodrigues, "African Higher Education and Decolonizing the Teaching of Philosophy", *Educational Philosophy and Theory* 0, no. 0 (Routledge, 2021)

15 David Benatar, "Those Who Seek Changes Must Show They Are Desirable", last modified 2017, <https://www.iol.co.za/capetimes/opinion/those-who-seek-changes-must-show-they-are-desirable-1886695>.

16 Henry Sidgwick and John Rawls, *Methods of Ethics* (Hackett Publishing Co, Inc, 1981); Christopher Simon Wareham, "A Duty to Explore African Ethics?", *Ethical Theory and Moral*

entails for the present question is that there is a need to check if Western intuitions are shared by others outside the Global North (like Africans) to confirm the strength of one's intuitions. Likewise, if one uses a reflective equilibrium methodology, it is also the case that checking more views is better than checking less. To find a balance between belief and theory, one needs to consider a reasonable diversity of perspectives to ensure that one's view is the best.¹⁷

What this entails is that, in fact, contrary to what Schellenberg and Draper state, the issue is not exactly that individuals are too focused on their theories and should focus more on the needs of the field. The needs of the field to expand, become more prosperous, etc., are aligned with philosophers' interests of making their theories stronger by confronting them with those with different intuitions and theories. Considering non-Western philosophies as potential objections is what a good philosophical methodology requires. Given that intuitions and theories are likely to be influenced by socio-cultural factors,¹⁸ to look at the history of Western philosophy is *not sufficient*, as these are more likely to be part of a more similar cultural milieu that has informed today's Western societies and left many (colonial) legacies. It is, therefore, crucial to broaden cultural horizons to get access to a broader range of problems, concepts, solutions, hypotheses, and theories.¹⁹

The sceptic may object in three ways. Firstly, the sceptic may contend that there is no need to check African views because these are not yet developed and so not worth checking; hence, one needs only to check those which are relevant and sufficiently sophisticated for the debate. Secondly, the sceptic may contend that my proposal is unfeasible in practice. Studying non-Western philosophy, like African philosophy, requires skills that contemporary philosophers of religion do not have. Notably, it needs knowledge of African languages, ethnocultural background, African philosophical literature, and so forth. Thirdly, the sceptic may object that these methodologies may be relevant for ethics but not the philosophy of religion.

Practice 20, no. 4 (2017); Michael Huemer, *Ethical Intuitionism* (AIAA, 2006).

17 J. Rawls, *A Theory of Justice: Revised Edition* (Harvard Univ. Press, 1999); Nelson Goodman, *Fact, Fiction, and Forecast* (Bobbs-Merrill, 1965).

18 Jeff McMahan, "Moral Intuition", in *The Blackwell Guide to Ethical Theory*, ed. Hugh LaFollette - (Blackwell, 2000).

19 Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method* (A&C Black, 2013).

Concerning the first objection, an evident colonial legacy is visible in the objection: the presupposition being that those outside the West cannot produce anything valuable. However, this is false. African philosophers have produced sophisticated systems in logic²⁰, metaphysics²¹, ethics²², political philosophy²³, and the philosophy of religion.²⁴ Additionally, for the sceptic to be able to object to this, he would have to have genuinely checked African materials and then dismissed them rather than rejected them without analysis. This rejection cannot be a priori, and the simple fact that articles do not appear in visible venues is not a sufficient reason to assume the content is not good. The fact that African philosophy articles rarely appear in more visible venues is more likely to do with editorial exclusion than with the quality of these.

In response to the second objection, I should note that it is indeed a problem that scholars do not have the know-how to initiate the process of decolonisation. Nonetheless, this is not a lethal problem because there are ways to slowly improve the process.²⁵ Studying non-explored academic areas may be a slow process, but it needs to start somewhere. In a recent interview with *Closer to Truth*, John Searle explains how he began writing about consciousness, a topic he knew nothing about.²⁶ He states that he started by looking at undergraduate textbooks and built his knowledge from there. Indeed, when looking at some of the specialists in African philosophy today who hail from the Global North — Thaddeus Metz, Katrin Flikschuh, and so forth — they were trained in Western rather than African philosophy and yet can still produce work in this area. Moreover, even in Africa, there is a tendency to focus on Western phi-

20 J. O. Chimakonam, *Ezumezu*.

21 Innocent Asouzu, *The Method and Principles of Complementary Reflection in and Beyond African Philosophy* (LIT Verlag Münster, 2005).

22 Motsamai Molefe, *An African Ethics of Personhood and Bioethics: A Reflection on Abortion and Euthanasia* (Springer Nature, 2020).

23 Bernard Matolino, *Afro-Communitarian Democracy* (Lexington Books, 2019).

24 Ada Agada, "Complementarism and Consolationism: Mapping Out a 21st-Century African Philosophical Trajectory", *Synthesis philosophica* 35, no. 1 (Hrvatsko filozofsko društvo, 2020); Emmanuel Ofuasia, "An Argument for the Non-Existence of the Devil in African Traditional Religions", *Filosofia Theoretica* 11, no. 1 (2022); L. Uchenna Ogbonnaya, "The Question of the Nature of God from the African Place", *Filosofia Theoretica* 11, no. 1 (2022).

25 Luís Cordeiro-Rodrigues, "African Higher Education and Decolonizing the Teaching of Philosophy".

26 Closer To Truth, dir., "John Searle - Does Consciousness Defeat Materialism?", October 16, 2015, 9:03.

losophy²⁷; yet many scholars specialize in African philosophy with self-study. The specialization and inclusion are possible; but why are they possible exactly?

I contend that there are at least three kinds of reasons. Firstly, many materials are available online, written in English, which allow scholars to explore non-Western philosophies. Journals like *Filosofia Theoretica*, *The South African Journal of Philosophy*, *Philosophia Africana*, *Philosophy East and West*, and *Dao* all provide non-Western philosophical outlooks in English which can serve as a basis for starting to explore beyond Western philosophy. There is no shortage of debates on the philosophy of religion and evil specifically. There are also online materials on how to include African philosophy in the syllabus.²⁸ Secondly, we know that there are scholars who specialize in African philosophy and other non-Western philosophies. If the specialisation process takes time, philosophers of religion can start by inviting scholars and specialists in other philosophies to give guest lectures, online or offline, and offer consulting services for syllabi. It is possible, therefore, to integrate these into the syllabus.

Thirdly and perhaps most importantly, the objection seems to rely on a mistaken conception of culture. The objection assumes that non-Western cultures are something distant, a closed and separated whole inaccessible. This was, in fact, the viewpoint of culture from classical cultural anthropologists, who mistakenly understood culture in these essentialist terms. Cultures are not like this; instead, they communicate and share features with others. The right view of culture is a cosmopolitan one, which understands cultures are overlapping and influenced by each other.²⁹ In today's world, it is inconceivable to think that cultures do not intersect and share important features.³⁰ Taking this on board, I wish to make the point that specialisation in non-

27 Cordeiro-Rodrigues, "African Higher Education and Decolonizing the Teaching of Philosophy".

28 Ibid.; Luis Cordeiro-Rodrigues, "Integrating African Philosophy Into the Western Philosophy Curriculum", *Teaching Philosophy* 41, no. 1 (2018); Lesley Le Grange, "Decolonising, Africanising, Indigenising, and Internationalising Curriculum Studies: Opportunities to (Re)Imagine the Field", *Journal of Education (Univ. of KwaZulu-Natal)*, no. 74 (Authors, 2018); Simphiwe Sesanti, "Teaching Ancient Egyptian Philosophy (Ethics) and History: Fulfilling a Quest for a Decolonised and Afrocentric Education", *Educational Research for Social Change* 7, no. SPE (Nelson Mandela Metropolitan Univ., 2018); Jo-Anne Vorster and Lynn Quinn, "The 'Decolonial Turn': What Does It Mean for Academic Staff Development?", *Education as Change* 21, no. 1 (Univ. of Johannesburg, 2017).

29 Jeremy Waldron, "Minority Cultures and the Cosmopolitan Alternative", *Univ. of Michigan Journal of Law Reform*, January (1992).

30 Anne Phillips, *Multiculturalism without Culture* (Princeton Univ. Press, 2009).

Western philosophies is possible because they are not strange, inaccessible wholes, but fields of knowledge that intersect with current specializations of Western scholars.

Regarding the third objection, it is the case that these methodologies are relevant to the philosophy of religion. Routinely, Theist philosophers discuss the concept of God with perfection as a starting point.³¹ Furthermore, Theists often assume a monotheistic standpoint.³² Nonetheless, it is the intuition of many Africans that God is not perfect.³³ Neither is it the case that Africans tend to be monotheists.³⁴ Hence, confronting intuitions and theories of the nature of God with polytheist and imperfection views from Africans seems a fruitful activity for clarifying these debates.³⁵ This is the case even if the African views are false. As John Stuart Mill states:

The peculiar evil of silencing the expression of an opinion is that it is robbing the human race, posterity as well as the existing generation; those who dissent from the opinion, still more than those who hold it. If the opinion is right, they are deprived of the opportunity of exchanging error for truth: if wrong, they lose what is almost as great a benefit, the clearer perception and livelier impression of truth, produced by its collision with error.³⁶

31 Alvin Plantinga, *God, Freedom and Evil* (William B Eerdmans Publishing Co, 1974); Peter Van Inwagen, *The Problem of Evil: The Gifford Lectures Delivered in the Univ. of St Andrews in 2003* (Oxford Univ. Press, Usa, 2008); Richard Swinburne, *Providence and the Problem of Evil* (OUP Oxford, 1998).

32 Richard Swinburne, "The Social Theory of the Trinity", *Religious Studies* 54, no. 3 (Cambridge Univ. Press, 2018); Dale Tuggy, "Trinity", in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. Edward N. Zalta (Metaphysics Research Lab, Stanford Univ., 2021).

33 John A. Bewaji, "Olodumare: God in Yoruba Belief and the Theistic Problem of Evil", *African Studies Quarterly* 2, no. 1 (1998); Ademola Fayemi, "Philosophical Problem of Evil: Response to E. O. Oduwole", *Philosophia* 41, no. 1 (The Philippine National Philosophical Research Society, 2013); Luis Cordeiro-Rodrigues, "Mutability and Relationality"; Amara Esther Chimakonam, "Why the Problem of Evil Might Not Be a Problem after All in African Philosophy of Religion", *Filosofia Theoretica* 11, no. 1 (2022).

34 Segun Gbadegesin, *African Philosophy: Traditional Yoruba Philosophy and Contemporary African Realities: 134* (Peter Lang Publishing Inc, 1996); Rouyan Gu, "Comparing Concepts of God: Translating God in the Chinese and Yoruba Religious Contexts", *Filosofia Theoretica* 11, no. 1 (2022); Jiechen Hu, "Divinities and Ancestors: A Preliminary Comparison between African and Confucian Cosmologies", *Filosofia Theoretica* 11, no. 1 (2022).

35 Pao-Shen Ho, "Rethinking Monotheism: Some Comparisons between the Igala Religion and Christianity", *Filosofia Theoretica: Journal of African Philosophy, Culture and Religions* 11, no. 1 (Calabar School of Philosophy, 2022).

36 John Stuart Mill, *On Liberty, Utilitarianism and Other Essays 2/e* (OUP Oxford, 2015), 16.

When it comes to the problem of evil it becomes even clearer that confronting Western theories with African views is crucial. The problem of evil is most fundamentally a problem of ethics: what is God, if He exists, morally justified to do?³⁷ African views — such as those of the Yoruba — believe that morality is something that both humans and Gods alike ought to follow.³⁸ This contrasts, for example, with some Christian views that consider God as beyond human morality and so not need to respond to a human-centric value system.³⁹ Furthermore, given that the problem of evil is fundamentally an ethical problem, any ethical discussion ought to, at a minimum, consider the views of those affected by a certain discussion.⁴⁰ It is unthinkable to, say, make decisions about women's rights without including women in the debate.⁴¹ Likewise, in a discussion of what evils are morally justified, it is unreasonable to exclude one of the groups most affected by evils in this world (poverty, war, disease, colonialism, and so forth), that is, Africans.⁴²

This takes me to the second set of reasons why I argue that the inclusion of African philosophy in philosophy of religion syllabi is important; namely, the reasons related to justice. Firstly, as William R. Jones has pointed out, many theodicies and defenses have ignored the black subject in their theorizing. Including the black subject in their theorising would imply that God is racist and considers black people inferior. More specifically, theories about the evil that imply that black people's disproportionate suffering vis-a-vis white suffering is justified are absurd and unjust, as they rely on racist understandings of reality. To rebut such understandings, it is important to include theories adequately informed by the suffering of Africans and which treat Africans in an inclusive way.⁴³

37 James P. Sterba, *Is a Good God Logically Possible?* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2019).

38 Gbadegesin, *African Philosophy*.

39 Georg Gasser, "Animal Suffering, God and Lessons from the Book of Job", *Religions* 12, no. 12 (Multidisciplinary Digital Publishing Institute, 2021).

40 Sterba, *Is a Good God Logically Possible?*

41 Okin, *Justice, Gender, And The Family* (Basic Books, 1991); Monique Deveaux, *Gender and Justice in Multicultural Liberal States* (Oxford Univ. Press, 2007).

42 This is a clear example where non-mainstream Christian views may also be relevant. Orthodox Christianity, Anglicanism, and Catholicism are likely to share different views on morality and excluding some from consideration weakens the theory.

43 Jones, *Is God a White Racist?*; Wang and Cordeiro-Rodrigues, "Pathways Towards a Global Philosophy of Religion".

Secondly, excluding the African philosophy of religion from the syllabi constitutes what Miranda Fricker classified as epistemic injustice. Epistemic injustice, according to Fricker, can take two forms. One form is when the testimony of a certain person is discredited because the audience is prejudiced. The second form is when a structural arrangement makes it difficult or impossible for a group or an individual to express one's views.⁴⁴ The exclusion of African philosophy of religion is an expression of both these forms of epistemic injustice. The exclusion of African views or religious experiences and the reduction of these to witchcraft and pseudo-science, contrasting with 'Western philosophy,' constitutes a violation of the first kind of epistemic injustice. The under-representation of African ideas about religion in relevant syllabi is a structural arrangement that makes it impossible or difficult for scholars and students who wish to explore or have explored such views.

IV. A POSSIBLE PATHWAY FOR INCLUSION

Exposing new generations to other philosophies is crucial, and therefore I believe changing the syllabi is fundamental for the renewal of the field. I wish to defend an inclusionist model that maintains that what should be done is to include elements from other traditions to produce a mixed syllabus. I have discussed this question before, and I do not have a space to further argue in favour of an inclusionist model [reference deleted for blind review]. Hence, I will assume this is desirable and suggest what an inclusionist model could look like. Note first that what to be inclusionist means depends on the context. It is not possible to have a universal theory of what is to be done in practice for each situation. Decolonisation is something that requires identifying harmful practices and replacing them with some which are beneficial.⁴⁵ There are implications for syllabus content and assessment methods. In terms of syllabus content, I recommend a view that includes a variety of different views from the West and Africa.⁴⁶ This does not mean that all views

44 Miranda Fricker, *Epistemic Injustice: Power and the Ethics of Knowing* (Oxford Univ. Press, USA, 2009); Wareham, "A Duty to Explore African Ethics?"

45 Vorster and Quinn, "The 'Decolonial Turn'".

46 Surely, views from other parts of the world, such as Asia and Latin America, are also relevant. Nonetheless, this is beyond the scope of this article. I simply wish to show how to include more African elements in the syllabus.

have to always be represented. For example, in an African studies program, it seems unnecessary to include a philosophy of religion model which includes Western views. Hence, I would like to offer a possible syllabus. The suggested module aims at addressing the exclusion of African views and, by doing this, it is also encompassing other traditions beyond Theism, such as Panentheism, which are becoming increasingly relevant.⁴⁷⁴⁸

V. INTRODUCTION TO THE PHILOSOPHY OF RELIGION

Week 1: What is the Philosophy of Religion?

Reading:

Taliaferro, Charles, “Philosophy of Religion”

Luis Cordeiro-Rodrigues, Jonathan O Chimakonam “African Philosophy of Religion from a Global Perspective: Deities, Ancestors, Relationality and the Problem of Evil”

Week 2: The Ontological Argument

Reading:

Anselm of Canterbury, “The Ontological Argument”

Gaunilo, “On Behalf of the Fool”

Week 3: Cosmological and Design Arguments

Reading:

Thomas Aquinas, “The Five Ways”

William Paley, “The Argument from Design”

Week 4: The Attributes of God: Western and African Theistic Views

47 John Culp, “Panentheism”, in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. Edward N. Zalta (Metaphysics Research Lab, Stanford Univ., 2020); Chad Meister, “Ancient and Contemporary Expressions of Panentheism”, *Philosophy Compass* 12, no. 9 (2017).

48 Pantheism ought also to be included in the syllabus. Nonetheless, unlike Theism and Panentheism, Pantheism is not very common in Africa.

Reading:

Thomas Aquinas, 'God is omnipotent'

Boethius, 'God is timeless.'

Desmond Tutu, 'God has a Dream', 1, 3, 4, 5

Week 5: Panentheism and the Limited God View**Reading:**

Ada Agada 'Bewaji and Fayemi, 'On God, Omnipotence and Evil'

Luís Cordeiro-Rodrigues, 'Mutability and Relationality: Towards an African Four-Dimensionalist Pan-Psychism'

Week 6: The Problem of Evil I: Historical Debates**Reading:**

David Hume, "The Argument from Evil"

Gottfried Leibniz, "Theodicy: A Defense of Theism"

Teodros Kiros, "Zera Yacob and Traditional Ethiopian Philosophy"

Week 7: The Problem of Evil II: Contemporary Theism and Atheism**Reading:**

Richard Swinburne, "Why God Allows Evil"

William L. Rowe, "Evil Is Evidence against Theistic Belief"

Week 8: The Problem of Evil III: African Concepts of God and Evil**Reading:**

Fayemi, Ademola. "Philosophical Problem of Evil: Response to E. O. Oduwole"

Bewaji, John A. 1998. "Olodumare: God in Yoruba Belief and the Theistic Problem of Evil"

Week 9: The Problem of Evil IV: African Panentheist Cosmology and Evil

Reading:

Jonathan Chimakonam & Amara Esther Chimakonam “Examining the logical argument of the problem of evil from an African perspective.”

Amara Esther Chimakonam, “Why the Problem of Evil Might not be a Problem after all in African Philosophy of Religion.”

Week 10: Religious Language**Reading:**

F.C. Copleston, “The Inadequacy of Analogy”

Rouyan Gu Comparing Concepts of God: Translating God in the Chinese and Yoruba Religious Contexts

Week 11: Religious Morality**Reading:**

McCord Adams, Marilyn. “Forgiveness: A Christian Model”

Tutu, Desmond. “No Future Without Forgiveness”, Chapters 1–3

Week 12: Exam Week

In this module, I apply two strategies to integrate African philosophical literature into the syllabus: I try to incorporate some African readings with Western ones in the same class and have some classes fully dedicated to African thought. In week 1, I discuss the meaning of the philosophy of religion and include a reading which argues that the field has been over-focused on Western views. I thus make a case for decolonising it.⁴⁹ In weeks 2 and 3, I do not include African literature because there has been no work here (to my knowledge) discussing God’s existence. In week 4, I discuss the attributes of God according to Theists. This week I include Desmond Tutu’s view, which is similar to traditional Theism but understands God as a God of harmony.⁵⁰ Then, in week 5, I teach two salient views in Africa: African Panentheism and God as

49 Luis Cordeiro-Rodrigues and Chimakonam, “African Philosophy of Religion from a Global Perspective”.

50 Desmond Tutu, *God Has A Dream: A Vision of Hope for Our Times* (Ebury Digital, 2011).

an imperfect entity. I would primarily focus on West African perspectives, such as the Kongolesse and Yoruba religions.⁵¹ Week 6 starts with a historical discussion of the problem of evil, including classical texts from the Western philosophical tradition and the thought of Ethiopian philosopher, Zera Yacob. Weeks 7 to 9 engage with contemporary debates on the problem of evil. Week 7 discusses Western contemporary Theist philosophers.⁵² Week 8 considers the problem of evil from the African viewpoint that holds that God does not have Omni-properties.⁵³ In week 9 the focus is on the African Panentheistic cosmological viewpoint about evil. According to this perspective, all aspects of reality are self-insufficient and that evil exists as a necessity for existence.⁵⁴ In week 10, I combine Western debates on religion and philosophy of language with African intellectual discussions on colonial legacies in the philosophy of religion. Finally, in week 11 I discuss religious morality by comparing the moral thought of Tutu with the views of Marilyn McCord Adams.⁵⁵

VI. CONCLUSION

In this article, I responded to Schellenberg and Draper's call for renewing the field of philosophy of religion. This is an important, honorable, and legitimate goal and I not only agree with their diagnosis but also with many of their solutions. My criticism is not that their views are incorrect, but rather that they are incomplete. Schellenberg and Draper have missed an important element, the exclusion of non-Westerns from the field and how decolonization needs to make part of the renewal they propose. I have therefore offered some suggestions on how to include in the syllabi one tradition of philosophy of religion that has been largely neglected: the African philosophy of religion.

51 Ada Agada, "Bewaji and Fayemi On God, Omnipotence and Evil", *Filosofia Theoretica* 11, no. 1 (2022).

52 Swinburne, *Providence and the Problem of Evil*.

53 Fayemi, "Philosophical Problem of Evil"; Bewaji, "Olodumare".

54 A. E. Chimakonam, "Why the Problem of Evil Might Not Be a Problem after All in African Philosophy of Religion"; Jonathan O. Chimakonam and Amara Esther Chimakonam, "Examining the Logical Argument of the Problem of Evil from an African Perspective", *Religious Studies*, July (Cambridge Univ. Press, 2022); Asouzu, *The Method and Principles of Complementary Reflection in and Beyond African Philosophy*.

55 Desmond Tutu, *No Future Without Forgiveness* (Image, 2000); Marilyn McCord Adams, *Horrendous Evils and the Goodness of God* (Cornell Univ. Press, 2000).

Further research should try to be even more inclusive and make recommendations on how to include Latin American, Asian, and other forms of religion in the syllabi.

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