

means sharing resources with them, gaining more understanding and engaging in co-operative practices.

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**Rob Lovering. *God and Evidence*. Bloomsbury, 2013.**

In his book 'God and Evidence: Problems for Theistic Philosophers' Rob Lovering surveys and criticizes various views held among theistic philosophers which he calls defenders of a philosophical Alamo; with theists outnumbered 15% to 85%. The 15% can further be divided among three categories: theistic inferentialists, theistic noninferentialists and theistic fideists. He defines theistic inferentialists as: '(...) philosophers who believe that (a) God exists, (b) there is inferential probabilifying evidence of God's existence, and (c) this evidence is discoverable not simply in principle, but in practice.' (p. 3); theistic noninferentialists as: '(...) philosophers who believe that (a) God exists, (b) there is noninferential probabilifying evidence of God's existence, and (c) this evidence is discoverable not simply in principle, but in practice.' (p. 3); and theistic fideists as: '(...) philosophers who believe that (a) God exists, (b) there is no discoverable probabilifying evidence of God's existence, but (c) it is acceptable – morally, if not otherwise – to have faith that God exists.' (p. 3). For the distinction between inferential and noninferential evidence he quotes John Bishop: 'A proposition's truth is inferentially evident when its truth is correctly inferable (...) from other propositions whose truth is accepted; a proposition's truth is non-inferentially (basically) evident when its truth is acceptable (...) without being derived by inference from other evidentially established truths.' (as quoted by Lovering on p. 6). Later on, the noninferential evidence seems roughly to coincide with religious experiences.

The main problem for theistic inferentialists, according to Lovering, is that they have not succeeded in convincing their atheistic academic peers and this is a problem for their defining beliefs. He goes on to list a number of possible solutions which he dismisses as inadequate. The 'adequate' solutions Lovering proposes are that one or more of theistic inferentialists' defining beliefs are false or that one or more of the defining beliefs is cognitively meaningless and thereby neither true nor false.

The most interesting part of the book is the discussion of theistic noninferentialists. Lovering's problem for theistic noninferentialists is the 'problem of the hiddenness of God'. He borrows this idea from John Schellenberg who argued that the fact that to many people God is hidden, renders the existence of God unlikely. Lovering then goes on to state Michael J. Murray's 'soul making defense of divine hiddenness' and argues that it falls short because God's hiddenness causes some of us to lose our ability to develop morally significant characters through inculpable ignorance of the moral status of actions. If God is hidden, so are his commandments and therefore absence of God implies absence of knowledge of morality. Inculpable ignorance undercuts moral soul-making because developing morally significant characters with knowledge of the moral status of actions is impossible. By this line of reasoning, Lovering claims to have refuted Murray's argument.

Theistic fideists face a moral problem. Lovering does not claim that believing in God without evidence is wrong in itself, but it is when it causes harm to others. Given his 'inculpable ignorance argument' from section two, Lovering's appeal to common sense morality is somewhat surprising. It appears that the moral status of actions is not hidden for Lovering (Lovering being an atheist) while God is. So apparently God's hiddenness does not necessarily imply hiddenness of morality and moral soul-making is possible when God is hidden. In cases where a belief will affect others, one should proportion his beliefs to the evidence because this is the only doxastic practice that has proven itself to be nonarbitrarily reliable. Finally, Lovering adds a number of problems for all three varieties of theistic philosophers. The most interesting of these is his (not so new) argument for the impossibility of divine omniscience. He argues the notion of omniscience is incoherent because a being which has all possible propositional knowledge cannot know what it is like not to know something; and therefore lacks experiential knowledge.

In his first section Lovering misses the point that theistic inferentialists' defining beliefs do not state that the evidence will convince (the majority of) all philosophers. Lovering's use of the word 'probabilifying' signals that the evidence will leave room for rejection because the evidence is not conclusive. It is not unlikely that nontheistic philosophers apply different or higher standards for evidence (e.g. that the evidence be scientific). Furthermore, Lovering's argumentation seems to presuppose that the burden of proof is on the theist (maybe because they are the minority position in philosophy). Especially Alvin Plantinga has argued against

this position. The ‘inculpable ignorance argument’ is interesting because it rekindles the discussion on the relation between moral norms and the existence of God. By claiming the moral status of actions is hidden when God is hidden he seems to deny people are able to know what actions are morally right or wrong without God. Lovering thus defends the claim that if we do not know whether God exists, we do not know which actions are morally right or wrong (or neutral). This seems further than most atheists are willing to go. Concerning theistic fideists, he does not elaborate on how belief in God without evidence harms others and why the evidentialist doxastic practice does not. Strangely enough, Lovering makes no mention of Alvin Plantinga or other proponents of reformed epistemology, whereas they represent the most widely discussed theory of why belief in God without evidence is a decent approach.

Lovering’s book is interesting, not so much for his overview of theistic positions which he does not develop enough, but for his own arguments against theism. Especially his ‘inculpable ignorance argument’ has real potential for rekindling the debate about the hiddenness of God.

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**Paul M. Gould. *Beyond the Control of God: Six Views on the Problem of God and Abstract Objects* (Bloomsbury Studies in Philosophy of Religion). Bloomsbury, 2014.**

In the introduction of *Beyond the Control of God?: Six Views on the Problem of God and Abstract Objects*, Paul Gould introduces an inconsistent triad that philosophers who endorse both the existence of abstract objects and theism will have to face (p. 2). The inconsistent triad goes as follows:

- Abstract objects exist. [Platonism]
- If abstract objects exist, then they are dependent on God.
- If abstract objects exist, then they are independent of God.

By God, Gould specifies that he has in mind ‘a personal being who is worthy of worship (which is in line with perfect being theology)’, and by abstract objects, he has in mind such terms and predicates as ‘property’, ‘proposition’, ‘relation’, ‘set’, ‘possible world’, ‘number’, and the like (p. 1). Gould thinks that by denying one of the options in the above triad, one