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BOOK REVIEWS AND NOTICES

AGAINST THEISTIC PERSONALISM: WHAT MODERN EPISTEMOLOGY DOES TO CLASSICAL THEISM

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Abstract. Is God a person, like you and me eventually, but only much better and without our human deficiencies? When you read some of the philosophers of religion, including Richard Swinburne, Alvin Plantinga, or Open Theists, God appears as such a person, in a sense closer to Superman than to the Creator of Heaven and Earth. It is also a theory that a Christian pastoral theology today tends to impose, insisting that God is close to us and attentive to all of us. But this modern account of God could be a deep and even tragic mistake. One God in three persons, the formula of the Trinity, does not mean that God is a person. On this matters we need an effort in the epistemology of theology to examine more precisely what we can pretend to know about God, and especially how we could pretend to know that God is person.

When saying the Lord's Prayer, a Christian addresses a prayer to God which is a succession of requests almost like a rosary: "Thy will be done, Thy Kingdom come, Give us this day our daily bread, forgive us our trespasses, lead us not into temptation, deliver us from evil." And yet, who other than a person would we make such requests to? When talking to an animal ("Heel!") or a machine ("Are you going to work now or what?"), we act *as if* these were people, but we know that isn't the case and would indeed be very surprised to get a reply other than a bark, a *miaow* or a programmed machine reply. Thus a prayer addressed to God by a Christian seems to imply something regarding the nature of God, namely that He is a person. And this seems also to mean that relations between God and His creatures are interpersonal.

Let us call this theory "theistic personalism". It can be found in both the most common religious practice and in the sophisticated philosophy of religion or theology.

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It seems to me that God being a person is one of the most significant assumptions in pastoral theology today. Sermons insist on the proximity of God and often compare divine love to family tenderness between parents and children. Christian religious discourse encourages us to address ourselves to God, to "live in His presence" — an oft-used formula — or to place Him "deep within our heart". There is a certain sentimentalism in advocating that we should pray to the God-person rather than to a transcendent, absolute, eternal, unchanging and impassive God. Prayer enables us to "enter into communion with God", so we are told, and there is talk of a "dialogue with the Creator" or "meeting the Lord". Recently I heard a priest finish his sermon by saying: "During Lent, let us live intensely our relationship with God through our daily prayers and let us hear His addresses to us which he asks for us to listen to". The actual possibility of the religious experience thus seems to involve such a relationship and therefore that God *should be* a person, and even a person who would ask me to listen to Him. On the radio, a few years ago, we used to hear this song by an American singer, Joan Osborne, which said:

What if God was one of us?

Just a slob like one of us?

Just a stranger on the bus

Trying to make His way home?

A person is familiar to us because we are all people. If we are in the image of God, then this would mean this kind of sharing between the Divine person and human beings exists.

That God is a person is not just an implicit theory in the most common pastoral theology today — it is also an evident fact for contemporary philosophers and theologians like Richard Swinburne, Alvin Plantinga or William Hasker and also those who support "Open Theism". Their *theistic personalism* has *even* led them to renounce fundamental doctrines of classical theism such as divine simplicity, immutability and impassibility or that of a divine eternity understood as existing outside time itself. These doctrines were however those of theologians of some importance like Saint Augustine, Boethius, Saint Anselm, Maimonides or Saint Thomas.

Let us consider simplicity. If God is simple, then He does not possess the attributes we assign to Him, but is identical to these attributes. If a person has properties we attribute to them such as wisdom or beauty, for example, that

person is not identical to the properties possessed, because others may possess them too. For Aquinas, God is almighty or perfectly good because He is all-powerful and of perfect goodness, and not because He possesses a quality that others possess or may possess. God is not therefore made up of His attributes. He is simple. This is such a fundamental doctrine that Saint Thomas dedicated question 3 of the *Prima Pars* of his *Summa Theologiæ* to it, immediately after proving the existence of God and before his ideas about the attributes of God.

However is it possible to *simultaneously* say that God is simple, not composed and that He is a person? Firstly, a person is not simple — people have attributes like wisdom and beauty, for example, which can be both acquired and lost. Secondly, certain attributes of God seem incompatible with the status of a person, such as immutability or eternity, understood as existing outside time. A person changes by becoming aware of events and trying to improve things. That person is therefore within time, not eternal and above all not outside time. How could God be emotionless? If we have an interpersonal relationship with Him, then He must surely sympathize and suffer with us or be moved by our misfortunes and so forth.

Let us attempt to characterize theistic personalism's main claims.

1. A person is a being with an essentially mental life made up of mental states such as thoughts (mental representations) or desires.
2. Human beings are linked to their bodies in a contingent (and temporary) manner.
3. God as a person is immaterial but has thoughts (representations) and desires, such as those which may be attributed to a person (according to a dualist theory of the person which firmly distinguishes between the mind or mental dimension and the body or physical dimension).
4. The difference between a human being and a divine person is that God does not have the limitations of non-divine people when they think and desire something.

Swinburne puts it like this at the start of his book *The Coherence of Theism*:

> By a theist I understand a man who believes that there is a God. By a "God" he understands something like a "person without a body (i.e. a spirit) who is eternal, free, able to do anything, knows everything, is perfectly good, is the

> proper object of human worship and obedience, the creator and sustainer of the universe".[1]

I would now like to compare Swinburne's views with what I read as a child in my catechism textbook:

> *Question*. What is God?
>
> *Answer*. God is an eternal, independent, immutable and infinite spirit, who is present everywhere, sees everything, can do everything, who created and governs all things.

What difference is there between this classical catechism (written by M. l'Abbé Cheriou in the XIXth century, even if I am not quite as old as that of course) and Swinburne's ideas? In my catechism book, there was no question of God being a person. The fact that God was a spirit in fact implies that He cannot be a person. But what difference does it make if we use the notion of a person to discuss the nature of God? Surely it is more tangible. Surely we gain in proximity. One might say to a child: "You see, my little dear, God is a person, like you or me, but He is the Creator. He is eternal, absolutely free, able to do everything; He knows everything; He is perfectly good while we have our limitations, don't we? Well God doesn't!" If the child says that God is therefore like his grandfather then all that needs to be added is: "Oh, that's even better!"

Is it really however possible, without thinking twice, to understand God as a person? And even if we say that He is a person without any of the defects of the other people we know. Brian Davies claims the following:

> The formula "God is a person" is … a relatively recent one. I believe that its first occurrence in English comes in the report of a trial of someone called John Biddle (b. 1615), who in 1644 was brought before the magistrates of Gloucester, England, on a charge of heresy. His "heresy" was claiming that God is a person. Biddle was explicitly defending Unitarian beliefs about God, already in evidence among Socinians outside England.[2]

How could something once considered heretic, according to Davies, become such a fundamental part of both the most common pastoral theory and the theism of certain of the most reputed religious philosophers and theologians?[3]

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1 Richard Swinburne, *The Coherence of Theism* (Clarendon Press, [1977] 1993), 1.

2 Brian Davies, *The Reality of God and the Problem of Evil* (Continuum, 2006), 59.

3 E.g., John Schellenberg says that "theism … develops its entire understanding of the divine from the idea of personhood", *The Hiddenness Argument: Philosophy's New Challenge*

It should be noted that Davies situates the birth of theistic personalism in the middle of the XVIIth century. My hypothesis is that it is not at all contingent to consider that this theistic personalism was a contemporary of the appearance of a certain philosophical conception, which was to be a great success, though disputed. This concerns what it is to be a human being. Let us suppose that someone wonders "but what am I then?" In the middle of the XVIIth century, the response is now "A thing that thinks". And if that person should ask "What is that?" the reply is: "A thing that doubts, understands, affirms, denies, is willing, is unwilling, and also which imagines and has sensory perceptions". I am citing Descartes in the second of his *Meditations on First Philosophy*. A human being is a mind united with a body, but what makes a human being is the mind. This theory is quite new at this epoch. It replaces another: human beings are rational creatures, beings made up of an immaterial soul and a material body, which together form a unique substance. There is a considerable difference — a human being was an object made up of two metaphysical parts — a soul and a body. It has, mainly with Descartes[4], become a mind, a conscience, a self. And so, human being is now, like God, a spirit! This is how Swinburne explains it:

> A person is a being who has (or, when fully developed, will have) powers (to perform intentional actions, that is, actions which he or she means to do), beliefs, and free will (to choose among alternative actions without being compelled by irrational forces to do one rather than the other); when the beliefs and actions include ones of some sophistication (such as using language). I shall assume … that humans do have free will and so are persons. Ordinary human persons exist for a limited period of time, dependent on physical causes (their bodies and especially their brains) for their capacities to exercise their powers, form beliefs, and make choices. God is supposed to be unlimited in all these respects, and not to depend on anything for His existence or capacities.[5]

Swinburne begins by defining a *sort* of being: people. These are characterized by having a cerebral life, which is intentional, and of their own free will. People are therefore thinking beings with wills. We are submerged in an assumed dualism. Swinburne distinguishes between two kinds of beings: people and God.

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to Belief in God (OUP, 2015), 21. It is at least historically very debatable. And even today, there are still theists who do not think at all so.

4 I am aware that there were other philosophers and theologians long before Descartes to be tempted by this conception of man, as a spirit, a consciousness, a self. But Descartes is the first to have had such a success!

5 Richard Swinburne, *Was Jesus God?* (OUP, 2008), 6.

The difference is independence regarding physical causes. Man depends on these while God does not.

Let us therefore summarize the approach of theistic personalists. What do we know about human beings? They think and can make free choices, their time is limited, they are dependent on their bodies and they have moral defects. What do we know of God? To reply, it seems enough to abstractly extrapolate from the notion of a person to one particular person, who also thinks and makes free choices, but without the cognitive and decision-related limitations which humans, with their temporal limitations, manifest. God is a "zero-defect person" who requires no corrections. This approach is characteristic of *theistic personalism* and considers God to be a *superlative person*.

One arrives at a position of theistic personalism by at least implicitly following the tradition of modern Cartesian and Lockean epistemology, and more specifically the notion of the person that this tradition promoted. That is why I am talking about theistic personalism rather than personalistic theism. Philosophers who adopt theistic personalism start from the notion of person, not from God. And they conceive God as a super-person, a person without all the defects of human persons. For them there are two kinds of persons: God (or the divine persons in the tri-personal God) and human beings. They are both characterized by a mind. But in the human case, the mind is connected, altogether contingently, to a body, and happily not in the God case.

When Swinburne considers what makes a person, he characterizes it through a kind of thought experiment[6], free will and also the limitations de-

6 There is a passage by Swinburne which exemplifies perfectly the temptation to start from what we, human beings, are, and to arrive, simply by suppressing our defects, to God as a person: "Image yourself, for example, gradually ceasing to be affected by alcohol or drugs, your thinking being equally coherent however men mess about with your brain. Imagine too that you cease to feel any pains, aches, thrills … You also find yourself able to utter words which can be heard anywhere, without moving any material objects. However, although yourself gaining these strange powers, you remain otherwise the same … Surely anyone can thus conceive of himself becoming an omnipresent spirit" (Swinburne, *The Coherence of Theism*, 106–7). Paul Helm says this example is "hilarious" (Paul Helm, "Anthropomorphism Protestant Style", in *Whose God? Which Tradition? The Nature of Belief in God*, ed. Dewi Z. Phillips (Ashgate, 2008), 139). It is as if Swinburne's method was taken in a book untitled "Becoming God in ten lessons", with the first lesson on "omnipresence" (because it begins with something quite easy). Why not try also to imagine acquiring perfect goodness and omniscience the same way? I let the question to know if the appeal to imagination in the passage is not purely rhetorical, because, in fact, we imagine simply nothing, I am afraid! (See the critique made in Peter van

rived from our own body. Being a person means being a *consciousness*. Personality is being able to reflect about mental states, thinking about oneself, examining one's own desires or forming free moral judgements. As Swinburne attributes his own theistic personalism to all theists, he even suggests that his notion of the person is what Aristotle and the Medieval philosophers would have described as the difference between rational souls and sensitive souls, between human beings and animals.[7] This is highly questionable. Neither Aristotle nor Saint Thomas characterizes human beings through the consciousness they have of themselves. For both of them, the specific difference of human beings is rationality and not at all consciousness. The concept of the person adopted by Swinburne is, typically, that of modern philosophy, a post-Cartesian concept which has invaded modern thought. Swinburne states that:

> It is because God's essential properties all follow from the very simple property of having pure, limitless, intentional power, that I claim that God is an individual of a very simple kind; certainly the simplest kind of person there can be.[8]

For Swinburne God is "the simplest kind of person there can be". The psychological notion of a person is decisive here rather than the notion of simplicity proposed, in a traditional way, by Aquinas. In Aquinas's account, simplicity means that there is nothing potential in God. God is *actus purus*. The notion of person does not appear at all! Swinburne explains that God is this superlative person who exists free of any metaphysical necessity: He is perfectly free, all-powerful and omniscient. But, this has nothing to do with God as a pure act, with no potentiality, which is absolutely simple and eternal (and not just without beginning or end), as in the (Athanasian, Augustinian, Anselmian and) Thomist tradition. In this tradition, God is not described as a being with intentional power, however pure. For theistic personalists, the notion of intentional power is however directly linked to the idea of a conscious experience which is also characteristic of human beings. The result is a deeply anthropomorphic account of God.

Inwagen, *God, Knowledge, and Mystery* (Cornell Univ. Press, 1988), 19–21) This passage shows adequately that a theistic personalist pretends that God is a person like us, but far better, far omnipresent, far omniscient, etc.

7 See Swinburne, *The Coherence of Theism*, 103.

8 Richard Swinburne, *The Christian God* (Clarendon Press, 1994), 154.

The claim that God is a person is thus not at all a simple way of reformulating classical theism, as Swinburne suggests. It is instead a whole other form of modern theism. It results from the role attributed to an epistemology in which the mind is understood as the consciousness of the self. It is that which would be proper to thought, will and, indeed, free will. After having explained that the doctrine of divine simplicity in the works of Irenaeus, Augustin and Anselm is paradoxical, and that Thomas sadly suffers from residues of Platonism, Swinburne claims that the unity of divine properties follows on from their inclusion in a sole simple property, namely always this "pure, limitless, intentional power"[9].

Theistic personalism would thus result from a theory whereby epistemology — thought as a theory of cognitive and intentional experience — is the foremost philosophy. We need to base our thought thereon, *even when considering the nature of God.* And so, if God is a person without the limitations of human beings, He behaves and must behave like a *decent* person. He should be benevolent and love all beings, which leads to the assumption that He changes and suffers. As for the moral justification of God, it must be shown that he is good, just, as a good person is. This idea also assumes that He is not a "hidden God" because a loving God could not despair of His creatures. He must therefore be attentive to what happens to human beings and there must be in the divine plan a reason for evil in the world. Evil, as John Hick[10] or Richard Swinburne[11] claim, has to become an appropriate means of achieving the best possible end.

How may theistic personalists defend their ideas against the sort of critique proposed here, saying that, finally, this theism results from the modern notion of person? They could perhaps express their views thus:

— You basically claim that theistic personalism, of which you make Swinburne the figurehead, is based on a modern conception of the person as consciousness, which is in reality epistemological and psychological. You consider that this leads to a conception of God, which you present as being anthropomorphic, let us say. Finally, this conception questions certain fundamental doctrines of classical theism (simplicity, for example, but we could

9 See Swinburne, *The Christian God*, 162.

10 John Hick, *Evil and the God of Love* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2010 [1966]), 372.

11 Richard Swinburne, *The Existence of God* (Clarendon Press, 2004), 252.

suppose also timelessness). However isn't that very theism rather difficult to defend with its notions of divine simplicity and existence outside time, which are bristling with paradoxes? Let us consider the theory that God does not possess attributes like goodness but *is* rather Goodness itself as it is claimed. As Alvin Plantinga puts it: "If God is a property, then He isn't a person but a mere abstract object; He has no knowledge, awareness, power, love or life" before adding that "so taken, the simplicity doctrine seems an utter mistake"[12]. Who can understand anything about the doctrine of divine simplicity or that of divine immutability? If this is the case, then isn't exporting in theological matters an epistemological conception of Man as consciousness rather a good thing? To return to prayer, you have not explained how we may address requests to God if He is not a person. In the Bible, surely God replies to prayers. If you reread the episode about the Exodus of Hebrews from Egypt, surely God's answers to Moses' prayers is the basis of the story! As Richard Swinburne said "If God had thus fixed His intentions 'from all eternity' He would be a very lifeless thing; not a person who reacts to men with sympathy or anger, pardon or chastening because He chooses to there and then"[13]. Christians are personalists because they pray, and expect the compassion shown by Christ from God himself. Another episode of the Bible, which would be otherwise inexplicable, was when Jesus brought Lazarus back to life because his family asked Him to; and Jesus cries because Lazarus is dead. Is He without emotion? Without counting all the occasions when Jesus sympathized with the sick and healed them. In these cases, God surely thinks one thing and then thinks another. He changes like we do. Otherwise how could He take a decision? And if He cannot take a decision, how could He be free? In reality, you are obsessed by this idea that psychophysical dualism is an unacceptable modern philosophy theory. And this therefore means that Man cannot be defined as a consciousness. I wonder if you have not a fixation on that supposed "modern mentalism" in epistemology, which is quite probably more your own invention than a historical reality.[14] (Perhaps this comes from your reading of Wittgenstein, and his so-called private language argument, and your

12 Alvin Plantinga, *Does God Have a Nature?* (Marquette Univ. Press, 1980), 47.

13 Swinburne, *The Coherence of Theism*, 221.

14 Would it not be the same as the traditional accusation among the Thomists of nominalism (of Ockham), which would gradually have gained all philosophical thought, and would be the basis of our modernity?

refusal of a certain account of the human being as a consciousness.[15]) But you are wrong: God really is a person in the sense that He is a person without a body and zero-defect, a pure mind, as Swinburne, Plantinga, Hasker and many others say or suggest, and as the most common pastoral theory today also rightly supposes. After all, is it not a good thing for a Christian to seek to be close to the Lord and wish to have a dialogue with him?

Let us return to Swinburne's passage quoted by this objector: "If God had thus fixed His intentions 'from all eternity' He would be a very lifeless thing; *not a person* who reacts to men with sympathy or anger, pardon or chastening because He chooses to there and then"[16]. It is true that the question of whether God suffers — whether He shares the suffering of His creatures and sympathizes with them — has invaded contemporary theology and generally, when discussed, the verdict is that, yes, He suffers. In fact, this is simply orthodoxy now for a lot of Protestant and Catholic theologians, including Karl Barth or Hans Urs von Balthasar, but also philosophers, and among them Nicholas Wolterstorff[17]. Of course, God suffers!, they say.[18] Classical theism is said to not provide an adequate reply, and this has led to a new understanding of God as a person with the same attention for others as human beings but, of course, *far better.*

What can be said in defence of the thesis that God is not a person? In this subject there is, however, a classical claim, expressed by Saint Anselm in Chapter VIII of the *Proslogion*: "How, then, are You merciful and not merciful, O Lord, unless it be that You are merciful in relation to us and not in relation to Yourself? In fact, You are [merciful] according to our way of looking at things and not according to Your way. For when You look upon us in our misery it is we who feel the effect of Your mercy, but You do not experience the feeling." It is because we are people — though perhaps not in the sense of

15 See Roger Pouivet, *After Wittgenstein, St. Thomas*, tr. by Michael S. Sherwin (St. Augustine's Press, 2008).

16 Swinburne, *The Coherence of Theism*, 221, my italics.

17 See Nicholas Wolterstorff, "Suffering Love" in *Philosophy and the Christian faith*, ed. Thomas V. Morris (Univ. of Notre Dame Press, 1988).

18 For a critique of this assertion, which has become obvious to many, see Herbert McCabe, "The Involvement of God", *New Blackfriars* 66, no. 785 (1985); Thomas G. Weinandy, *Does God Suffer?* (Univ. of Notre Dame Press, 2000).

the dualism defended by Swinburne, Plantinga or Hasker — that God is merciful. But it is not because *He* is a person.

If we can expect a little sympathy from our fellow creatures, because they are persons, does it make sense to wait for the same from God because He is also a person like them? Are we, I mean we human beings, in an ontological and above all *psychological continuum* with God, which would give sense to this expectation of God's sympathy for us? Does God display the characteristics of benevolence and love at the highest levels while these are present in human beings to a much lesser degree? No, because there is no *common standard* between God and ourselves. God is Goodness itself. He is not a good person and not even a *super-person*. In the same way He is not *a* being or *the Supreme Being* either, but He just IS ("He Who Is", as He himself said, *Exodus* 3: 14), without any qualifiers.

God is not a psychological consciousness, as we are supposed to be according to Modern philosophers. But He is not more a moral agent, as we are actually.[19] He is not the best among moral beings. As Herbert McCabe put it:

> It makes perfect sense to say both that it is not in the nature of God to suffer and also that it is not in the nature of God to lack the most intimate possible involvement with the sufferings of His creatures. To safeguard the compassion of God there is no need to resort to the idea that God as He surveys the history of mankind suffers with us in a literal sense — though in some spiritual way.[20]

Psalm 103 says: "The Lord is merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and plenteous in mercy". This is a metaphor; we have not to take it as a literal description of God's deepest thoughts! The metaphor is useful for our understanding of what we are in our relation to God as creatures, not to characterize God's personhood. Psalm 102 says: "For He hath looked down from the height of His sanctuary". But do we wonder if He has a good view from that height? Then in Psalm 103, God remembers that Man is but dust. Does that mean that He has a good memory, much better than our own, given that we forget our keys sometimes or do not remember to say "Happy Anniversary" to our loving wife (or husband)? If it is a metaphor to say that God looked down from the

19 See Davies, *The Reality of God,* chap. 4: "God's Moral Standing"; Brian Davies, "Is God a Moral Agent?", in *Whose God? Which Tradition? The Nature of Belief in God*, ed. Dewi Z. Phillips (Ashgate, 2008); Paul O'Grady, *Aquinas's Philosophy of Religion* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), 133.
20 Herbert McCabe, *God Still Matters* (Continuum, 2005), 46.

height of His sanctuary or that God remembers, it is *also* a metaphor to claim God to be sympathetic or even loving to people. It is another metaphor to say that God is never distant or uninvolved regarding His creatures — simply because we only exist because of His act as the Creator. We know that the victims of evil are never without God, even if saying this to a victim is no consolation. This probably provides no explanation of evil either.[21] But why should we succeed in explaining how God can be led to accept that there is evil in the world? Why should we pose the problem of his moral integrity? "My point is, Brian Davies says, that God seems to permit what good people would not permit and that this, to say the least, puts an enormous question mark over the view that we have evidence for him being good as people are good"[22]. What we call "the problem of evil" could lead us to doubt that God is a person without all our defects, and not to try to understand how evil could find a place in the providential plan of God as a person.

In God, being, knowing, loving and creating are identical: this is the doctrine of divine simplicity. In God, being and doing are the same thing. This is why the model of the person as consciousness who is capable of thought and making decisions after examining what could justifiably be believed or be best to do is a metaphor. But it could even be a *bad* metaphor; or a *deceiving* metaphor. Especially, if we do not understand it *is* a metaphor. It seems untrustworthy as it derives from an epistemology which itself can be greatly criticized for its ideas about the nature of human beings who are understood as being consciousnesses. This is clearly the case if the metaphor leads to what was considered, according Brian Davies, heresy.

How would it be possible to save the Divine person from blame regarding the existence of evil in the world or even claim that a God-person could exist when evil exists in the world? Of course, Saint Augustin, Saint Anselm and Saint Thomas were not ignorant of thought on evil, but it was not central as it is considered now by philosophers of religion, but also by theologians. The fact that evil is a *problem,* and even *the* problem for theists, and that it is so decisive an issue that the philosophy of religion is interested in it, as Swinburne, Plantinga and many others think, result from this anthropomorphic account of God as a person. The idea of an anthropomorphic God came about when the distinc-

21 See Davies, *The Reality of God*, 234–35.

22 Brian Davies, *Thinking About God* (Wipf & Stock, 2010), 224.

tion between God and His creature became the difference between the unlimited and the limited in the exercise of thought and will. This personalization of God provided a certain perspective on issues supposed to be central to thought about theism. Thus, Swinburne can say in the introduction to *Providence and the Problem of Evil*: "The theist maintains that God … could not achieve some of his good purposes except by means of a delay before they are achieved, and these and other good purposes except by means of allowing evils to occur".[23] God, as a person actually, organizes things by reflecting on how to achieve it at best. Like you and me, God has means to achieve His ends.

Another case of anthropomorphism would be John Schellenberg's idea of a hidden God.[24] God remains hidden to many human beings who cannot have any knowledge of Him. It would be wrong of an omniscient and all-powerful God to remain hidden to anyone at all but a perfectly good God cannot do anything wrong. The right conclusion seems to be that this God is in fact non-existent rather than hidden. But the hidden God argument refers to the God-person again, the God who thinks and wants things exactly like a person, since He is one, but without the limitations. It would be bad for such a person to remain hidden. Finally, one would have to doubt the existence of this hidden God. But should we not especially doubt the fact that the Christian God is a person who would hide? Is "Hidden" a term that can qualify God in the sense in which it qualifies a person?

Also is it not even slightly strange to claim that *a person*, if God is one, is infinite, the creator of the world, almighty, omniscient and absolutely good? Swinburne claims God to be a person without a body who is eternal, free and capable of doing anything: a person who knows everything, is perfectly good and is the appropriate subject for human praise and obedience, is the Creator and the basis for the existence of the universe. However this so called "person", simply, is *not* a person at all. The adjectives used to characterize Him are superlatives but they are still totally unsuitable for characterizing a person. Totally false and unsuitable adjectives do exist such as "fake" in the expression "fake passport". A fake passport is quite simply not a passport. In the same way as a

23 Richard Swinburne, *Providence and the Problem of Evil* (Clarendon Press, 1998), 2.

24 See Schellenberg, *The Hiddenness Argument*. Schellenberg's argument seems to me to be valid in the case of personalist theism (or theistic personalism), but I do not think it is so powerful against classical theism of Saint Athanasius, Saint Augustine, Saint Anselm and Saint Thomas. It presupposes a Swinburnian God!

fake passport simply is not a passport, so a person who created the world or is all-powerful cannot be a person, even and because when that person is perfect. Speaking of God as a person is giving into theological confusion.

Conversely there is nothing absurd in saying that God is *personal* but not a person.[25] Firstly, it is possible for God not to be a person without that meaning He has no intelligence, will, omniscience, freedom and love. This means that God is *distinct* from His creation. Secondly, saying that the Christian God is personal amounts to refusing pantheism and panentheism. Thirdly, saying that God is personal does not mean claiming He is a person, but that Jesus Christ is the son of God and the son of Man. Christ is not a person *among others* but *a person* of the Trinity. However He is not God *because* He is a person; Christ is a human person with a human nature but nevertheless He is the Saviour, He is God and is not a human being. So, the inference from a personal God to God as a person is not necessary. Davies says: "to deny that God is a person as we are persons is no more to say that God is impersonal than denying that he has a body is to deny that he can be truly referred to as a father"[26].

Is it not that the anthropomorphism of theistic personalism is linked to the clear demand in Swinburne's work (and many other philosophers) that God be *comprehensible*? And for that, He needs to be a person like us (which also assumes that we are understandable too in the sense of the term adopted by Swinburne, but it is another problem). Also, as Brian Davies puts it:

> God as talked about in the mainstream of Judeo-Christianity is incomprehensible, unimaginable, and quite unlike human beings. He is also unchangeable and the Creator of all things — this meaning that nothing but God exists uncaused. On this view God defies classification. And to talk of Him as a person in Swinburne's sense is nonsense or idolatrous.[27]

This judgement seems severe. However, no one doubts that we do not have an experience and knowledge of God which could be compared to those we have of the world around us. No-one doubts that, apart from the rational evi-

25 See Eleonore Stump, *The God of the Bible and the God of the Philosophers* (Marquette Univ. Press, 2016). I interpret Stump's book as showing not only that we can but we must understand the relationship between man and God as personal — especially through Christ — but I do not believe it implies that God is, metaphysically, a person. To move from one to the other is, in my opinion, the error of theistic personalism.

26 Davies, *Thinking About God*, 152.

27 Brian Davies, "A Timeless God?", *New Blackfriars* 64, no. 755 (1983): 217.

dence of God's existence, our knowledge of Him consists of what He is not rather than what He actually is.[28] Our knowledge of God remains shrouded in profound mystery, as one readily grasps in reading in any catechism what is said of the Great Mysteries of faith.[29] With reference to Dionysius's *Divine Names,* Saint Thomas commented that no name or complex explanation (not even simple intuition or a science derived from the process by which conclusions become principles) which are attributed to God suffice to describe Him totally.[30] This would mean that identifying Him as a person is deceiving. By giving too much importance and value to the epistemology of the conscious subject in our understanding of God, this leads us to claim a kind of clarity that is not the right one. It must be clear that God is mysterious, and not that he is a person without our defects. This epistemology and philosophy of the mind, which appeared in the XVIIth century — with the philosophical success we know about — is not at all the norm for intelligibility of the nature of God.[31]

Let us return finally to the question of prayer with which we began this article. Despite the arguments proposed against theistic personalism, if we pray, ask things from God above all, and if those prayers are petitions, God indeed

28 The classical reference is Aquinas's *Summa Theologiæ,* Ia, 3, prol. On this passage, Denys Turner says : "Nothing is easier, to begin with, than to see that, in his discussion of the divine simplicity in question 3, what is demonstrated is not some comprehensible divine attribute, some affirmation which marks out God from everything else, but some marker of what constitutes the divine *in*comprehensibility, as distinct from the incomprehensibility of everything else." (Denys Turner, *Faith, Reason and the Existence of God* (CUP, 2004), 41) We do not know how "other" God is. That is what makes God unknowable for us. We have no common scale to determinate how far He is from what we understand. But if you say that God is a person you have such a scale.

29 Aquinas says that "in this life we do not know what God is [even] through the revelation of grace, and so [by grace] we are made one with him as to something unknown" (*Summa Theologiæ,* Ia, 12, 13 ad1). Turner's commentary is: "For even if in truth Christians do know by grace and revelation what the philosopher can never know — and they do — such knowledge as faith teaches us can serve only to draw us into a darkness of God which is deeper than it could possibly be for the pagan; it is deepened, not relieved, by the Trinity, intensified by the incarnation, not dispelled." (Turner, *Faith, Reason and the Existence of God*, 43)

30 See Saint Thomas, *In Dionysii De divinis nominibus,* I, 3, § 77. See also Gregory P. Rocca, *Speaking the Incomprehensible God: Thomas Aquinas on the Interplay of Positive and Negative Theology* (Catholic Univ. of America Press, 2004).

31 This in no way implies the thesis of divine ineffability! Between theistic personalism and apophatic ineffabilism, there is the traditional possibility of saying what God is not rather than what He is.

must be a person. But not at all! If our prayers do have a meaning, we surely are addressing a loving and personal being. But it does not mean that God is a person. As Brian Davies put it, "given that the course of creation derives from His will, and given that Christians are instructed to ask for things from God, it would seem natural to turn to God as one who is able to bring about what one desires"[32]. So, to pray is a perfectly rational behaviour. But why God, as the one who is able to bring what one desires, would be a person because we pray Him? Why address him would *suppose* it to be a person as we are, a temporal agent acting in things in the universe but without all our defects? That God knows and understands our desires, and that He wants something for us, does not imply that He is a person. And I hope that what I said in the previous pages provide at least some reasons to think why He is not a person.

When we pray, there even would be no point in asking *a person* for the things we request of God, because we pray to ask for that which we can ask no-one else, and especially no person on Earth for. We do not pray to God in the same way that we would ask something from a person who is able to offer it to us, or instead of asking what we want from that person. For anyone who thinks that God is the Creator, omnipotent, and that nothing in the world is done independently of His will, it is perfectly reasonable to pray, and to ask Him. But, it is precisely that one does not think that God is the kind of person that one has to convince to do something.

Sure we can pray for an excellent grade at an exam, or that the university council gives us a promotion. But then we do not expect God to do exactly what a person would do for us to have the exam — to give us the right solution of a problem of mathematics. We do not expect God to do exactly what a person would do to help us to have a promotion — to convince a committee that we merit it. We ask God because the help of a person seems not enough, or that the person who could help us needs herself God's grace. We are not confident that our fellow persons would do the right think without this grace. If someone prays for the healing of his child, it is not because he believes that the medical doctor is unable to save his boy or his girls. (He can even be convinced that the doctor is the best, that he has not the defects of the other doctors.) It is neither that he thinks that God is a super-doctor, better in medicine that the doctors he knows. If God is asked, it is because he is not a person at

32 Davies, *Thinking About God*, 316.

all, but absolutely different from anyone to whom he could ask for help. God is not prayed as a person, even not as a person without the limitations of human persons, but in a sense because he is not a person and not at the place of other persons. As Thomas Aquinas says:

> For we pray not that we may change the Divine disposition, but that we may impetrate that which God has disposed to be fulfilled by our prayers in other words "that by asking, men may deserve to receive what Almighty God from eternity has disposed to give," as Gregory says (Dial. i, 8). … We need to pray to God, not in order to make known to Him our needs or desires but that we ourselves may be reminded of the necessity of having recourse to God's help in these matters. … Our motive in praying is not that we may change the Divine disposition, but that, by our prayers, we may obtain what God has appointed…. God bestows many things on us out of His liberality, even without our asking for them: but that He wishes to bestow certain things on us at our asking, is for the sake of our good, namely, that we may acquire confidence in having recourse to God, and that we may recognize in Him the Author of our goods.[33]

Clearly our reasons to pray are not the kind of reasons we could have to ask a person for something he can provide us! A prayer is a causal action on a person. But there is no causal action on God, which has the least meaning! It is also why Aquinas says:

> By praying man surrenders his mind to God, since he subjects it to Him with reverence and, so to speak, presents it to Him. … Wherefore just as the human mind excels exterior things, whether bodily members, or those external things that are employed for God's service, so too, prayer surpasses other acts of religion.[34]

Herbert McCabe says that "maybe the way we understand God is 'whatever makes sense of prayer'"[35]. When we pray the doctor to do something for a child, we are not praying in the same sense than when we pray God for the healing of a child. It is likely that there is an analogy between the two uses of the term "to pray" in the first and in the second situation. But the analogy is not grounded on the identity of nature — they would share personhood — between a medical doctor and God. Our prayers do not *alter* God, they do not make him do something that he would probably not have done otherwise, or

33 Aquinas, *Summa Theologiæ,* IIaIIae, 83, 2.
34 Aquinas, *Summa Theologiæ,* IIaIIae, 83, 2, ad. 3.
35 McCabe, *God Still Matters*, 217.

change his mind. Yet this is what we expect from a prayer made to a person. That we in the Lord's prayer say "Thy will be done" shows it is certainly not a question of changing a person's opinion or of telling him what it would be desirable to do. It is that we are not addressing ourselves to a person, Zeus or Apollo, who are very special persons, but to God.[36]

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It seems to me that here we have no good arguments to say that God is a person simply because He is personal and is not a material reality. This way of expressing oneself is linked to a very controversial doctrine, the psychophysical dualism, in the domain of philosophy of the mind. It has damaging consequences in rational theology as soon as one asks oneself about the divine action, the problem of evil, the question of petitionary prayer, and so on. At the very least, a serious doubt about the attribution to God of a personality, in the usual sense, could be a good method when we approach these themes.

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36 That God is not a person does not change the fact that Jesus, the incarnate God, is a human person. This is nothing but the doctrine of the Incarnation. Jesus Christ has two natures. But let him be man and God does not make that God is a person. That the Son is a person of the Trinity, and the Father a person of the Trinity too, as is the Holy Spirit, is also a different question than whether Jesus is a person, in the sense discussed in this article.

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TWO EPISTEMOLOGICAL ARGUMENTS FOR THE EXISTENCE OF GOD

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Abstract. In the article I outline two epistemological theistic arguments. The first one starts from the dilemma between our strong conviction that we possess some knowledge of the world and the belief that there are some serious reasons which undermine it. In my opinion theism opens the possibility of the way out of the dilemma. The second argument depends on the premise that in every time every worldly thing is actually perceived or known. I support it by four considerations and claim that the simplest explanation of the epistemic 'non-loneliness' of the world is the existence of the Supreme Cogniser.

Epistemological arguments for the existence of God start with premises concerning human cognition or knowledge and lead to the conclusion that God exists.[1] They can be summarized by the thought-provoking maxim *if knowledge then God*[2] which states a logical connection between the existence of human knowledge and the existence of God as the necessary condition of knowledge. These arguments, although they have been present in the history of philosophy at least since the time of St Augustine, are not so popular as classical (metaphysical) theistic ones but they are rooted in modern philosophy, especially in Cartesian and post-Cartesian epistemology.[3] Below I will outline two of them:

1 I thank Marcin Iwanicki and all participants of the conference 'Epistemology and Theology' for interesting discussions which helped me to prepare this article. I paid attention to the epistemological theistic arguments due to reading the inspiring doctoral dissertations of Piotr K. Szałek and Miłosz Hołda.

2 James Anderson, "If Knowledge Then God: The Epistemological Theistic Arguments of Alvin Plantinga and Cornelius Van Til", *Calvin Theological Journal* 40, no. 1 (2005): 49.

3 Cf. Rene Descartes' confession: 'Thus I see plainly that the certainty and truth of all knowledge depends strictly on my awareness of the true God. So much so that until I became aware of him I couldn't perfectly know anything. Now I can achieve … knowledge of countless

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- the argument from the dissonance between the reasons for dogmatism and the reasons for skepticism;
- the argument from the epistemic 'non-loneliness' of the world.

I. THE ARGUMENT FROM DISSONANCE

We have a strong conviction that we possess some knowledge of the world. Certainly, this knowledge is imperfect, limited in many ways and it often needs to be modified or completed. In spite of these shortcomings, it would be hard to argue against its existence altogether. On the other hand, however, we could find a great number of reasons which seem to question the value of our knowledge:

(i) we frequently make cognitive mistakes, for instance we give in to illusions;

(ii) quite often, external factors interfere with our cognition and distort its outcomes;

(iii) while acquiring and systematizing our knowledge, we often get entangled in assumptions difficult to justify without falling into the error of *petitio principii*.

If this is the case, then we are led to suspect (and this observation is difficult to dismiss) that:

(i') we make mistakes notoriously, not just occasionally;

(ii') our cognition is perturbed by any external factors essentially and permanently, and not just accidentally;

(iii') our knowledge does not have any credible basis or justification.

The suspicion discussed above, apart from undermining the value of our particular cognitive acts, generally invalidates the accuracy of our knowledge, and even its fundamental possibility. This suspicion is illustrated by various thought experiments which describe a hypothetical mechanism of a global illusion. It does not matter whether the author of the illusion is a malicious

matters [...]'. René Descartes, *Meditations on First Philosophy*, ed. Johnathan Bennett (www.earlymoderntexts.com, [1641] 2007), 26.

demon influencing our minds, ill-willed scientists stimulating appropriate zones of our brains, or some other factor. What is important is that it is possible, even probable — given our proneness to mistakes and occurrence of error-generating circumstances — that our cognitive faculties function properly or normally, so to speak, and in spite of this they do not inform us thoroughly about the world.

Let us add (following Alvin Plantinga) that one of the leading scientific theories, the theory of evolution, can lead to skeptical conclusions concerning the value or mere possibility of acquiring knowledge. For if, as this theory proclaims or entails, our faculties and cognitive mechanisms were shaped in a long process of contingent changes 'governed' by the principle of natural selection, then we can infer that their basic objective is the survival of our biological species. This means that, thanks to the aforementioned faculties and mechanisms, we are somehow adapted to our environment. Yet, this does not mean or does not have to mean that we obtain essential or reliable knowledge of the world through them. Their function is primarily biological, not epistemic. The latter function is secondary or random at most.[4]

The above doubt can be expressed in more general terms. If we wish to describe our cognitive processes in purely naturalistic terms, as a coincidence of subtle physical phenomena — the way that neuroscience suggests — it is hard to demonstrate that they result in credible knowledge of the world. The outcomes of some physical phenomena could be just other physical phenomena, not conscious mental states which we call cognition or knowledge. In any case, even if we admit that mental states are by-products of a biological reaction of our organism to external stimuli, we do not have enough reason to believe that these states reflect reality faithfully.

As we can see, our reflection on human cognition gives rise to the following dilemma. On the one hand, we are strongly inclined to accept the following thesis:

(1) We possess knowledge of the world.

4 As Alvin Plantinga, *Warranted Christian Belief* (Oxford University Press, 2000), 227–40 suggests, in connection to that we can say, waywardly, that if our knowledge has a status, which could be inferred from the theory of evolution, we have no sufficient basis to assume that this theory (or the conjunction of it and naturalism) is true. We have to search for the guarantee of the value of our cognition in the supernatural factor.

Our collective experience in knowledge acquisition and its practical application, spanning several centuries, seem to speak in favor of (1). On the other hand, however, we cannot neglect that fact that

(2) There are significant reasons, both actual and supposed (or potential), which undermine the truth of (1).

The acceptance of (1), despite the awareness of (2), leads to naive dogmatism, whereas the acceptance of (2) contradicts (1), leading to incredible skepticism or a radical belief in non-existence of our knowledge or its fundamental and irremovable handicap. Nevertheless, this skepticism seems to be, in the light of our experience, common sense and practical life — not only destructive but also absurd.

The way out of the above dilemma could be a thesis allowing us to weaken the reasons from (2) so that they do not contradict the truth of (1). Theism puts forward such a thesis. It says that

(3) There is God who created the world and people (cognitive or knowing subjects) in such a way that they can acquire knowledge of the world.

In the context of (3), all actual or supposed reasons against the possibility or general value of human knowledge lose their force or meaning. Let us emphasis that the aforementioned knowledge can be imperfect in a number of ways; still, it needs to be fundamentally real and not a mere illusion. The guarantee of the possibility of such knowledge can be only God, i.e. the person who deliberately adjusted human cognitive faculties to the world. This person should be perfect causally (or onticly), cognitively and morally. Otherwise, we could still doubt whether such an adjustment yields positive results. A person or anything else who or which is not omnipotent, omniscient and morally good cannot be the irremovable guarantee of knowledge. For example, let us think about an informer who (because of his ignorance or physical defect or moral vice) tells the truth only sometimes. If we had to be cognitively dependent on her or him, we would have good reasons to suspect that we do not possess knowledge.

The above remark allows us to assume that there is no alternative for (3). All other guarantees of the possibility of knowledge, apart from God, would allow for other skeptical hypotheses. All internal world mechanisms are random or blind and dependent upon other contingent circumstances. In turn,

imperfect subjects could operate with error, on the basis of erroneous knowledge or out of wrong motives. On the other hand, God

- contrary to the mechanisms of nature, has reliable knowledge and acts consciously and purposefully;
- contrary to a malicious demon or malicious scientists, uses his complete knowledge without intending to mislead anyone.

There will be voices saying that the argument reconstructed here does not demonstrate the existence of God but solves a certain artificial dilemma. Let me respond that the dilemma between the dogmatism of (1) and the skepticism of (2) constitutes one of the most fundamental and vital topics in philosophy. The role of solutions to philosophical problems consists in putting forward (hypo)theses, which eliminate dilemmas. If we take these dilemmas and solutions seriously, we should accept the existence of beings which they postulate. It would be unreasonable to expect anything more from philosophical argument. So, if theism is the only option which makes us free from the 'dogmatism-skepticism' dilemma, we (as epistemologists) should affirm the existence of the theistic God.

It is necessary to add that the argument from the dissonance is different from 'the argument from reason'. According to the latter no thought (or broader: no cognitive act) 'can be fully explained in terms of nonrational causes' then 'explaining reason in terms of unreason explains reason *away*, and undercuts the very reason on which the explanation is supposed to be based'[5]; if so, naturalism or materialism cannot be true and the epistemic status of theism (as the leading mentalist worldview) is enhanced. Maybe Victor Reppert (following C.S. Lewis and developing his 'argument from reason') is right, but my argument is based on a weaker premise: even if naturalism can be true and does not undermine the existence of cognitive acts, it (or strictly speaking: any factor allowed by it) does not warrant the general value or the possibility of knowledge as justified true belief. Knowledge can be warranted only by God as postulated by theism.

5 Victor Reppert, "The Argument from Reason", in *The Blackwell Companion to Natural Theology*, ed. William L. Craig and James P. Moreland (Wiley-Blackwell, 2009), 353–88.

II. THE ARGUMENT FROM 'NON-LONELINESS'

The argument from the epistemic 'non-loneliness' of the world can be extracted from *A Treatise Concerning the Principles of Human Knowledge* written by George Berkeley. As Berkeley says:

> [...] all those bodies that compose the mighty structure of the world, have no existence outside a mind; for them to exist is for them to be perceived or known; consequently so long as they aren't actually perceived by (i.e. don't exist in the mind of) myself or any other created spirit, they must either have no existence at all or else exist in the mind of some eternal spirit; because it makes no sense — and involves all the absurdity of abstraction — to attribute to any such thing an existence independent of a spirit.[6]

The key idea of the above quotation can be expanded into the following argument:

(4) The existence of things in the world consists in their being actually perceived or known.

(5) There are things in the world which are not actually being perceived or known by any worldly person.

(6) All existing things in the world which are not actually being perceived or known by any worldly person are actually being perceived or known by God as the transcendent, permanent and perfect 'perceptor' or 'knower' of the world.

An argument thus presented has at least three important shortcomings. First of all, it assumes a dubious thesis (4) stating that the existence of (worldly) things depends upon someone cognising them. Second, the transition from the thesis that each thing is always perceived or known by someone to the thesis (6) that there is one person who always perceives or knows each thing is too easy. Third, the argument seems to contain an equivocation: in (5) *to exist* (or its equivalent) is understood in an ordinary sense, whereas in (4) it is used in a special sense of Berkeley's philosophy, i.e. in the sense of being perceived or known.

6 Berkeley. George, *The Principles of Human Knowledge*, ed. Johnathan Bennett (www.earlymoderntexts.com, [1710] 2007), 12.

In order to avoid the first and the third difficulty, the discussed argument can be simplified as follows:

(7) If in every time every worldly thing is actually perceived or known, then the transcendent, permanent and perfect 'perceptor' or 'knower' of them exists. (Call her or him *the Supreme Cogniser*)

(8) In every time every worldly thing is actually perceived or known.

(9) The Supreme Cogniser exists.

I am keen on defending premise (7) by pointing out that, if in every time every worldly thing is actually perceived or known, then either the (only one) Supreme Cogniser exists, or there are many (worldly or transcendent) 'perceptors' or 'knowers', as many as it is needed for all worldly things to be actually (always) perceived or known. The first alternative seems to be, however, far simpler and more credible. It is easier for us to accept that there is exactly one transcendent cognitive subject who perfectly knows every item in time and space, than to assume that there are (apart from us) many empirically unknown subjects who know together what we do not know. If we agree to grant this, we accept (7) and thus weaken the power of the second objection to Berkeley's argument, stated above. In other words, if (8) is true, epistemic theism seems to be a more credible hypothesis than panpsychism, monadism or conceptions which absolutise human cognitive faculties or conceptions which assume some extraterrestrial intelligences.

So, we are left with the premise (8). This is the most controversial premise of the argument. Since we are not perfect 'knowers', we cannot know exactly if it is true. I think, however, that there are several reasons to suppose or believe that it is the case what it says. I call them the "arguments against the epistemic 'loneliness' of the world". Here are these arguments:

(A) The realization that there are enormous areas of the space-time which are not perceived by anyone or which we know only partially or roughly can lead to some mental discomfort — from a terror to a feeling that those things are redundant, meaningless or absurd. This discomfort could have lead Nicholas Everitt to 'argument from scale'[7]: if our universe is 'unimaginably large, unimaginably old, and [such

7 Nicholas Everitt, *The Non-existence of God* (Routledge, 2004), 225.

that] in which human [cognitive] beings form an unimaginably tiny part of it, temporally and spatially', then classical 'theism is *probably* false'. But we can remove the discomfort in the opposite way (by *retorsio argumenti*): if the universe is so huge and old that no its inhabitant can really (or entirely) know it, then the thesis of classical theism that the whole universe must be always known by the omniscient God is probably true.

(B) The fact that worldly things are prone to be known can be interpreted as a sign that they are constantly being known. As wings are the indication of the ability of flying as, for example, the mathematical structure of physical reality can be the indication of being known by any reason. It is true that not all animals with wings can fly and that animals which can fly do not fly every time. But it is also true that the essential living function of animals with wings is or was (in their evolutionary history) flying. Therefore, the existence of objects in the physical universe (or its states) which are (were and will be) never known can be surprising. These objects would be as animals with wings which (in their individual or species history) have never flown.

(C) If something exists and it is a thing (or its state) which is never known by anyone, then no one can ever form a true proposition (or statement) concerning this thing (or its state). Then there is the truth-maker without its truth-bearer. Is it possible? It seems that the existence of a given true proposition entails the existence of its truth-maker. But does this entailment go conversely: from the existence of the truth-maker (i.e. the state of affairs) to the existence of the proposition which is made true by it? That is the question. Maybe the following consideration will be helpful to answer it.

The contingent state of affairs that (for example) the number of all dinosaurs in the whole history of the earth was exactly (say) 19257834 entails that it is possible that there is the true proposition *The number of all dinosaurs in the whole history of the earth was exactly 19257834*. It means that there is at least one possible world with this proposition. What about necessary states of affairs? Let us pay attention to the necessary state of affairs that 2 + 3 = 5. It entails that there is at least

one possible world with the proposition *2 + 3 = 5*. But if this proposition exists in one possible world, it (by virtue of its necessity) exists in all possible worlds. As a result, if propositions cannot exist without a reason or mind, there is at least one person who knows that 2 + 3 = 5 and there is one or more persons who know all necessary states of affairs. Moreover, if necessary states of affairs cannot exist without underlying or supporting them contingent states of affairs (such as that the sum of two apples and three pears on my dish is five fruits), all (necessary and contingent) states of affairs must be known by at least one person.

(D) Maybe Anderson[8], explaining Van Til's epistemological argument, is right that 'if no one has *comprehensive* knowledge of the universe, then no one can have *any* knowledge of the universe' because 'unless one knows *everything* about universe, the interrelatedness of the university means that whatever reasons or grounds one has for one's beliefs the possibility remains of some fact coming to light that radically undermines those reasons or grounds'. As a result, if we have some knowledge of the universe, it is possible only because we participate somehow in comprehensive or perfect knowledge.

Let us note that thesis (8) does not follow from reasons (A)-(D).[9] However, in light of (A) through (D), the premise (8) can be regarded as a reasonable hypothesis, and not as a fantastic supposition. Thanks to it, the conclusion (9) — *The Supreme Cogniser exists* — will also be regarded as a credible statement. Perhaps, simply, (9) is the best explanation or explication of intuition (which inspires many philosophers, particularly idealists) that the world is not epistemically 'mute', 'empty' or 'lonely.' According to this explication, the physical world and its entire space-time content remains in a constant relationship with the transcendent subject which apprehends it perfectly. The exceptional epistemic status of this subject allows us to ascribe to it its distinguishable ontic status which is connected with the name *God*.

8 Anderson, "If Knowledge Then God", 64–65.

9 Maybe the exception is the argument (D). In my opinion it can be reinforced or replaced by the argument from perfect knowledge as the purpose of human cognition or as the term of the development of human knowledge. I am going to present this argument (transforming, in a realistic fashion, some ideas of Immanuel Kant and Michael Dummett) in another place.

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THE PROBLEM OF ALTERNATIVE MONOTHEISMS: ANOTHER SERIOUS CHALLENGE TO THEISM

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Abstract. Theistic and analytic philosophers of religion typically privilege classical theism by ignoring or underestimating the great threat of alternative monotheisms.[2] In this article I discuss numerous god-models, such as those involving weak, stupid, evil, morally indifferent, and non-revelatory gods. I find that theistic philosophers have not successfully eliminated these and other possibilities, or argued for their relative improbability. In fact, based on current evidence — especially concerning the hiddenness of God and the gratuitous evils in the world — many of these hypotheses appear to be more probable than theism. Also considering the — arguably infinite — number of alternative monotheisms, the inescapable conclusion is that theism is a very improbable god-concept, even when it is assumed that one and only one transcendent god exists.

I. THE PROBLEM

Numerous sceptical scholars analyse and scrutinise arguments for the existence of at least one god, generally finding them wanting.[3] Furthermore, when such arguments are combined, and contrasted against *contra* arguments, critical scholars conclude that such cases are not sufficient to make probable

1 The author thanks Stephen Law, who offered many helpful criticisms and contributed much material concerning The Evil God Challenge. The author also wishes to thank Herman Philipse for his inspiration and feedback.

2 I take 'theism' to mean 'classical theism', which is but one of many possible monotheisms. Avoiding much of the discussion around classical theism, I wish to focus on the challenges in arguing for theism over monotheistic alternatives. I consider theism and alternative monotheisms as entailing the notion of divine transcendence.

3 Jordan Howard Sobel, *Logic and Theism: Arguments for and against Beliefs in God* (CUP, 2004); Graham Robert Oppy, *Arguing about Gods* (CUP, 2006); Herman Philipse, *God in the Age of Science?: A Critique of Religious Reason* (OUP, 2012) (henceforth, "GAS").

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the existence of a god or gods. Whilst I concur, I shall reflect on what can be known about the existence of god/s if (many or most of) the arguments are generally assumed to be persuasive.[4] In other words, for the sake of argument, and whilst formulating my argument within the framework of a Bayesian approach,[5] I shall temporarily suppose that there is good evidence that supports divine existence, and overlook the many good arguments for ontological naturalism, in the sense of the thesis that there are no gods.

I shall also temporarily suppose that there is good evidence that supports monotheism; granting that arguments from simplicity that are so popular amongst theistic philosophers in dismissing the many polytheisms have ontological significance. Of course, accepting the existence of a single transcendent god is not equivalent to asserting the existence of the god of classical theism (henceforth "God"). This seems especially pertinent, given that many philosophers seem to view 'naturalism' and 'classical theism' as the only two options worth considering.[6] There is indeed a very large literature, often revolving around Pascal's Wager, which asserts that there are plausible alternatives to theism that cannot just be overlooked, particularly in a probabilistic case.[7] The aim of this paper is to explain the magnitude of this problem, to expand on some of these alternatives, and to argue that when considering the totality of currently available evidence the truth of classical theism is very improbable — even when the existence of one and only one transcendent god is granted.[8]

4 I am currently involved in interdisciplinary '*contra* theism' projects, which highlight the many deficiencies in the most sophisticated cases for the existence of God. Such arguments include cosmological, teleological, axiological, and historical arguments.

5 For a discussion of the failure of alternative apologetic approaches, such as the use of deductive arguments, and the benefits of examining inductive/probabilistic arguments through a Bayesian lens, see Philipse (GAS). In Bayesian reasoning, we refer to the inherent plausibility of the theory as the 'prior probability', the likelihood of the evidence on the theory as the 'likelihood' (or the 'consequent probability'), and the overall result as the 'posterior probability' (or simply, the 'probability'). See also Raphael Lataster, "Bayesian Reasoning: Criticising the 'Criteria of Authenticity' and Calling for a Review of Biblical Criticism," *Journal of Alternative Perspectives in the Social Sciences* 5, no. 2 (2013): 271–293. Please note that many of the priors discussed throughout are subjective.

6 For example, see John Cottingham, *Philosophy of Religion: Towards a More Humane Approach* (CUP, 2014), 2, 28–39, 72.

7 For example, see Paul Saka, "Pascal's Wager and the Many Gods Objection," *Religious Studies* 37, no. 3 (2001): 321–341.

8 This article limits the discussion to monotheism and what I describe as alternative monotheisms. Polytheisms and monistic/pantheistic god-concepts are discussed in other articles.

II. THE PARTIALLY GREAT AND MINIMALLY GREAT GODS

There are numerous — actually, infinitely many — alternatives to theism that describe the existence of one transcendent god. Positing alternative monotheisms is a straightforward task. The philosopher need only initially imagine the theistic god, for example, with one of the definitive properties altered, or removed altogether. For example, the theistic god, typically hypothesised as being maximally great, is alleged to be omnibenevolent. One alternative would be a god that is omnimalevolent.[9] There may also be gods that are somewhat, or very, good or evil.[10] Another possibility is a god that is balanced, morality-wise, and is neither good nor evil; one that is morally indifferent.[11] This scenario may also be the result of a world in which good and evil do not actually exist, so that there is no room for the existing god to be described as good or evil. Consider also how a hypothesis entailing a god that is not omnibenevolent can be considered 'simpler' than one entailing that god *must* be.[12] Some of these non-omnibenevolent gods may even better explain the evidence that gratuitous evil or suffering exists, as philosophers might expect that an all-good god would not tolerate the existence of gratuitous evil or suffering.[13]

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9 Law postulates an evil god, acknowledging earlier efforts by Madden, Hare, Cahn, Stein, New, and Millican. See Stephen Law, "The Evil-God Challenge," *Religious Studies* 46, no. 3 (2010): 353–373. Historically, many gods were considered evil, and were despised by believers. For example, the Egyptian Apep and the Marcionites' interpretation of the god of the Tanakh. See *The Book of Overthrowing Apep* and Sebastian Moll, *The Arch-Heretic Marcion* (Mohr Siebeck, 2010), 58–59.

10 Daniels unknowingly, and too hastily, dismisses the possibility of an evil god, simply assuming that "the ultimate reason for people doing what they do, when they have one, is to get what's good". He also fails to provide a probabilistic case against such an evil god. See Charles B. Daniels, "God, demon, good, evil," *The Journal of Value Inquiry* 31, no. 2 (1997): 177–181.

11 Cf. Philipse (GAS), 250. See also Oppy's discussion on evil and morally neutral gods in Graham Robert Oppy, "God, God* and God," in *Faith and Reason: Friends Or Foes in the New Millennium?*, ed. Anthony Fisher and Hayden Ramsay (ATF Press, 2004), 171–186.

12 In other words, theism claims more about God than is necessary, which seems inconsistent with theistic apologists' constant appeals to simplicity.

13 I am not at all claiming that evil, or good, exists. Indeed, if there were no good and evil, it would seem that theism is impossible, as it posits a god that is all-good. Models of god that makes no such claims would still be possible. For example, a god that is 'merely' all-powerful and all-knowing.

Another divine property that can be tweaked is that of omnipotence. It is easy to imagine a less powerful god, such as one that is powerless to put an end to all evil (again, possibly providing a god-concept that better explains the existence of gratuitous evil). Similarly, there may be a god that does not have infinite or complete knowledge but has x amount of knowledge (which can again better explain the existence of gratuitous evil). Another god may have x+1 amount of knowledge, yet another might know x+2 facts about the world, and so forth. It is easy to see how there are an infinite number of possibly existing monotheistic gods, of which the theistic God is but one.[14] There may indeed be a god that is a 'maximally great entity', but there is no reason to suppose that there could not be a creator god that is slightly less great, such as Ialdabaoth, the Demiurge.[15] So far keeping to only these three definitive properties of God, it is obvious that while there may be an all-powerful, all-knowing and all-good god, the god that exists might also be weak, stupid, and evil, or even reasonably-powerful, fairly-knowledgeable, and morally-indifferent. Alternatively, properties can be added, such as omniessence, which would conflict with other properties of the theistic god (like transcendence).[16] With such additional properties, there may also be yet more spectra on which to theorise about infinitely more alternatives. And likewise for the other presumed properties of God.

The philosophical theist is thus faced with a daunting task: arguing for the probability of theism given the infinitely many monotheistic alternatives. If the evidence was equally expected on all possible hypotheses (where each hypothesis purports the existence of a different monotheistic god), and each hypothesis is considered as inherently plausible as the next (as when the principle of indifference is invoked),[17] it would be impossible to decide which of the monotheisms is the most reasonably upheld. This may not be a problem for the broad-minded monotheist. For the theist, however, it becomes clear that the posterior probability of their preferred theory's truth relative to its

14 Cf. Philipse (GAS), 246.

15 For a brief description of Ialdabaoth, see Zlatko Pleše, *Poetics of the Gnostic Universe: Narrative and Cosmology in the Apocryphon of John* (Brill, 2006), 51–55.

16 Such possibilities shall be discussed in a forthcoming article.

17 Cf. Philipse (GAS), 247.

infinitely many monotheistic rivals, akin to rolling an infinitely sided die, is almost certainly minimal:[18]

$$P(theism|e.b) = 1 / \infty$$

Effectively:

$$P(theism|e.b) = 0$$

Conversely, the probability that a monotheistic alternative obtains would be:

$$P(monotheistic\ alternatives|e.b) = (\infty - 1) / \infty$$

Effectively:

$$P(monotheistic\ alternatives|e.b) = 1$$

Apart from the uncomfortable notion that variable properties can be added and subtracted at will from a definition of God that is effectively arbitrary, this problem of infinitely many monotheistic alternatives[19] is potentially overcome by those philosophical theists who appeal to simplicity,[20] so long as they can argue that simplicity is truth-conducive, and not merely a pragmatic criterion for theory choice.[21] Just as simplicity, in terms of cardinality, may lead the undecided towards monotheism rather than polytheism, so too may simplicity lead the undecided towards a god that is infinitely powerful rather than one that is only partially powerful.[22] In other words, these various models of god are apparently not equally probable: allegedly there is reason to consider theism the most probable monotheism, even if it is not itself very probable. According to Christian philosophers like Richard Swinburne and

18 The notation on the left hand side of the equation simply means, "the probability of the truth of theism, considering all the evidence and background knowledge".

19 For those who would consider infinity/infinitesimals to be undefined, consider instead the limiting probability as the finite class of monotheistic hypotheses is continuously enlarged. For example, (one googol-1) / one googol, would suffice.

20 I primarily refer to the simplicity of a hypothesis, though this can also apply to the simplicity of a god, since apologists are often fond of assuming that a simpler god (or at least what they consider to be a simpler god) makes for a simpler — and presumably more probable — hypothesis.

21 Cf. Philipse (GAS), 212ff, 246ff.

22 I have argued elsewhere that polytheism, as a catch-all hypothesis, should be considered preferable to monotheism. See Raphael Lataster and Herman Philipse, "The Problem of Polytheisms: A Serious Challenge to Theism," *International Journal for Philosophy of Religion*, no. doi: 10.1007/s11153–015–9554-x (2015).

William Lane Craig, theism, simply, is *simpler*. Swinburne claims that "hypotheses attributing infinite values of properties to objects are simpler than ones attributing large finite values" and that "scientific practice shows this preference for infinite values over large finite values of a property".[23] He provides some examples:

> Newton's theory of gravity postulated that the gravitational force travelled with infinite velocity, rather than with some very large finite velocity (say 2,000,000,000.325 km/sec.), which would have predicted the observations equally well within the limit of accuracy to which measurements could be made. Only when Einstein's General Theory of Relativity, concerned with electromagnetism as well as with gravity, was adopted as the simplest theory covering a vast range of data did scientists accept as a consequence of that theory that the gravitational force travelled with a finite velocity. Likewise in the Middle Ages people believed that light travelled with an infinite velocity rather than with some large finite velocity equally compatible with observations. Only when observations were made by Römer in the seventeenth century incompatible with the infinite-velocity theory was it accepted that light had a finite velocity.[24]

Interestingly, these scientists preferred what are allegedly the simpler theories, and they were eventually proven wrong. William Lane Craig also endorses appeals to simplicity in arguing for the truth of theism:

> Considerations of simplicity might also come into play here. For example, it is simpler to posit one metaphysically necessary, infinite, omniscient, morally perfect being than to think that three separate necessary beings exist exemplifying these respective excellent-making properties. Similarly, with respect to quasi-maximally great beings, Swinburne's contention seems plausible that it is simpler (or perhaps less ad hoc) to posit either zero or infinity as the measure of a degreed property than to posit some inexplicably finite measure. Thus, it would be more plausible to think that maximal greatness is possibly instantiated than quasi-maximal greatness.[25]

There are numerous problems with the claim that these infinite qualities are simpler, the most relevant of which is that this sort of simplicity is not necessarily truth-conducive. The appeal to simplicity here is a non sequitur unless

23 Richard Swinburne, *The Existence of God*, 2nd ed. (OUP, 2004), 55.

24 Richard Swinburne, *Is There a God?*, Rev. ed. (OUP, 2010), 40–41. See also Swinburne (EG), 55, 97. In these passages, Swinburne also alludes to monotheism being simpler than polytheism.

25 William Lane Craig, *Reasonable Faith: Christian Truth and Apologetics*, 3rd ed. (Crossway Books, 2008), 188. See also 187.

it can be demonstrated that a hypothesis' relative simplicity makes it more probable or less probable. Swinburne and Craig have not done this; nor has any academic, in any field. Scholars such as Kosso and van Fraassen have recognised the pragmatic aesthetic of simpler explanations, but have not been able to comprehensively demonstrate the greater probability of simpler theories.[26] Complicating matters further for the theist, if simplicity is truth-conducive, so that theism is indeed more probable that similar concepts with, say, slightly weaker or less knowledgeable gods, the degree of preference ought to be justified. Alternatives cannot be brushed aside simply because theism is claimed as being simpler. A slight — or even very large — increase in theism's probability on the basis of its alleged simplicity may not necessarily be enough to overcome the probabilistic weight of the alternatives as a collective, especially when there are very — or infinitely — many, and especially when other factors that could affect the probabilities in favor of monotheistic alternatives are factored in.

It is the latter point to which I now turn. Simplicity can be considered an aspect of a theory's inherent plausibility or prior probability; the direct evidence, affecting the consequent probabilities, also play a crucial role in a proper probabilistic analysis. Whether or not theism is the simplest monotheistic god-concept, it should not be taken as a given that theism is the most probable one, let alone probable (i.e., $p > 0.5$).

26 Philosopher of Science, Peter Kosso, explains that "Simplicity is clearly a pragmatic virtue, and for that reason it is a good thing to strive for. But we have yet to see the connection between being simple and being true". See Peter Kosso, *Reading the Book of Nature: An Introduction to the Philosophy of Science* (CUP, 1992), 46. Noting that equating truth and simplicity is groundless, van Fraassen argues along similar lines. See Bas C. van Fraassen, *The Scientific Image* (Clarendon, 1980). For critiques on this notion relating to Philosophy of Religion (specifically Swinburne's appeal to simplicity), see Julia Göhner, Marie I. Kaiser, and Christian Suhm, "Is Simplicity an Adequate Criterion of Theory Choice?," in *Richard Swinburne: Christian Philosophy in a Modern World*, ed. Nicola Mößner, Sebastian Schmoranzer, and Christian Weidemann (De Gruyter, 2008), 33–46; Johannes Korbmacher, Sebastian Schmoranzer, and Ansgar Seide, "Simply False? Swinburne on Simplicity as Evidence of Truth," in ibid., 47–60. Cf. Philipse (GAS), 212–220, 245–255.

III. THE EVIL GODS

Given the importance of simplicity, there is more information relevant to our investigations than the simplicity of a theory. For example, the existence of evil, or gratuitous suffering, which forms the basis of arguments from evil, is relevant to our probabilistic analysis. The logical argument from evil will here be overlooked, and even the evidential argument from evil as an argument for naturalism is irrelevant at present.[27] We are currently interested in which sort of god-hypothesis would have a greater likelihood given the existence of such evil. With the unjustified appeals to simplicity brushed aside, *ceteris paribus*, the effect of the evidence of gratuitous evil on various god-models will determine which is more likely, and thus — given equal priors — which is more probable. But let us first consider The Evil God Challenge.[28]

What is The Evil God Challenge? Those who believe in an omnipotent, omniscient and supremely good and benevolent deity face the following *evidential problem of evil*. The world contains great evils, such as immense suffering. Let us call evils for which there is no God-justifying reason *gratuitous evils*. Then a well-known argument runs:

(1) If God exists, gratuitous evils do not.

(2) Gratuitous evils exist.

(3) Therefore, there is no God.

While God might allow some suffering as the price paid for greater goods, he presumably would not allow *gratuitous* suffering — suffering for which there is no God-justifying reason. But much of the suffering that is observed does appear to be, from a divine perspective, gratuitous.[29] Therefore, that suffering is *good evidence that God does not exist*. Theists typically respond to the above argument by challenging its second premise. Some develop theodicies: expla-

27 In the sense that this article is not arguing for naturalism.

28 Stephen Law will soon expand on this concept in a book to be published by OUP.

29 For example, the incredible pain many animals deal with, on a daily basis. Cf. William Rowe, "The Problem of Evil and Some Varieties of Atheism," *American Philosophical Quarterly* 16, no. 4 (1979): 337. For a convincing argument about many seemingly gratuitous evils being good evidence for gratuitous evils, see Robert Bass, "Many Inscrutable Evils," *Ars Disputandi* 11, no. 1 (2011): 118–132; Robert Bass, "Inscrutable evils: still numerous, still relevant," *International Journal of Philosophy and Theology* 75, no. 4 (2014): 379–384.

nations for why God allows such evils; explanations in terms of free will, for example. Others suggest that the second premise cannot be known to be true. They argue, for example, that our inability to think of reasons why God would allow the suffering we observe does not allow us to reasonably conclude there is no such reason; this is the position of the 'sceptical theists' — theists that are sceptical about our ability to know such reasons.

Enter the Evil God Challenge. The Challenge turns on the thought that similar responses are also available to someone who believes in an omnipotent, omniscient, and *omnimalevolent* being — i.e., an 'evil God', henceforth "Dog" — in order to deal with the following *mirror* problem: the *evidential problem of good*.

(1) If Dog exists, gratuitous goods do not.

(2) Gratuitous goods exist.

(3) Therefore, there is no Dog.

Gratuitous goods are goods (e.g., love, laughter, ice-cream, puppies, and rainbows) for which there is no Dog-justifying reason. Pre-theoretically, many of us would find this argument compelling and will use something like it to explain why philosophers would consider belief in Dog highly unreasonable. Surely there are abundant goods in the world for which there is unlikely to be any Dog-justifying reason. The Challenge, then, is for theists to explain why belief in God is significantly more reasonable than belief in Dog, with the latter seemingly being absurd; to explain why the presence of both good and evil in the world is fatal for the Dog hypothesis but not for the God hypothesis. Appropriately, just as a range of theodicies has been constructed to deal with the problem of evil, so a range of mirror theodicies (e.g., a mirror free-will theodicy) can be constructed to explain why Dog would allow various observed goods. For example, perhaps this truly is the worst of all worlds, and we — limited as we are — just cannot understand how. The evil god is simply mysterious and her ways inscrutable. All of this appears absurd. These mirror theodicies appear to be about as (in)effective as the standard theodicies. But if the mirror theodicies fail to salvage the Dog hypothesis (if they don't, there is still a serious rival to theism), philosophers can wonder why they ought to consider the standard versions as any more effective in salvaging the God hypothesis.

Sceptical theism also leaves these two hypotheses more or less rationally on par. If sceptical theism succeeds in dealing with the problem of evil, then sceptical theism — or rather, "sceptical dogism" — also succeeds in dealing with the problem of good. For it has the consequence that not only can philosophers not know the second premise of the first argument from evil, neither can they know the second premise of the second, mirror argument; sceptical dogism entails that, for all we know, there may be Dog-justifying reasons for the *goods* we observe. Some will suggest that there are at least arguments *for* the supremely good God not mirrored by arguments for the supremely evil Dog. However, most of the popular arguments for God's existence (cosmological, teleological, and so forth) are actually neutral with respect to God's moral character. There are some ontological and moral arguments specifically for a good God, but even many theists would doubt that they succeed in making the belief in God significantly more reasonable than belief in Dog. Mirror arguments for an evil god can also be constructed, such as this mirror version of a simple ontological argument:

(1) I can conceive of a maximally evil god.

(2) It is more evil for this being to exist in reality than merely in my imagination.

(3) Therefore, the evil being of which I am conceiving must exist in reality.

Some philosophers, such as Keith Ward, Edward Feser, and Christopher Weaver, suggest that the Evil God hypothesis can be shown to involve a logical contradiction, and can thus be ruled out a priori. Ward for example, asserts that it is an a priori truth that, "an omnipotent omniscient being cannot be evil".[30] As this is allegedly not true of the God hypothesis, the belief in God is significantly more reasonable than the belief in Dog. But this is mere presupposition and actually does disservice to what is supposed to be an omnipotent and free god. There is simply no logical reason to rule out the possibility that an all-knowing and all-powerful being can be very evil. In fact, the Judeo-Christian scriptures, usually relevant in discussions about philosophical theism, indicate that God is the source of evil.[31] This objection

30 Keith Ward, "The Evil God Challenge — A Response," *Think* 14, no. 40 (2015): 43.

31 See Isaiah 45:7.

also overlooks the fact that many of us would, seemingly justifiably, reject belief in Dog on the basis of apparent gratuitous goods in the world,[32] notwithstanding the fact (if it is a fact) that the Dog hypothesis involves such a contradiction. And if sceptics are justified in rejecting the Dog hypothesis on that basis alone, then why is it not justifiable to reject the God hypothesis on the same sort of basis? Surely it is.

Another avenue for the theistic philosopher is to point to those who claim revelatory experiences of a good god. Can't such people reasonably believe given only their, in many cases highly compelling, experiences? But some individuals do indeed have experiences of an evil god (or similar), and yet it is commonly considered that *their* beliefs grounded in such experiences are unreasonable, and in some cases symptomatic of mental illness. One example would be the case of Dena Schlosser, who claims to have been ordered by what can only be described as an evil god, to mutilate her child.[33] When it comes to assessing the rationality of such claims, what relevant difference is there between these beliefs and the similarly grounded beliefs of the traditional theist? Why is one sort of experientially grounded belief reasonable if the other is not? Objective philosophers should not simply prefer one (relatively) plausible model over the other, even if one of them is more desirous.

It appears difficult to avoid the conclusion that both the God and Dog hypotheses are to an extent disconfirmed. If gratuitous goods and evils do exist, then a god-model that fits in between these two extremes should be preferred. Depending on the actual proportion of goods and evils in the world, philosophers ought to favour either a partially good god, a partially evil god,

32 All else could be considered equal. The Christian theist might object, pointing to the Bible as supportive of God's existence, but this would assume too much. The Bible could easily be argued as being supportive of Dog's existence. The latter may even be more probable, considering the many divinely endorsed genocides and rapes in the Tanakh or Old Testament, the many contradictions found therein, and the religious schisms and religious violence that has eventuated. The theist may also point to personal religious experiences. Again, these could be a result of Dog's existence, and are arguably better explained, on the basis of inconsistency in revelation, on the Dog hypothesis.

33 Apologists' declarations about atheists being unable to declare what is evil — particularly absurd because many atheists do accept an objective standard of morality — notwithstanding. For more on the Schlosser case, see Theresa Porter and Helen Gavin, "Infanticide and Neonaticide: A Review of 40 Years of Research Literature on Incidence and Causes," *Trauma, Violence, & Abuse* 11, no. 3 (2010): 101.

or a morally indifferent god ("Mig"),[34] or a less than omnipotent god who may not be completely able to realise its vision (likewise for a less than omniscient god). In any case, the existence of at least some good and some evil in the world works against the belief in the existence of Dog, as well as the existence of God. While the existence of gratuitous goods and evils may not conclusively rule out the existence of God and Dog, it surely is less expected, rendering those hypotheses relatively less probable. Note that somewhat similar arguments can also be made regarding stupid gods and weak gods. Unfortunately for the theist, yet more challenges await.

IV. THE DEISTIC AND QUASI-DEISTIC GODS

It could be agreed that it is simpler and more reasonable to accept that the one existing god is not sub-maximal, but is omnipotent, omniscient, and omnibenevolent, and yet it is still not necessary to concede that God, the god of theism, exists. Spare a thought for the god of deism, "Deo".[35] Deo is very similar to God, but is not a revelatory god. Deo does not interact or interfere with the creation. Deo does not require us, or anyone/anything else, to believe in her. It is easy to imagine that such a god is far greater than the god of theism, which is seemingly needy of human interaction, particularly with regards to being reminded about how great he is. When the focus shifts to Judeo-Christian theism, it is similarly easy to imagine that a deistic god is greater than the god that needs to constantly rectify the mistakes or imperfections of his creation.[36] That a perfect creature created by an all-powerful God could be-

34 Cf. Philipse (GAS), 250–251.

35 For some resources on the development of deism and its crucial role in shaping the largely secular contemporary West, see C. J. Betts, *Early Deism in France: From the so-called 'déistes' of Lyon (1564) to Voltaire's 'Lettres philosophiques' (1734)* (Nijhoff Publishers, 1984) and Peter Byrne, *Natural Religion and the Nature of Religion: The Legacy of Deism* (Routledge, 1989).

36 His creation Lucifer was perfect, but then was not (Ezekiel 28:15); God's early companions almost immediately defied him (Genesis 3); almost everyone in the world needed to be killed (Genesis 6–9); still not content with his children in the postdiluvian world, God punishes and segregates humanity by multiplying their languages (Genesis 11); only God's physical manifestation, betrayal, torture and 'death' on Earth could at last set the world to rights (Matthew 27, John 3:16); the latter was not, after all, the 'final solution', with God finally threatening to destroy the world, saving only a select few who are to be rewarded with the privilege of praising God's greatness and wisdom for all eternity (Revelation 5–7). Also of interest is Judges 1:19, which implies that Yahweh could not defeat 'chariots of iron'.

come imperfect seems unthinkable; likewise the need for worldwide floods, blood magic, and divine sacrifice. It also appears doubly unlikely that an all-knowing God would become disappointed with what he — omnipotent and omniscient as he is — created.

Furthermore, deistic god-concepts are far superior probabilistically to theism when reflecting on God's hiddenness in the world, if all else is held equal. Arguments from god's hiddenness tend to focus on the lack of direct evidence for the existence of God. An example would be:

(1) A god that requires our adoration would probably make its existence clear to us.

(2) It is not clear that such a god exists.

(3) Therefore, such a god probably does not exist.

One solution may be the overused appeal to God's alleged inscrutability, as in sceptical theism. But such a tactic removes the possibility for a proper probabilistic analysis, meaning that philosophers could well consider many of the infinitely many alternatives to theism just as — and even more — plausible.[37] A more reasonable objection would be that the lack of evidence is not evidence. However, in epistemic probabilistic analyses, which considers expectations about extant evidence, it certainly can be. Just as the order and the lack of radiation in this room indicates that a nuclear explosion did not occur here yesterday, so too does the lack of interactions with God indicate that God is not as interested in us as typically presumed. A less reasonable objection would be that God does not want to infringe upon our free will. That assumes that the knowledge of God's existence necessarily leads to a person's acceptance and worship of God, which even the Bible rules out, as made obvious by the fall of Lucifer and the disobedience of many ancient Israelites. Simply, if God does not make his love for us clear, it is reasonable to think that God — that is, the god of classical theism — does not exist. It seems that the best way for a supernaturalist to approach the argument is to concede that while it is unlikely that the sort of god described in the first premise ex-

37 In attempting to refute Schellenberg's argument from divine hiddenness, Cuneo unconvincingly appeals to mere possibilities, such as the existence of 'divine love', which is different from 'human love'. See Terence Cuneo, "Another look at divine hiddenness," *Religious Studies* 49, no. 2 (2013): 151–164.

ists, some god might still exist. And so we abandon God and move on to Deo. With all else held equal (keep in mind that there are many possible deisms), Deo's existence is more probable than God's.

After all, the evidence of God's hiddenness would be more expected if there existed a god that did not wish for relationships with us. Such arguments do not necessarily rule out theism, but they do make theism less probable, and deism (or other alternatives, like the evil god of dogism who might want to harm us with her silence in order to condemn us to an eternity of suffering) more probable. Arguments from hiddenness, while they can be used to argue for naturalism in a direct comparison with classical theism, do no harm at all to Deo, or at least does not harm every single one of her kin (again, as with previous concepts, there are infinitely-many possible deisms). Hence, *ceteris paribus*, it is more likely that a deistic god exists. Furthermore, the concepts of simplicity appealed to by philosophical theists in order to arrive at a single omnipotent, omniscient, and omnibenevolent god can also lead one from theism to deism. Deism makes fewer claims about the world than theism. A fact that also points to its being more robust; there is less to be disconfirmed by future scientific discoveries. Similarly, deism is a catch-all hypothesis, while there is only one theism, or at least one brand of theism endorsed by a particular theistic philosopher.

There are also quasi-deistic gods to consider, ones that may be revelatory after all. It just so happens that the revelations are not intended for us. It is worth considering why it is that theistic philosophers so often assume that humans are of such great objective importance, that they deserve these divine communications. Such scholars ought to entertain the notion that the focus of such a god's (henceforth, "Queo") attention and infatuation may not, in fact, be *Homo sapiens*. This line of thought raises the possibility that many humans cannot bear the thought that they are some insignificant side-effect of other processes, so they invent religions in order to place themselves as the reason for everything and as the object of a loving god's unyielding love and attention. Assuming that a revelatory god does exist, it cannot simply be assumed that it is not some other species that has enamoured her.

Perhaps Queo has actually revealed himself, not to humans, but to an extraterrestrial species.[38] More locally, (s)he might have been revealed to oysters, bees, peacocks, artificially-intelligent robots, or inanimate rocks. For example, the true religious faith might lie with the sheep, whose god will deliver them from those ghastly oversized apes who enslave, and even eat them. Elements of this tradition could have become appropriated by both Jews (cf. their alleged Egyptian captivity) and Christians (cf. Jesus-shepherd motifs).[39] Mayhap Queo has even chosen to reveal god's self to other great apes, such as orangutans or gorillas. It could be some divine joke, that the species chosen to be graced with Queo's all-important reveal is not *Homo sapiens sapiens* (modern humans), but their closest relatives, *Pan paniscus* (bonobos) and *Pan troglodytes* (common chimpanzees).[40]

Consider also, the post-humanist possibilities that Queo has not yet revealed itself to humanity, or any other species, but will do so in future. It may be tomorrow, or one hundred years from now. It may be to *Homo sapiens sapiens*, or a slightly-evolved future human species (perhaps a *Homo evolvus*, *Homo noeticus* or *Homo sapiens luminous*), or a much-changed human species (such

38 Theists may, irrelevantly, cite the Fermi paradox regarding the lack of evidence for alien civilisations. One novel solution holds that much of the observable universe is a simulation designed to make it appear as though humans are the only intelligent beings. See Stephen Baxter, "The Planetarium Hypothesis: A Resolution of the Fermi Paradox," *Journal of the British Interplanetary Society* 54, no. 5/6 (2001): 210–216. Noted Creationist Ken Ham suspects that there are no intelligent extraterrestrials and surprisingly asserts that if there were, "any aliens would also be affected by Adam's sin, but because they are not Adam's descendants, they can't have salvation". See Ken Ham. "'We'll Find a New Earth within 20 Years'", accessed 29/07/2014, http://blogs.answersingenesis.org/blogs/ken-ham/2014/07/20/well-find-a-new-earth-within-20-years.

39 See Exodus, Psalm 23, 1 Peter 5:4. Note that the archaeological evidence contradicts Jewish claims of Israelite servitude in ancient Egypt. See James Weinstein, "Exodus and the Archaeological Reality," in *Exodus: The Egyptian Evidence*, ed. Ernest S. Frerichs and Leonard H. Lesko (Eisenbrauns, 1997), 87; Israel Finkelstein and Neil Asher Silberman, *The Bible Unearthed: Archaeology's New Vision of Ancient Israel and the Origin of its Sacred Texts* (Free Press, 2002), 62–69. Even respected rabbis such as David Wolpe doubt the historicity of the Exodus, and other aspects of the traditional Jewish origin tales. See Teresa Watanabe. "Doubting the Story of Exodus," accessed 06/07/2015, http://articles.latimes.com/2001/apr/13/news/mn-50481.

40 These two types of chimpanzees are the closest living relatives to humans. See Anne Fischer et al., "Evidence for a Complex Demographic History of Chimpanzees," *Molecular Biology and Evolution* 21, no. 5 (2004): 799–808. Note that the theist could accuse me of presupposing the possibility of a revelation to animals without linguistic capacities. This does not apply to all the examples provided, and would be ungenerous, since the omnipotent God should not be limited by linguistic concerns.

as the Eloi or the Morlocks),[41] or an alternative species (possibly long after humans are extinct), such as the nobly resilient cockroaches[42] or a highly-evolved race of cat-people.[43] Our collective ego, whilst visibly important to the survival of the species, cannot be considered authoritative in matters of objective truth, especially when the matter concerns human importance, where — presently unavailable — outsider perspectives may be required.

There appears to be no good reason to assume anthropocentrism, and a move to more biocentric views would surely allow for more objective philosophising. Indeed, given humanity's fleeting existence in a minute part of the universe, objective arguing for human primacy would be quite the challenge.[44] And that Queo would wait several more years should also not deter the theistic philosopher, given that many theistic religious adherents are content to believe that God had already waited billions (from the creation of the Universe, and the formation of Earth), millions (since the dawn of humankind), hundreds of thousands (since the rise of anatomically modern humans), or thousands (since the rise of human civilisation) of years, before finally revealing herself to only a handful of people in the sparsely-populated deserts of the Middle East.[45]

Similarly, it is possible that Queo has already revealed himself, though much earlier than is traditionally thought. Queo may have been revealed not to modern humans, but to human ancestors such as *Homo heidelbergensis*, *Homo erectus*, *Homo habilis*, *Australopithecus afarensis*, *Pierolapithecus catalaunicus*, or perhaps to the closely-related *Homo floresiensis* or *Homo neanderthalensis*. Or maybe the revelation is not for the advanced apes at all,

41 See H. G. Wells, *The Time Machine* (Penguin, 2012).

42 Perhaps the comedian Ellen DeGeneres was correct, when she speculated about god being a giant bug, one that is unimpressed about all the cockroaches and ants that humans have killed. See Ellen DeGeneres, *My Point... and I Do Have One* (Bantam, 1995), 129.

43 *Felis sapiens* plays a prominent role in the surrealist humour of Rob Grant and Doug Naylor. Like humans, these cat people thought themselves very important, created religions, fought holy wars, and obeyed sexually restrictive commandments such as "Thou shalt not partake of carnal knowledge with more than four members of the opposite sex at any one session". See Grant Naylor, *Red Dwarf: Infinity Welcomes Careful Drivers* (Penguin Books, 1989), 123–128.

44 Consider also that humans are not the oldest extant species on Earth (there are also possibly many more older and life-sustaining planets throughout the universe), or the most numerous.

45 This references the God of Judeo-Christianity. See the Biblical books of Genesis and Mark. The populous Chinese, who would later invent the printing press, may have been a wiser choice. The focus on a handful of desert dwellers seems at odds with God's alleged love and desire that *all* shall enter into a relationship with him.

whose origins, like all animals, lie in primordial sludge. This grand revelation may have been reserved for (relatively) non-related species such as the many kinds of dinosaurs, or even earlier — and common — ancestors, such as primitive, single-celled, prokaryote-like organisms. These seemingly misanthropic imaginings are all possibilities that theistic philosophers have for the most part not even acknowledged, let alone eliminated.

It should also be considered that discourses on revelation tend to involve supernatural or miraculous claims, which are inherently implausible, so that again, deisms may be considered simpler and more probable.[46] Philosophers could also consider the possibility that the creator god is no longer present, or even dead. Philosophers could also consider the case of a single god that, whilst being transcendent and fully apart from the creation, is not immaterial as the God of theism is said to be; such a god arguably coheres better with the available evidence.[47] But such reasoning feels *gratuitous* at this stage. The point has been well made. There are numerous — arguably infinitely many — monotheistic alternatives to classical theism, and they have not all been comprehensively refuted or convincingly dismissed for being relatively less probable. In fact, many — perhaps infinitely many — of them are more probable than theism.

V. SUMMARISED ARGUMENT

The following is a summarised and very conservative[48] form of my argument from alternative monotheisms, which charitably assumes that some monotheistic god-model obtains:

(1) There are numerous logically possible monotheisms, of which theism is one.

(2) Many of these models can reasonably explain the evidence.

46 Several scholars have argued against the crucial revelatory event that is Jesus' resurrection, and miraculous/supernatural claims in general. For example, see Raphael Lataster, "A Philosophical and Historical Analysis of William Lane Craig's Resurrection of Jesus Argument," *Think* 14, no. 39 (2015): 59–71.

47 Since substance dualism has not yet been established.

48 In that infinitely many alternatives are not appealed to, which could unsportingly reveal the probability of theism's truth as effectively being 0, even when monotheism is accepted.

(3) At least some of these models explain the evidence better than theism.

(4) Therefore, it is reasonable to consider that theism is unlikely to be true.

The first premise is obviously true. Numerous monotheistic god-models can be conceived, and theism, or an individual's specific brand of theism, is but one of them.[49] (2) is also true; it is (3) that may be contentious. Nevertheless, while arguments from evil and hiddenness do not decisively disprove the existence of God or of any god/s, they certainly point to the higher probability of alternative god-concepts. Other evidences that are taken to support theism over naturalism do not necessarily support theism over all alternative monotheisms. For example, the deistic god also creates and fine-tunes. Note that 'the evidence' refers to all currently available evidence and factors pertaining to reasonable belief, and that some of these models differ from theism only on one point (e.g., tolerance of evil, willingness to reveal), so that the higher likelihood results in a higher overall probability. This all leads naturally to (4). There are many monotheistic alternatives to theism that are more probable. As such, theism is very improbable, even when the existence of one and only one transcendent god is conceded.

VI. CONCLUSION

Thus is the *argument from alternative monotheisms*. For the sake of argument, it was assumed that the evidence is sufficient to demonstrate that one and only one transcendent god exists. However, if so, the evidence is not sufficient to declare that theism is probable, or at least the most probably instantiated of the monotheistic god-concepts; a task made more complicated by the fact that there are infinitely many monotheistic alternatives to theism. In fact, many of the alternatives to God, such as Dog (the Evil God), Mig (the morally indifferent god), Deo (a deistic god), and Queo (a quasi-deistic god), better explain the evidence; evidence such as the gratuitous goods and evils present in the world, and of the 'hiddenness of God'. In other words, it is relatively more probable that these, similar, and other gods exist. Of course, even if theism were the most

49 Of course, secular critics might object that it is not clear that there are *any* logically possible monotheisms. But this is charitably assumed here, for the sake of argument.

probable of the monotheisms, the extent to which it is more probable needs to be established, since the catch-all hypothesis of alternative monotheisms could still be more probable than theism. Theistic philosophers have not accomplished this, even if the unjustified assertion that their notions of simplicity render a theory more probable were granted. Based on current evidence, theism should be considered a very improbable god-model, even when the existence of one and only one transcendent god is upheld.

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PHILOSOPHY OF RELIGION AS A WAY TO SKEPTICISM[1]

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Abstract. The article aims to answer the question whether philosophy of religion can fulfil its research goals, that is discover the essence of religion, find out if any one of them (and, if need be, which one) is true and if faith and religious behavior are rational. In the face of a multitude of religions it is difficult to point to any common elements which makes it harder (if not impossible) to discover the essence of religion. Trying to prove the consistency of the concept of God as an object of religion and either His/Her existence or non-existence faces similar problems; this makes it impossible to conclusively decide whether religion is true or not. Therefore, it is also difficult to settle whether religious faith (or lack thereof) is rational or irrational. However, this failure does not deny the cognitive value of philosophy of religion, which can analyze various religious doctrines as it relates to their consistency, truthfulness, or the rationality of following them.

I. PHILOSOPHY OF RELIGION

There are commonly known problems with understanding and practicing philosophy since none of its definitions is universally accepted by philosophers. This is the reason why philosophy is treated lightly by the representatives of other branches of science. It is difficult to treat seriously a branch, lacking not only a specific set of accepted (and real) claims but also an agreement on its objects, tasks and methods to achieve them. The situation is made even worse by the fact that some philosophers defend absurd theses, for example, that the objects we see are illusions (subjective projections of the mind

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and not an objective reality); meanwhile those who believe such claims to be false are unable to prove so. This could suggest that philosophical problems are not serious. This assessment is a result of not only paradoxical claims made by philosophers but also cognitive ambitions of philosophy, which seeks final and absolutely certain solutions to fundamental problems like the nature of existence or the criterion of truth.

Similar troubles are linked to philosophy of religion which has an additional problem of the complexity of religious phenomena. Therefore, the first question should be what do the philosophers of religion study, what for, what methods do they use and also whether their work is necessary to understand religion (that is, does philosophy of religion contribute something essentially new to the knowledge about religion). If philosophy of religion is to have a point, it must study an aspect omitted by other sciences (like psychology of religion, sociology of religion, history of religion or comparative religious studies).

Philosophy of religion is often practiced as natural theology attempting to justify the main religious claims only by reason (without references to faith). It is therefore apologetics aiming to prove that a specific religious doctrine is coherent and true[2]. Philosophy of religion is also practiced as criticism of religion, undermining the point of specific doctrines and rituals[3]. This is the reason why philosophy is often seen as a threat to religion and the philosopher is considered an atheist or a godless person. However, regardless of the differences, both models (apologetic and critical) show that philosophy depends on everyday beliefs, our worldview or even emotional factors. Philosophers do not want to admit this problem, proclaiming the notion of knowledge based on unbiased arguments of reason; they also often consider philosophy to be the most important science, the base and condition of the rest (this was the position held by Edmund Husserl). However, philosophy of religion is neither the most important area of studies of religion nor its basis; and yet it takes on important issues ignored by other sciences concerning religion.

The basic problem of philosophy is linked to the question about the essence of religion: what religion really is. This question also appears in other areas of studies of religion, for in order to be able to study it, a psychologist

2 In this tradition we could mention such contemporary philosophers as Richard Swinburne, Alvin Plantinga or Peter van Inwagen.

3 In this tradition we could mention such philosophers as Bertrand Russell, Paul Edwards, Kai Nielsen or Anthony Flew (before his conversion).

of religion must be able to distinguish between religious actions and attitudes from the non-religious ones; much like a sociologist or a historian. However, a psychologist defines the essence of religion differently than a sociologist, historian, or philosopher; since the latter seeks a constituting feature of religion or necessary and sufficient condition of being religion.

The next problem considered on the ground of philosophy of religion, is whether religious claims (doctrines) can be true or justified (and if yes, than which one is true and the most credible). This issue is directly linked to the question of the nature and existence of the main object of religious cult, especially to the question whether the concept of this object is consistent.

Finally, the third group of issues taken on the grounds of philosophy of religion, concerns the question whether human religious behavior is rational.

Philosophers attempt to solve these problems not empirically but only by conceptual analysis; they are not interested in detailed differences between historical religions, but in their essence. They do not examine the differences between different images of God, but the essential content of the concept of God and His/Her existence. Philosophers also do not ask what role do specific religions have in history and how they are used, but whether religious faith is rational.

By taking on these issues, philosophers confront their hypotheses not only with facts but also with logically possible situations, which never occurred. They use thought experiments which aim at falsifying (or correcting) definitions or hypotheses. This method, broadly used by Anglo-Saxon analytical philosophers, comes from the nature of philosophy itself, dissatisfied with partial and hypothetical solutions and seeking universal (including all possibilities) and absolutely certain (immune to all counterarguments) truths.

The main goal of philosophy of religion is an essential description of religion, however philosophers often also attempt to explain the existence of religion. From this perspective, the important question is whether religion is just an accidental phenomenon, characteristic for a specific periods in human history, or a phenomenon that is irremovable, coming from human nature. On occasion, ambitions of philosophers are even bigger, and concern judging religion as a source of fanaticism or moral advancement and the demand of its cultivation or elimination from public life[4].

4 This problem was currently posed by the new atheists, like philosopher Daniel Dennett or biologist Richard Dawkins.

In the paper I will omit the issues concerning explaining religion (why it exists) and focus on its description (the definition of religion) and evaluation (in the aspect of rationality of religious behavior). The main task of my paper is to answer the question whether philosophy of religion can achieve its goals.

II. DEFINITION OF RELIGION

The definition of religion should include all and only those phenomena which constitute the essence of religion. Therefore, the definition has to be essential (including a set of constituting features of religion) and should give us a criterion (to distinguish religion from other phenomena). The definition should apply to not only historic religions but to its all possible forms, even those which do not exist yet, or even never will exist; because, if they are possible religions then they must be included to the definition. The definition of religion has to fulfill the same conditions that are required of definitions of other phenomena. However, the question, how to construct it, remains.

One of the methods (an a posteriori definition) is referencing the observation of the phenomena being defined; it is comparing different religions in order to find similarities between them. If a group of necessary and sufficient features is established, we can say that an essential definition of religion is achieved.

This method, however, is problematic because the necessary condition of isolating religious phenomena as an object of observation is previous knowledge of the essence of religion. If one distinguishes religious phenomenon from others, than it means he/she already has an essential definition of religion. The condition to define religion based on observation turns out to be previous knowledge of this definition; it is a vicious circle.

Another method of defining religion (an a priori definition) would be based on an abstract concept of it without reference to existing religions. This method would be similar to construct the idea of a square in geometry, since it is known, that no square objects fulfills this definition; they are all just imperfect visualization. Unfortunately, it does not seem to be a good way to define religion, because it is difficult to describe what religion is, without referring to its historical forms. By ignoring experience, it is easy to construct a definition which is too broad (including also those phenomena which are not religions) or too narrow (overlooking phenomena which are religions); in extreme cases one could be left with a definition without an example in the real world.

These problems appear when defining not only religion, but also other phenomena like art, sport knowledge or human nature[5]. Everyone who wants to study them has to know their definition as a condition of distinguishing them from other phenomena. Paradoxically, however, a definition (especially an essential one) can only be the result of an exhaustive knowledge of the phenomenon. In order to avoid this dilemma, we initially assume a common and unfocused definitions, specifying them in the course of studies; but this definition is not, of course, essential definition.

Because of the mentioned problems we should ask, whether the initial assumption that an essence of religion (as a set of its necessary and sufficient features) exists is justified. It suggests that a perfect religion, which is a religion in the strict sense, exists (or is possible). This means that other religions are only religions to the degree to which they resemble the perfect (or the most developed) religion[6]. This hypothesis is problematic because attempts to create a perfect religion usually turn out to be a totally false picture of religion; an example could be the atheistic religion or the natural religion (also called the religion of reason, religion without mystery or without revelation). However, even abandoning the idea of a perfect religion it is impossible to abandon the belief that an essence of religion exists. The reason for this is the fact that every person studying religion makes this assumption, since they distinguish between what is and what is not the subject of their studies. Therefore, even if historians refuse the existence of a perfect religion (or even the group of features constituting an essence of all actual and possible religions), they still use it in their study in the form of some kind of definition of religion. Paradoxically, refusing a universal essence of religion is also an essential thesis; in that case the essence of religion is that it has no essence.

These types of speculation may appear unnecessary or even superficial and ridiculous, especially since in practice we accurately distinguish religion from other phenomena (like politics, science or art). However, it is not so simply, because essentialism is the condition of human thinking; in every phenomenon we must distinguish what is important (and necessary) from what is unimportant (and unnecessary). Even without being able to discover or de-

5 Some similar problems with the definition of knowledge were discussed by Roderick M. Chisholm.

6 In the western tradition philosophers of religion usually take the monotheistic religions as a model of religion.

fine the essence of religion, we assume that it exists, because there are some reasons that we call Buddhism, polytheism or Roman Catholicism, religions. Searching for the essence of religion does not come from philosophers' stubbornness but from the real phenomena which we describe as religious phenomena. Despite the differences, the world of religions is not extremely pluralistic, since it does not exclude the possibility of similarities between religions. Even a pluralist, who believes that there are many quite different religions, is an essentialist because he/she describes all religions with the same name.

Wittgenstein's theory of language games, according to which the meaning of our concepts depends on the way they are used, could be an attempt to break the deadlock. For example, let's take the concept of a game. The game of football is different form the game of chess, but they are both games by family resemblance, just like the game of polo, bridge or basketball. The concept of religion is also a family concept; it may be difficult to find shared features between Islam, Buddhism and Roman Catholicism, but they are similar enough to be called religions.

This solution is not satisfactory because in the case of family relations there are more and less typical examples. Certainly, being a parent is a closer relationship than being a nephew or a niece. Similarly, there can be more typical examples of being religion, which could be its essence. But, even if there are no typical examples of religion (like there is no typical example of a game), they are all called religions, because of the similarities between them. Therefore, they have similar traits, considered to be the essence of religion, which suggests that the theory of family resemblances is also a form of essentialism.

The problem is that we are unable to discover the feature that would be shared by all religions. Even if sacrifice or prayer seem to be present in all religions, they certainly do not exhaust their essence; defining religion as a sacrifice or a prayer would be too narrow. This suggests that essentialism is a necessary assumption in studying religion, but it leads to skepticism in the case of definition of religion.

III. TRUTHFULNESS OF RELIGION

The next problem is linked to the question whether religion (and, if so, which one) is true. It is complicated because of different definitions of truth.

The realist (also called correspondent or classical) definition of truth – saying that those claims consistent with facts are true – is the closest to our everyday intuitions; the statement "God exists" is true if God really does exist, and false if He/She does not. However, the problem is that in the case of religious statements concerning the existence of God or the afterlife, we do not know how to check if they are true.

Also the coherence theory of truth, which says that a group of claims is true if it is consistent, is troublesome. This condition could be fulfilled by several religions, also those which exclude each other, and only one of them can be true in the sense of being complaisant with reality.

The problem of the truthfulness of religion is equally difficult to solve on the base of pragmatic definition of truth, which says that what brings positive results is the truth; these could mean both objective rules of action and a subjective feeling of a meaningful life. No matter whether God does exist or not, faith in Him/Her can motivate us to do good; therefore, it is pragmatically true. The problem is, however, that in this sense all religious doctrines can be true, because each of them could fulfill somebody's expectations or emotional needs. It is also possible that the same doctrine could be useful to one person and harmful to another, which would mean it was true and false at the same time.

Mostly, the problem of whether religion is true, is discussed on the grounds of the realist theory of truth. First and foremost it concerns the existence of the object of religion. It can be illustrated with the example of a theistic God but a similar reasoning can be employed in the context of different religious doctrines.

III.1. Consistency of God

In the Middle Ages one started with proving the existence of God and then described His/Her attributes. However, since Leibniz, proof of God's possibility is considered as a condition to prove His/Her existence; if it turned out that God is inconsistent, than He/She could not exist.

Apart from consistency, God also has to have traits which make Him/Her worthy of worship. Unfortunately, by ascribing Him/Her traits important from a religious point of view (like the love for humanity) one tends to fall into anthropomorphism and mythology. For example, how could we compare God's love with human love? However, if we only ascribe to God metaphysical traits (like the necessary existence), we deprive Him/Her from

religious meaning. Despite Christian philosophers' struggles, a necessary being does not have to love humans or even be a person. On the philosophical ground, one cannot assume that Christ is the true image of God because one can only believe in His divinity and proof of Christ's consistency (God and human at the same time) is impossible.

There is a similar problem linked to the concept of a philosophical absolute. If it is an infinite being (in the sense of an infinite number of attributes and their infinite power) than it is inconsistent (current infinity is impossible) and inconceivable (we do not know what infinite kindness, power or mercy is). If it is a finite being with empirical traits like corporality and spatiotemporal location, then it is easy to check that it does not exist; the concept of God is therefore consistent but objectless.

The hypothesis that all attributes ascribed to God are metaphors and should not be taken literally, is an attempt to avoid this problem. However, every metaphor, if it is to be understood, should be possible to translate (at least partially) to the language of empirical concepts. Therefore, if such a translation is impossible then the concept of God lacks content and is incomprehensible.

III.2. Existence of God

The problem of God's existence appears even at the level of concepts, since if He/She is an inconsistent being, then He/She cannot exist; if He/She is a consistent being, then He/She may exist (but we do not know whether He/She really does). The question of God's existence would be answered positively on the level of the concept only if one could prove that one of His/Her attributes is a necessary existence. Such attempts (called ontological arguments) are based on the assumption that God is the most perfect being possible and therefore has to exist (if He/She did not exist then He/She would not be the most perfect being possible)[7]. However these arguments are fruitless because it is not known whether the concept of God as the most perfect being possible, is consistent[8].

Another way to solve the problem of God's existence is referencing empirical testimonies, which are supposedly proving or disproving it. The theis-

7 Recently, Brian Leftow tries to defend the validity of the Anselmian version of the ontological argument. See, for example Brian Leftow, "The Ontological Argument", in *The Oxford Handbook of Philosophy of Religion*, ed. William J. Wainwright (OUP, 2005).

8 Criticism of the various versions of the ontological arguments is presented in Graham R. Oppy, *Ontological Arguments and Belief in God* (CUP, 1995).

tic argument is the existence of the world (the world could not create itself) or its ordered structure, which cannot be a result of chance. However, these arguments are not conclusive. The argument from order is based on doubtful premises, since, there is not only order in the world, but also chaos and cruelty. The fact that some species of animals are food for other species is hardly evidence that the world was created by an almighty and merciful God. Also the rationality of the laws of nature could come from natural causes. Similarly, one cannot conclude that God exists based on the fact that the world exists, because it could be explained by the hypothesis of chance or its own autonomy and eternity.

Proving that God does not exist is equally difficult. The most important argument is the fact of evil; if there is a God who cares about creatures, then He/She should not allow the horrendous evil, especially in the form of natural disasters, suffering and death. However, this argument is not conclusive because it is possible that God allows evil for a greater good, with which He/She will bless His/Her creatures in a future life[9]. It could also be argued that evil is the source of religion, because only faith in God allows one to bear it.

The currently broadly discussed God's hiddenness (especially by John Schellenberg) is an additional problem. If He/She exists, loves us, and wants all the best for us the same time knowing, that the greatest good for us is to know Him/Her, then it is difficult to understand why He/She remains hidden. In that case, atheism seems better and more rational position, because if God as an absolutely perfect being did exist, He/She would rid the world from evil and would not keep us doubtful about His/Her existence; if He/She has not done it, it means He/She does not exist. However, even God's hiddenness does not disprove His existence; it is possible that He/She has revealed Himself/Herself even though we cannot see it, or that He/She has an important reason for remaining hidden.

If we have proof neither for nor against God's existence, then both faith or lack of faith in Him/Her go beyond the available evidence. We may know that one of the statements: "God exists"/ "God does not exist" is true, but we do not know which one; therefore we have reached skeptical conclusions.

9 This kind of theodicy is developed in Richard Swinburne, *Providence and the Problem of Evil* (Clarendon Press, 1998). Another kind of theodicy was defended in Peter van Inwagen, *The Problem of Evil: The Gifford Lectures 2003* (Clarendon Press, 2006).

Skepticism may have the form of a thesis claiming that no people know whether God exists or not, because the human mind is unable to solve this problem. This thesis seems doubtful because the only evidence for it is our current lack of knowledge. Just because so far, we have been unable to answer this question does not mean that we will not answer it in the future, or that the human mind is unable to answer it.

Skepticism can also be universal thesis, claiming that no mind knows, and can know whether God exists or not, because it is an unsolvable problem in its nature. This means that if God does not exist, then no one can know it; similarly, if God does exist, also no one (even God Himself) can know it. However, this thesis cannot be proven.

Apart from all these (and others) problems with skepticism, it can be in accordance with both faith and lack of faith in God. It is possible for a person who does not know whether God exists, to believe in God's existence, and to practice religion just like it is possible for such a person to not believe in God's existence and not practice religion. However, neither faith nor lack of faith in God can answer the question if religion is true.

Of course, one could argue that from a religious point of view philosophical arguments are unnecessary and the requirements of God's consistency and the proof of God's existence are too strong. For a person who believes in God, the truthfulness of religion is not what is important; rather the feeling of safety and life's meaning. Religion is therefore not a description of the world, but trust in God.

I am afraid, however, that this argument is false because trust in God assumes that God exists; if God does not exist, God cannot help. The problem of God's existence is therefore key to the truthfulness of religion, even though we cannot solve it. In this case, the question of whether religious practices are rational, arises.

IV. RATIONALITY OF RELIGIOUS BEHAVIOR

Judging religious behavior depends on the criterion of rationality. According to the ethics of beliefs defended by W. K. Clifford, only those claims which are proven can be considered true. Therefore, if there is no evidence that God exists, faith in Him/Her is irrational and morally wrong.

Unfortunately, not only religious beliefs but also many common (and even scientific) convictions do not fulfill such strong criteria of rationality. A person following Clifford's rules could accept just a few truths, which would paralyze her actions. Moreover, the lack of proof for God's existence does not negate the rationality of religious cults because humans are celebratory animals, living in a world full of symbols, no matter if those symbols refer to some real and transcendent objects. We must also recognize, that following Clifford's rules, lack of faith in God is equally irrational and morally wrong, since we have no proof of His/Her non-existence.

On the other hand, according to William James in significant cases one is allowed to follow emotions, and consider whatever brings more benefits to be true. Therefore, if a certain religion fulfills people's expectations, gives them a feeling that life is meaningful or hope for eternity, then they are allowed to consider such religion as true. Similarly, if religion brings more damage than good to individual and to society, then practicing it is not only irrational, but also evil from a moral perspective.

Even with this assumption, it is difficult to assess if religion brings more damage or good. New atheists claim, that every religion is not only false, but also damaging, bringing fanaticism and wars. On the other hand, however, we could say, that some religious people are able to sacrifice their lives in defend some important values. The Polish monk – Father Kolbe – could be an example; before the Second World War he sympathized with national-catholic ideology, and yet in the concentration camp in Auschwitz he gave his life for another prisoner.

Unfortunately, historical testimony cannot answer the key question: does evil or good coming from religious motivations is a result of the religion's essence or the character of its followers? Based on the observations of religious history we cannot prove that religion is in itself a source of evil or a source of good. History may show what religion was used as a justification for, and how its followers were behaving but it does not say if religion itself brings more harm or benefit. This means that on the issue of whether religious behavior is rational (and also on the demands of elimination or propagation of religion) we must remain skeptics.

V. MEANING OF PHILOSOPHY OF RELIGION

So far, the conclusions are rather pessimistic, since the main problems of philosophy of religion remain unsolved. Even though we know that statements like "God either exists or not" are true, we have no means of deciding which alternative is true; so philosophy of religion fails, because it cannot answer for its main questions. In this situation we should ask, if these questions are serious scientific problems.

In response, one could state that when it comes to science, questions which are currently impossible to answer are still accepted, if it is possible, that they can be answered in future. But, even if we will never find the answers to some questions, they should not be eliminated, since they point to an important aspect of religion.

Philosophers may not be gathering empirical knowledge, but they bring conceptual tools which can help us to understand problem of the truthfulness, consistency and rationality of religion. If this task is to be successful, however, one has to abandon ambitions to study religion as such, concentrating on specific religious doctrines. If there is no perfect or essential religion, just specific historical religions, philosophers should not study fiction, which they consider to be the essence of religion, but should concentrate on the consistency, truthfulness and rationality of specific religions.

A similar situation takes place in the philosophy of science; it is difficult to study science as such, but it is possible to practice with benefit, philosophy of physics, philosophy of biology, or philosophy of mathematics. Similarly, one should study philosophy of Christianity, or philosophy of Islam rather than philosophy of religion. It does not mean that philosophy of Christianity should be its apologetics or criticism; quite contrary, it should be, as far as possible an objective analysis of its consistency, truthfulness and rationality.

Of course, one cannot exclude the possibility that such research will result in skepticism. However, skepticism, even as the last word in philosophy, is not fruitless since it modifies the original understanding of the object of studies. Consistent skepticism is (or at least should be) also a skepticism aware of its limitations; this means that a skeptic is (should be) skeptical also towards skepticism. Therefore, skepticism is a natural, critical standpoint, taken by every scholar not only towards different branches of science or theories constructed by their colleagues, but also towards their own ideas. From this perspective,

philosophy is not a separate area of research, but a critical self-knowledge of every scientist, no matter which branch of study of religion they represent.

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GOD AS ULTIMATE TRUTHMAKER

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Abstract. Theories of truthmaking have been introduced quite recently in epistemology. Having little to do with truth serums, or truths drugs, their concern is to define truth in terms of a certain relation between truthbearers and truthmakers. Those theories make an attempt to remedy what is supposed to be lacking in classical theories of truth, especially in Alfred Tarski's semantic theory.

I. OLD SCHOOL SEMANTICS OF TRUTH

I will certainly not venture — I would never dare — to lecture polish scholars on Tarski. This would amount to bringing owls in Athens. Let us just recall that, according to Tarski,

> Semantics is a discipline which, speaking loosely, deals with certain relations between expressions of a language and the objects (or "states of affairs") "referred to" by those expressions. As typical examples of semantic concepts we may mention the concepts of designation, satisfaction, and definition.[1]

Designation and satisfaction express relations between expressions, names of variables or predicates, and objects or properties referred to by these expressions (originally those considerations were limited to deductive languages[2]).

1 Alfred Tarski, "The Semantic Conception of Truth: and the Foundations of Semantics", *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 4, no. 3 (1944): §5.

2 To a large extent, criticisms adressed to the semantic conception of truth neglect the fact that it is not devoted to the analysis of natural spoken languages. Tarski: "For other languages — thus, for all natural, 'spoken' languages — the meaning of the problem is more or less vague, and its solution can have only an approximate character. Roughly speaking, the approximation consists in replacing a natural language … by one whose structure is exactly specified, and which diverges from the given language 'as little as possible'." Tarski, "The Semantic Conception of Truth", §6. In particular, there might be no systematic way of deciding whether a given sentence of a natural language is well-formed.

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For instance, a name designating an object or an object satisfaying a predicate may be defined as follows

'*n*' designates *o* in *L* iff *o* = *n*

o satisfies '*is* F' in *L* iff *o* is F

Tarski even „decides to extend the popular usage of the term "designate" by applying it not only to names, but also to sentences" so that „A sentence is true if it designates an existing state of affairs"

If "*n*" is a name and "F" is a predicate, then "*n* is F" expresses a true proposition if and only if there exists an object o such that "*n*" refers to *o* and "F" is satisfied by *o*[3]. To summarize : 'S' is true in L iff S, 'S' being the name of the sentence in L, which designates the proposition S.

II. TARSKI'S SEMANTICS IN NEED OF COMPLEMENTATION?

Let us now inquire into what is supposed to lack in the tarskian semantic conception of truth. According to Fraser McBride,

> [W]hilst a Tarski-style theory of truth consequently achieves a high score on the meaning side — and thereby tells us everything we need to know about truth with respect to *L* by deflationist lights — it lets us down on the reality side.[4]

Following Kevin Mulligan and Peter Simons, „approaches of this kind do nothing to explain how sentences about the real world are made true or false"[5]; „Tarski's theory is in need of supplementation by considerations about the entities in virtue of which propositions are true"[6]. Theories of truthmaking, then, are in search of what makes a sentence true, instead of just defining the property of a true sentence… A truth-maker is then the "ground" or the "ontological ground" of a true claim.[7]

3 Hence a definition of truth by satisfaction : *a sentence is true if it is satisfied by all objects, and false otherwise* in the 1944 paper, § 11.

4 Fraser MacBride, "Truthmakers", in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, 2016.

5 Kevin Mulligan, Peter Simons, and Barry Smith, "Truth-Makers", *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 44, no. 3 (1984): 288.

6 Peter Simons, "Logical Atomism and Its Ontological Refinement: A Defense", in *Language, Truth and Ontology*, ed. Kevin Mulligan (Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1992), 158–59.

7 Herbert Hochberg, "Nominalism, Platonism and "Being True of"", *Noûs* 1, no. 4 (1967): 416–17.

However, curiously enough, defenders of truthmakers deny any commitment to a causal understanding of truthmaking. Truthmaker theories are looking for that in virtue of which something is true, but they insist on precluding any causal commitment. (But what is a virtue without causal power?) As Bergmann and Brower put it:

> Despite the misleading connotations of its name, the notion is *not* to be understood in causal terms (i.e., literally in terms of *making*). On the contrary, it is to be understood in terms of broadly logical entailment — as is evident from the fact that contemporary philosophers habitually speak of truthmakers as *entailing* the truth of certain statements or predications (or better, the truths expressed by them).[8]

But does it work better when truthmaking is conceived of in terms of entailment? Bergmann and Brower deny it:

> a complete analysis of truthmaking in terms of entailment would lead to obvious absurdities, including the claim that necessary truths — such as 2+2=4 — have any existing thing whatsoever as their truthmakers.[9]

Following MacBride,

> Ultimately (*Entailment-T*), or a relevance logic version of it, will leave us wanting an account of what makes a representation of the existence of a truthmaker — whatever it entails — itself beholden to an independent reality.

Other accounts of tuthmaking seem to fail (Necessitation, Projection, Essentialism). This seems to me worrying. On the one hand, Tarski's approach is supected to be insufficiently metaphysical,[10] on the other hand the causal interpretation of truthmaking is ruled out.

Does it imply that the states of affairs, or the entities and properties, that are responsible for the truth of the sentences that express them do not actually contribute, do not causally make a difference to truth? If we assume that, well the Tarski-style approach lacks nothing. If a theory of truth is not just a matter of

8 Michael Bergmann and Jeffrey E. Brower, "A Theistic Argument Against Platonism (And in Support of Truthmakers and Divine Simplicity)", in *Oxford Studies in Metaphysics*: *Volume 2*, ed. Dean W. Zimmerman (Clarendon Press, 2006), 376, See also MacBride: "When introducing truth-makers it has become routine to begin with a disclaimer: that the sense in which a truthmaker "makes" something true is not the causal sense in which, e.g., a potter makes a pot."

9 Bergmann and Brower, „A Theistic Argument Against Platonism".

10 To be sure, Tarski himslef claims the philosophical neutrality of his conception, and devotes section (§19) of his 1944 paper to the disclaiming of "Alleged metaphysical elements in semantics".

which name denotes which object, and which predicate expresses which property, then what is it? Is it just a refinement of what are the underlying substances and properties that are involved in such or such states of affairs, the existence of which are the facts described by propositions? What is the point of criticizing a semantic theory of truth for its lack of ontological grounding, if the ontological level does not make causal differences to what is true?

Let us consider Tarski-like examples:

- "snow is white" is true iff snow is white.
- "Bydgoszcz is beautiful" is true iff Bydgoszcz is beautiful.

Now, instead of defining the truth of the sentences by means of a necessary and sufficient condition, let us ask: what makes "snow is white" true? What makes "Bydgoszcz is beautiful" true? If our different answers are: "snow (as a mass)", "this snowball", "whiteness", "such kind of whiteness", a certain relationship between "snow" and "white"; or "Bydgoszcz", "that view of Bydgoszcz", "such kind of beauty (instantiated in Bydgoszcz)", a certain relationship between "Bydgoszcz" and "beautiful", then our question is not actually about what makes those sentences true. We are just trying to emphasize what the truth of those statements consist in, what they are actually about, what is really involved in the truth of the sentence. We are making ontology (a noble discipline), inquiring into what there really is, that is to say, in Quinean terms, which is the bound variable whose value is the relevant "thing". We are trying to discover what is the real subject-matter, or who is the real character of the story. We are sketching an alternative casting, we are reformulating the story (for instance we can say that something happens to snow, or that something occurs to "beauty", or to "beautiful"…) But we just discuss the issue as to whether Bydgoszcz or the snow are substances, if their properties are universals or tropes, we are only refining our referring, but we do not make a significant step forward in the understanding of what makes "snow is white" or "Bydgoszcz is beautiful" true. It seems then correct to follow Johnathan Schaffer in saying that, whatever be the structure of the truth of those sentences, it ultimately depends on what the world is like,[11] and ultimately on what makes the world be like it is.

11 Jonathan Schaffer, "The Least Discerning and Most Promiscuous Truthmaker", *Philosophical Quarterly* 60, no. 239 (2010).

III. GOD ENTERS THE SCENE

I suggest that the search for extra-semantic truthmakers goes on the issue as to whether the so-called ontological grounds of true sentences play a causal role, or are causally inert. If they are inert, they are abstract. If they do not cause the sentences that describe them to be true, the truth of those sentences is due to a further cause, if any. I will not enter the discussion of cosmological arguments, I will assume, for the sake of the argument, that there is a relevance in considering that it is highly improbable that the entities involved in the states of affairs that build up the world be self-existent. I will therefore assume that the components of the world (whatever they be: particles, persons, tropes…) owe their existence to God, that it is generated and sustained by God. He makes them exist. And, this is my second assumption, this „making" is not a temporal operation, but a timeless relation of ontological dependence.

Let us now turn to consider to which extent God can be considered as a good candidate for the „ontological ground" of truthmaking in a causal understanding of making. My suggestion is that the lack of ontological grounding can be completed by the causal relation of God to his creatures. This is the issue as to which extent God can be said to cause, to bring about truths. Let us now inquire more frankly into the relation of God to truth and let us turn to the old debate of divine alethic sovereignty. According to Descartes, God being omnipotent is indifferent to "every reason of truth and goodness" in the sense that all truths, contingent, necessary and moral, are alike His creatures and might very well have been other than they are if He had chosen. Does it mean that God arbitrarily enacts what is true? I would like to advocate the view that God neither arbitrarily choses what counts as a truth, nor just discovers truthes which would hold independently from him.

To that purpose, I will follow Kretzmann's move as regards God and the basis of morality. I suggest to draw a parallel between the relationship of God to truth, and the relationship of God to goodness. This move or this parallel may provide some answer to the riddles raised by the contemporary doctrine of truthmakers.

By this move, I seem to be committed to the antique doctrine of the transcendantals, according to which God is the Being in itself, the Good in istelf, the Truth in itself… This is not my main concern. But of of course I will try to make sense of it. And I will suggest a shift from God being the truth in itself to God as ultimate Truthmaker. I will just focus on the relevance of the causal interpreta-

tion of truthmaking, so far as truth is grounded on being, and being depends on God. If statements are made true by states of affairs[12] and if states of affairs are brought about by God, God is the ultimate truthmaker. Of course this makes a quantifier shift from „for each truth there is something that makes it true" to „there is soemthing that makes every truth true" (but not every shift is a flaw).

IV. KRETZMANN ON THE BASIS OF MORALITY

Let us quickly recall Norman Kretzmann's argument in his paper[13] devoted to God and the basis of morality where he faces the dilemma of Euthyphro.

I will then try to do the same move as regards God and the basis of truth, firstly as regards contingent truths, and secondly logical or necessary ones.

Let us now recall the context of the platonic dialogue. Socrates is asking Euthypro about the essence of piety ('paieti'): "tell me then what is the pious?" (5d). After some attempts, Euthypro claims that "the pious is what all the gods love" (9e): Piety is what Gods approve of. But as Socrates suggests, there are two ways of construing this claim: Do the Gods approve of what is pious because it is pious, or is it pious because the Gods approve of it ? (10a) Following this line of distinction, Norman Kretzmann has contrasted two theories of religious morality (which he expressed monotheistically)

- (Moral Objectivism) God approves of right actions just because they are right and disapproves of wrong actions just because they are wrong
- (Divine Moral Subjectivism) Right actions are right just because god approves of them and wrong just because God disapproves of them.

This theory corresponds partly to divine command ethics (supported by Mansell and duly criticized by Mill).

As Kretzmann puts it (DMS) is welcoming "the possibility that absolutely any action could be made morally right simply in virtue of God's commanding or approving of it". It would be pointless to claim that God is good and so "can be relied on not to approve of moral evil", for, according to (DMS),

12 John L. Austin, *Philosophical Papers*, 3. ed., ed. James O. Urmson (OUP, 1979), 123.

13 Norman Kretzmann, "Abraham, Isaac and Euthyphro: God and the Basis of Morality", in *Hamartia*: *The concept of error in the western tradition essays in honor of John M. Crossett*, ed. Donald V. Stump et al. (Edwin Mellen Press, 1983).

"the only standard of moral goodness is God's approval". And then there is no objective grounding of morality. So it seems that any theist who wants to advocate moral objectivism is committed to Theological Moral Objectivism. But this theory, if less shocking, raises a problem.

In this theory God has nothing essential to do with morality. He just happens to command, or to approve of, what is defined as morally right, and to forbid and disapprove of what is defined as morally wrong. The standard of moral goodness is above God. And there is still the question: where does it come from? Which process, or who is responsible for this brute unaccountable state of affairs that such and such deeds are said to be objectively morally right or wrong? So, on the one hand, morality is an arbitrary matter. On the other hand, God is not the supreme standard of Goodness any more. But there is a way out to escape this dilemma. It consists in claiming that "God is identical with goodness". On this view, God does not arbitrarily chose what is good. And, being the Good in itself, God cannot but create states of affairs that are good. He cannot but see "that it was good". Nor does God passively conform to standards of morality. In creating, he acts well and good, for he is the Good in itself.

And then there is no more contrast between objectivism and subjectivism, there is no more dependency of God on preexisting rules of morals, and no more arbitrary choice of God. Therefore, Kretzmann rephrases the two branches of the dilemma which then vanishes:

(MO') God conceived of as a moral judge identical with perfect moral goodness itself approves of right actions just because they are right and disapproves of wrong actions just because they are wrong.

(DMS') Right actions are right just because God conceived of as a moral judge identical with perfect goodness itself

(By the way this could offer a solution of the is/ought problem. For if God is identical with perfect goodness itself, the world he brings about owes its existence to Goodness itself, and then rational agents who, as a matter of fact, owe their existence and capacities to Goodness, may be supposed to acknowledge and act justly, neither on the basis of arbitrary commands, nor in conforming to moral standards independent from God. What they are (creatures) suggest how they ought to live: in respecting the life and sharing the natural resources they owe to the creator, and so on… This was the traditional justification of the Rights of Man).

V. ALETHIC DIVINE SUBJECTIVISM/OBJECTIVISM

Can we make a similar move concerning truths, or true statements? Does God arbitrarily enact them? Then Alethic Divine Subjectivism is true. Or has he to conform to epistemic facts which are imposed to him? Then there is some very important feature of the world that does not depend on Him. Let us then try to define God as the ontological grouding of truth

(Alethic Objectivism) God knows whatever is true just because it is the case

(Divine Alethic Subjectivism) Whatever is true is true just because God knows it

(AO') God conceived of as truth itself knows whatever is true just because they are the case

(DAS') Whatever is true holds just because God conceived of as truth itself knows it

Then Alethic objectivism holds, and nevertheless we are in a position to concile alethic objectivism with God's alleged absolute sovereignty. But this leaves us with at least two questions: the issue as to what does identifying God with truth in itself amount to; and the issue as to what kind of knowledge can be ascribed to God as ultimate Truthmaker?

VI. TRUTH IN ITSELF AS ULTIMATE TRUTHMAKING

As regards the first issue: what does identifying God with truth in itself amount to? And how are we to justify such a claim?

In the tradition of neoplatonic metaphysics, there is the claim that for any class of members to which the same name applies, there exists an Idea, a separate Form, bearing the same name, in virtue of which that name may be truly applied to them. Some qualifications may be added, in order to avoid worrying consequences. This Idea is not a member of the class, it is not endowed with the property it is accounting for. (This rules out the problem of self-predication and defeats the argument of the third man). This rests on the so-called „one-over-many assumption":

> For every class of *x* such as *x* is F, there is a F-ness in virtue of which F applies to every *x*. (F-ness is not F)

If we consider the class of true sentences (in a given object language), according to this "One-over-many assumption", there is a true-ness = a truth in virtue of which the predicate 'true' applies to each sentence in T.

Accordingly, this truth in itself, this Prima Veritas, as Aquinas terms it, is not a property, it is what accounts for such and such sentences having the property of being true. And here we are committed to draw a sharp distinction between truth and true (like we should distinguish beween Goodness and good, health and healthy…) What is called Truth itself is not some true device, not even some maximally true one, but the very source of every true sentence, that is, if we rehabilitate the causal interpretation of truthmaking, God as ultimate Truthmaker.

Why should we accept the One-over-many assumption, especially in the case of true sentences? Here is my argument:

(1) God is the generating and sustaining cause of every state of affairs.

(2) The states of affairs are the truthmakers of the propositions that describe them.

(3) True sentences express propositions that describe the existing states of affairs.

(4) God is the ultimate truthmaker

(The Wittgensteinian shortcut would be the famous motto from the Notebooks (1914-1916) "God is the way everything happens". One could compare „4.12 Propositions can represent the whole of reality, but they cannot represent what they must have in common with reality in order to be able to represent it — logical form. In order to be able to represent logical form, we should have to be able to station ourselves with propositions somewhere outside logic, that is to say outside the world." and Armstrong: „any truth should depend for its truth on something „outside" it, in virtue of which it is true"[14])

To put it otherwise: truth being a property of any statement or of a proposition which declares what there is and what is the case, if there is an ultimate generating and sustaining cause of every state of affairs, this cause is the onto-

14 David M. Armstrong, *Truth and Truthmakers* (Cambridge University Press, 2004), 7.

logical grounding of the truth of the sentences describing the states of affairs at stake, that is their ultimate truthmaker.

VII. DIVINE KNOW-HOW AND WORLD'S MAKING OF

The second issue we were left with is the concern of God's knowledge of true propositions. This might require further explanation, as regards what does it mean for God to know contingent truths, of which he is the truthmaker. This explanation might be found in the model of what Anscombe, after Aquinas, terms God's pratical knowledge. In order to make sense of this compatibility of alethic objectivism and divine independence, the kind of knowledge we have to ascribe to God is neither observational, nor predictive.

> speculative reason only apprehends things (ratio speculativa est apprehensiva solum rerum), [...] practical reason not only apprehends but also causes them (*non solum apprehensiva, sed etiam causativa*)[15]

God has a practical knowledge of every singular beings and modes, since he is the one who generates and sustains them. He knows everything that happens by bringing about the very existence and operation of every object involved in every state of affairs, including free deeds and demands made by some creatures[16].

If we deny this view, then we get a dualistic view, according to which there is or there are objects and operations which do not depend on God. (This raises problems for theodicy)

God knows what the world is like, and may even know what it is like to be a bat, a vat, a brain in vat, a heroe, a villain, an ordinary person, and so on. In order to do so, he does not need to experience perspectives on the world. In order to be truly omniscient, God must not have all the phenomenal concepts (concepts about what it is like to have such and such phenomenal experiences any finite conscious beings may have). God does not need nor want any point of view. He sees ("And God saw…" that is : He sees timelessly) what he makes.

15 Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, IIa IIae, q. 83, art.1c.

16 Thomas Flint precludes the account that God knows our free actions by knowing his own intentions to cause us to act in certain ways, for such external causation is, according to the libertarian, is incompatible with freedom, Thomas P. Flint, *Divine Providence: The Molinist Account* (Cornell Univ. Press, 1998), 35.

As William Hasker puts it, „The way God knows things to be is the way things really are“[17]. The following view seems to me consistent:

- God timelessly brings about a world made of successive temporal events.
- God knows what he is timelessly doing.
- God is not committed to observe within a temporal framework what he otherwise knows perfectly by timelessly doing it.
- God knows perfectly what's going on, what happens to everyone, everywhere and always.

He knows, because he does. According to Anscombe, being the first agent timelessly involved in every action, he could say „I do what happens“.[18]

To this extent, God's bringing about every state of affairs is the practical way God makes the truth of the statements that describe them. He knows what he makes.

So far I have been dealing with the contingent truths that describe contingent states of affairs. But what about analytic truthes, or logical laws? What about necessary truths (if any)? There is a classical issue as to whether God, as an agent, is bound by any laws or theorems of logic, and whether he freely

17 Which does not entail „The way in which God knows things (i.e. his manner of knowing them) is the same as the way in which they exist“ William Hasker, *God, Time, and Knowledge* (Cornell University Press, 1998), 166.

18 G. E. M. Anscombe, *Intention* (Blackwell, 1957), 53. Cf. the passage by Aquinas cited in Fn 15, where the concept of non-observational knowledge is first compared with the knowledge one has of the position and movements of one's limbs, that can be known "even with your eyes shut"(I, 15), and without there being any "separately describable sensations" (ibid.,13) that give rise to your knowledge. "Later on, she compares the knowledge one has of one's actions to the knowledge of a project supervisor who directs the construction of a building from afar, without seeing or hearing any reports on its progress (ibid., 82); to one's ability to know what one is writing even if one's eyes are closed (ibid., 53, 82); to God's knowledge of creation (ibid., 87); and to a list that a shopper carries with him that directs his purchases, in contrast to a list made by a detective who follows the shopper around (*Intention*, 56)" John Schwenkler, "Understanding 'Practical Knowledge'" 15 (2015): 29. Of course, among the instances of practical knowledge, God's causation of the world is the only timeless one, if we adopt the ontological relational view, rather than the transitional account of creation. So we have to justify that the former holds. In the transitional account, "once there was nothing (but God), then there was something", creation is supposed to describe the transition from nothingness to being. Something is supposed to happen to nothing, which happens to become something. This amounts to ascribe properties to "nothing", which is absurd.

enacts and may repeal or rescind them. For instance, is God the truthmaker of the law of identity, the law of non-contradiction, the laws of inference…

My suggestion is: The law of identity, the law of non-contradiction, the laws of inference (modus ponens and tollens), supposed that they hold, are not standards to which God has to conform. But they are neither decrees he enacts arbitrarily. They are general features describing the way things behave, and the relations that hold between the states of affairs the world is made of. And, if there is a God conceived of as a generating and sustaining cause of the universe, then the way things behave entirely depends on Him. It expresses God's operation.

Suppose that God had created a world in which things are continuously replaced by other items. The concept of a permanent substrate of change would be pointless. May be the concept of the place where different items appear and disappear would be more difficult to acquire, for in order to identify some place, you need some quasi permanent objects …

To this extent, we could agree that "eternal truths" as Descartes puts it, "are not known as true by God in any way which would imply that they are true independently of Him". For they are true in a way which implies that they depend on what there is and how the world goes. And to the extent to which everything there is and how the world goes depend on God, those "eternal truths" still depend on God. But they are not enacted arbitrarily. They supervene on how the world is, which on its turn depends on how God makes it.

The very structure of facts and substances could have been such as we would live in a megaric world, a world of substances without predicates, or heraclitean: no identifyable entities, only moves, changes, flows, in both cases objects without properties (pure parmenidian beings) or events without objects to which they occur. We could not predicate some property of any subject. There could have existed no substances at all, and no identifyable properties. To this extent, the laws of logic might be said to supervene on ontological features. They are not just semantic or logic principles, they describe deep features and structures of being.

VIII. CONCLUSION

I am not advocating at all cost a theory of Truthmaking. My point is just as follows. If the semantic theory of truth were to be replaced or at least completed by Truthmakers, then God, conceived of as the timeless generating

and sustaining cause of the universe, would be the best if not the sole candidate for the function of ultimate truthmaker. But this is requiring the very metaphysical One-over-many assumption, and this commits us to a causal understanding of truthmaking, not in the sense that

- God brings about that 'p'is true iff p;

But in the sense that:

- 'p' is true iff God brings about that p.

The semantic Tarskian convention would remain an epistemic convention, the genuine truthmaking relation would complete on the reality side the alleged relation of ontological dependence of everything that there is on the One that is. If so, there is no need any more to restrict truthmaking to positive propositions, for if the truth of positive propositions describing the states of affairs that occurred, are occurring or will occur depend on what God as a generating and sustaining cause make exist, the truth of negative propositions equally depend on God's causal activity, since the state of affairs that do not occur equally depend on God's causal activity.

Of course, one may stick to the perplexity expressed by Liggins, claiming that "it is hard to see how the thought that truth is grounded in reality lends any support to truthmaker theory"[19]. Or we could be content with identifying, like Schaffer, the world as "the one and only truth maker" (which he terms ironically "the least discerning and most promiscuous truthmaker"), adding to his "elegant and economical account of truthmaker"[20] a Maker of the world.

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19 David Liggins, "Truthmakers and the Groundedness of Truth", *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society* 108, no. 1pt2 (2008): 177.

20 Johnathan Schaffer, "On What Grounds What", in *Metametaphysics*: *New essays on the foundations of ontology*, ed. David J. Chalmers, David Manley and Ryan Wasserman (Oxford University Press, 2009), 307.

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THE EMBODIED MIND OF GOD

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Abstract. In this article, I propose a new concept: The Embodied Mind of God. I also point out the benefits that can flow from using it. This concept is a combination of two concepts broadly discussed in contemporary philosophy: 'The Mind of God' and 'The Embodied Mind'. In my opinion this new concept can be very useful in the area of Philosophical Christology, because one of the most important questions in that area concerns the mind of Jesus Christ — Incarnate Son of God. I present my own model of Christ's mind that is able to avoid at least some of the problems faced by Christology and sheds the new light on some of epistemological issues.

Do not blame matter, for it is not dishonourable.
Nothing is dishonourable which was brought into being by God.

John of Damascus

This article is a kind of Christological consideration, Christological meditation, applicable to philosophy. So this is a proposal from the philosophical Christology point of view. Philosophical Christology, in consideration of the person of Jesus, who is regarded by Christians as the Incarnate Son of God, sees an opportunity to deepen and better understand our philosophical categories.

I. JESUS' MIND AS 'POSSIBLE MIND'

Christological considerations make sense and are useful even when one does not believe in Jesus as the Son of God. Looking at him from an epistemological point of view, one has the right to treat him as at most a 'possible mind'. Just as in metaphysics we use the concept of 'possible worlds' the 'examination' of which, or rather the associated 'thought experiments', give us a better insight into the intrinsic features of our world, so in epistemology we can use the concept of 'possible minds'. A 'possible world' is one that is somewhat similar to ours, but differs from it, sometimes quite significantly. Similarly, a 'possible

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mind' is one that to some extent is similar to the human mind, however, contains something that makes it different. For example, models of the human mind mapped in silicon-based material or in biological neural networks can be regarded as 'possible minds'. In these cases however 'minimum conditions' were sought that would allow us to think about the similarity of these artificial creations to the human mind.

In this article I want to suggest the study of the 'possible mind' in its 'maximum' version — directly united with the divine. Even if we do not accept the doctrinal texts of Christianity, we know that in the history of human thought there appeared the idea of the divine-human unity, in which, as the Council of Chalcedon taught, what is divine and what is human, is not divided, but at the same time not mixed.[1] Whether such a mind actually existed is another question, but at least it is a 'possible mind'. So it seems that, viewed from a philosophical point of view, this attempt is justified.

I think that from the Christological point of view the meaning of such a study can also be defended. The problem of Jesus Christ is one of the two most important Christian issues (the other is the problem of the Holy Trinity). Based on the biblical data, the Fathers of the Church and Christian thinkers during 2000 years of existence of this faith have tried to find the answer to the question, how to express and to describe Jesus, whom they believe in. Faith comes first, but faith is still looking to understand and try to express this understanding by means of philosophical categories. Theology, however, does not feel too confident about the problem of the mind of Christ. This is probably because theologians lack precise enough philosophical concepts to express what is contained in the dogmas of faith. They have limited themselves to the area of knowledge of Christ.[2] Philosophical Christology, through the study of the mind of Christ, can give theology a huge favour. It must be however remembered that Philosophical Christology can only mark the dead endsand prepare the way to solve the problem of Jesus' mind.

1 The problem of Christ's knowledge was one of the chalcedonian controversies, see e.g. Imil M. Ishaq, *Christology and the Council of Chalcedon* (Outskirts Press, 2013), 347–71.

2 Psychological problems of 'Hypostatic Union' in Jesus Christ seem also to be easier than ontological problems, see Roch A. Kereszty, *Jesus Christ: Fundamentals of Christology* (St. Pauls, 2011), 305–12.

II. THE HARD PROBLEM OF JESUS' MIND

In the past, it was mainly the knowledge of Jesus that was considered. Theologians asked, for example, whether Jesus knew that he was God. They also asked how many parts his knowledge must 'consist of', so that one could explain on the one hand his sense of unity with the Father, his prophetic speech, and on the other hand his ignorance and the fact that he grew in wisdom and that he learned as every other human being. When one tracks the medieval discussions on this subject, a variety of theories can be found. The most extreme of them, presented by Alexander of Hales, stated that Jesus had up to 6 types of knowledge. The most popular theory assumed that Jesus had 3 kinds of knowledge: the beatific vision enjoyed by the saints in heaven (and by which he learned all things in God); infused knowledge, which is the expression of his being particularly chosen by the Father (this kind of knowledge allowed him to know things in themselves); acquired knowledge, which was developed.[3] However it was very difficult for theologians to explain, what Jesus needed the acquired knowledge for, if he knew all things in God and in themselves.[4] Interestingly enough, Thomas Aquinas, in his philosophical development, modified his line in this case. He also accepted three types of knowledge, but with time he admitted the increasing importance of acquired knowledge. For him also problematic issue was how Jesus learned from people, since he was filled with the knowledge in all possible ways.[5] The importance of 'acquired knowledge' was increasing, because theologians realized that the denial of this dimension of knowledge was a threat to the understanding of the humanity of Jesus.

The problem of the knowledge of Jesus is undoubtedly important and interesting. Equally or perhaps even more important seem to be the ontological issues. However, these are issues that are much more complicated.

3 See B. De Margerie, *The Human Knowledge of Christ* (St. Paul, 1977), also: M. McCord Adams, *What Sort of Human Nature? Medieval Philosophy and the Systematics of Christology* (Marquette Univ. Press, 1999), 32–57.

4 Some authors also ascribe to Jesus knowledge of mystical kind. See Randall S. Rosenberg, 'Christ's Human Knowledge: A Conversation with Lonergan and Balthasar', *Theological Studies* 71, no. 4 (2010): 817–45.

5 See Simon Francis Gaine OP, 'Christ's Acquired Knowledge According to Thomas Aquinas: How Aquinas's Philosophy Helped and Hindered his Account', *New Blackfriars* 96, no. 1063 (2015): 255–68.

It is no coincidence that theologians gave the ontological issues a wide berth; it is difficult to find adequate ideas with which one can grasp these issues. However, if we want to benefit from deliberations in the area of philosophical Christology and if we make christological considerations not only as intellectual play, we must dare to take on such 'difficult' philosophical topics. The problem of knowledge can be described as an 'easy' version of the problem of the mind of Jesus. The ontology of the mind of Jesus can be considered as the 'difficult' version of the same issue.

Christological models proposed in the past were built from top to bottom (it was a descending Christology). Today models are rather based on ascending Christology (they are built from the bottom to the top). This is because of a particularly strong emphasis on the humanity of Jesus in modern theology. Contemporary authors writing about this topic are happy to use the concepts and schemes coming from current philosophy and psychology. Although their considerations mainly refer to the knowledge of Jesus, there appear to be Christological models that try to show how it is possible to link the divine and the human mind of Jesus. The most interesting among them are models referring to psychoanalysis, which place the divine mind of Jesus below or above the threshold of normal, everyday consciousness. The first model, proposed by T. Morris, called the 'Two Minds Solution', is the suggestion that the divine mind of Jesus is a kind of 'subconsciousness'. Christ's human mind, acting as consciousness, to which we have normal access and the subconscious mind of the divine nature, there is a relationship. However reciprocal access to the content of the various layers of the mind is asymmetric. The divine mind has free access to the human mind. The human mind, however, receives only glimpses of what is happening in the other, deeper level. Jesus has complete divine knowledge, but He does not have access to it.[6]

This model does not seem to be satisfactory. Complete human consciousness, the 'fullness' of humanity, when seen from the epistemological point of view, also requires the existence of 'human' subconsciousness. When we realize how strongly the conscious dimension of our existence is

6 See Thomas V. Morris, 'The Metaphysics of God Incarnate', in *Oxford Readings in Philosophical Theology*, ed. Michael C. Rea (OUP, 2009), 221–24. See also his *The Logic of God Incarnate* (Wipf and Stock, 2001), 104–7.

determined by the unconscious dimension, we are not willing to get rid of this dimension so easily. The mind that contains the divine subconsciousness rather than the human one, does not seem to be the human mind any more. Jesus is not so fully human. Therefore, we fall into the trap of docetism — a position that says that the humanity of Jesus is merely apparent.[7]

A slightly different, but similar model was proposed by J. Maritain. Instead of 'subconsciousness' he talks about the 'supraconsciousness'. By this term he suggested that the divine in Jesus does not belong to the 'dark' realm of the mind, which may be associated with something 'subhuman'. The divine is the realm of light and closeness to God, the realm of contemplation and 'higher thinking'. 'Supraconsciousness' in Maritain's model is similar to the 'active intellect' known from Aristotle's conception.[8] However, if the 'supra-consciousness', as suggested by Maritain, is a 'normal' part of the equipment of the human mind, then we have exactly the same problem as in the previous case. To say that supra-consciousness is a more noble sphere does not change the fact that the human mind of Jesus is not 'purely human'. His humanity again is missing something.[9]

The tendency to use models that relate to the contemporary debate in the area of philosophy and psychology, however, is justified. I also find such a reference in the model proposed by myself. Each age has in itself 'its own' Jesus Christ and is trying to understand him using 'his own' categories.[10] I want to propose a model that does not refer only to the types of knowledge that can be distinguished in Christ. My proposal is an attempt to construct an ontology of the mind of Christ. I will use two concepts, which are discussed today. The first is the concept of 'The Mind of God', and the second one is

7 John Sweet, "Docetism: Is Jesus Really Human or Did He Appear to Be So?", in *Heresies and How to Avoid Them*: *Why It Matters What Christians Believe*, ed. Ben Quash and Michael Ward (Baker Academic, 2007).

8 See: Jacques Maritain, *On the Grace and Humanity of Jesus*, ed. Joseph W. Evans (Desclee de Brouwer, 1969, 47–93.

9 Different models of Christ's consciousness are presented and analyzed in Andrew Loke, 'The Incarnation and Jesus' Apparent Limitation in Knowledge', *New Blackfriars* 94, no. 1053 (2013): 583–602.

10 As Macquarrie reminds us: „[…] Christ-event of almost two thousand years ago is still making its impact felt, and those who are aware of this are still compelled to ask the question about the person who was at the centre of the event. But they can ask the question and likewise formulate any answers to the question only in the language and conceptuality of today". John Macquarrie, *Jesus Christ in Modern Thought* (Continuum, 1992), 340.

concept of 'The Embodied Mind'. I think that the mind of Jesus Christ can be understood as 'The Embodied Mind of God'.

III. 'THE MIND OF GOD'

The term 'The Mind of God' is most often associated with S. Hawking. In the words of 'A Brief History of Time' Hawking wrote: 'However, if we discover a complete theory, it should in time be understandable by everyone, not just by a few scientists. Then we shall all, philosophers, scientists and just ordinary people, be able to take part in the discussion of the question of why it is that we and the universe exist. If we find the answer to that, it would be the ultimate triumph of human reason — for then we should know the mind of God.'[11] Though Hawking has claimed that His words do not show that he is a theist, and that the term 'mind of God' is used metaphorically, you can hear in his words the echo of the great desire that stands at the basis of human knowledge — the desire to know the world as God knows it, to look at the world through the eyes of God, to know God's thoughts.

A similar desire guides theology. If the most appropriate description of theological aims can be considered in what St. Paul writes, then in theology, the point is to know the *'Nous kyriou'* (Romans 11:34; 1 Corrinthans 2.16). (The English translation of word 'nous' is 'mind'.) I think that the word '*nous*' is here understood not only in purely psychological terms. *Nous* is not also the set of logical propositions. *Nous* is not something that stands in front of God. It is rather a 'part' of God. God creating the world and giving Himself to the world, not only expresses His thoughts, but expresses Himself. The mind of God is of the same nature as God. In the case of man we can talk about the mind, which 'creates' thoughts and talk about thoughts that are 'products' of the mind. In God there is an identity between one and the other. Therefore by recognizing the ways in which God expresses Himself, we get to know His nature.

K. Rahner recognizes this matter as being particularly interesting. According to him, the self-giving of God to the world (*Selbstmitteilung Gottes*) is one complex process, one internally complex act. However, it contains four parts inextricably linked to each other and relating to each other. The

11 Stephen W. Hawking, *A Brief History of Time: From the Big Bang to Black Holes* (Bantam Books, 1990), 193.

first of these parts is creation; the second: incarnation, the third: the life of grace, and the fourth: the final transformation of the world. So if we want to know God, we must take into account all these parts.[12] Following Rahner, we can say that there is one mind of God. It is, however, intrinsically complex. The various 'parts' of the mind of God can be known in the world in four ways, respectively by: the law governing the world (creation), unique events deriving from freedom (incarnation), communication between persons (the life of grace), strengthening the structures in which people and the things of this world are connected (final transformation).

The concept of the 'mind of God' gives us new insights into the inner unity of the different ways in which God gives Himself to the world. The most important is that the concept of 'the mind of God' enables us to understand that this part of Mind, which is expressed in the Incarnation, is not separated from the other parts. I think that most Christological problems originate from the fact that the incarnation was treated as an extreme. Theologians portrayed them as a violation of the unity prevailing in the life of the Trinity. This would suggest that the Son of God enters into a world that is alien to God, detached from Him. It seems that these are the remains of a gnostic way of seeing the world. In gnostic conceptions, the world was affected by an incurable evil. Therefore, to save the perfection of God, you have to isolate Him from the world. According to theologians, Jesus, the Incarnate Son of God, was supposed to have been mostly separated from the world. In the light of Christian revelation we must say that the Son of God does not incorporate in the world in which there is no God. He incorporates in the world in which God expresses Himself in various ways. By becoming a man, the Son of God is not against God. The only thing that changes is the form of unity. Hence the 'mind of God' in the Incarnation also does not connect with the mind, which bears purely 'earthly' dimensions. Following Maritain one can say that Jesus is the '*verus homo*' but is not '*purus homo*'. In Rahner's concept, even being '*purus homo*' is not without its reference to God, who expresses Himself in various ways in the world.

Someone may ask: does this entail pantheism? On the basis of Christian theology on the one hand you should avoid identifying the created world with

12 Theology of God's activity in the world based on Rahner's thinking is presented in Denis Edwards, *How God Acts: Creation, Redemption, and Special Divine Action* (Fortress Press, 2010).

God and on the other hand thinking about the world as completely devoid of relationship with God. I believe that thinking using terms of transcendental presence of God in the world (Rahner proposes this kind of thinking) is the most accurate depiction. Undoubtedly, it has a negative connotation in the sense, that using this term we cannot deliver a fully accurate or complete explanation of God's presence and activity, but we can only indicate that God is really present and that he acts in the world. But we must remember that theological claims, not to mention dogmatic statements, are often negative („apophatic").

IV. 'THE EMBODIED MIND'

Another interesting concept is the thought of 'The Embodied Mind'.[13] This concept is characteristic to the second phase of cognitive sciences or otherwise, of the 'second generation cognitivism'. In the first stage of cognitive sciences there was a belief that manipulation of symbols is the essence of intelligence. Therefore, attempts were made to shape computer-aided psychological processes. The brain was treated as a system relatively isolated from the environment. Dissatisfaction with the solutions proposed in this approach led to the paradigm of 'the embodied mind'.

It had several sources. The first was philosophical. In the texts of the so-called 'late' Husserl we can find fragments in which he reflects on the significance of the body in cognitive processes. Husserl writes about 'kinesthetic experience', and also notes that cognition implies a special kind of bodily self-sensation. The body is found in cognitive processes in a double role. As the object of cognition it is constituted by an entity that already exist physically. Getting to know our bodies that 'we have', we use the body that 'we are'. Hussserl also puts the problem that in earlier phases of his philosophy would not be possible to present: namely, the problem of the birth and death of the 'transcendental subject'.[14]

13 Today we can use neuroscientific concepts to understand the problem of Christ's self, see Oliver Davies, 'Neuroscience, Self, and Jesus Christ', in *Questioning the Human*: *Toward a Theological Anthropology for the Twenty-First Century*, ed. Lieven Boeve, Yves de Maeseneer and Ellen van Stichel (OUP, 2014).

14 See David W. Smith, 'Mind and Body', in *The Cambridge Companion to Husserl*, ed. Barry Smith and David W. Smith (CUP, 1995).

Among philosophers, the question of 'embodied mind' is most commonly associated with M. Merleau-Ponty, who is in this respect a faithful disciple of Heidegger.[15] According to Merleau-Ponty the nature of the body is ambiguous and 'carnal existence' is the third category that goes beyond the physiological and psychological. In his concept, a living body is neither spirit or nature, nor soul, nor body, nor the interior or the exterior, nor an object or a person. These opposing categories are derived from something more basic. The body is not an ordinary subject in the world. Merleau-Ponty wants to show how the experience of the world, oneself and others is shaped and defined by embodiment. According to him, the body is not a curtain located between the mind and the world but it rather shapes the original way of being-in-the-world.[16]

The second source of 'the embodied mind' paradigm is the appearance of cognitive linguistics. Supporters of this stream break with Chomsky's generativism and propose an alternative model of creating language meanings. According to Lakoff and Johnson the original structure arises from our experience and interaction with the outside world. Then, on their basis, the mind generates more complicated language meanings. Insight into the processes of creation is possible through metaphors.[17]

The third phase of the development of this paradigm is the biological phase. Particularly important were here: the discovery of mirror neurons (Rozzolatti et al.) and of multimodality, and research on 'embodied simulation'. They show that cognitive processes are closely related to the motor system of human beings and other organisms. Subsequently, embodied social cognition was also studied. This cognition is purely intentional. Its aim is to guess beliefs, feelings, desires and intentions of other individuals. The conclusion to be drawn from these studies is that the understanding of the human mind is only possible through the integration of neurobiological research and physical research, social and cultural relationship, which concerns organisms.[18]

15 See Hubert Dreyfus, 'Merleau-Ponty and Recent Cognitive Science', in *The Cambridge Companion to Merleau-Ponty*, ed. Taylor Carman and Mark B. N. Hansen (CUP, 2005).

16 Additional information in Shaun Gallagher, 'Philosophical Antecedents of Situated Cognition', in *The Cambridge Handbook of Situated Cognition*, ed. P. Robbins and M.Aydede (CUP, 2009).

17 The beginning of this paradigm was the famous book George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By* (Univ. of Chicago Press, 1980).

18 Good examples of thinking in this paradigm are contained in Paco Calvo and Toni Gomila, *Handbook of Cognitive Science: An Embodied Approach* (Elsevier, 2008).

The second generation cognitivism is the most interesting for my purposes here. It also reached philosophical conclusions. We were able to see a revival of interest in phenomenal consciousness. We have witnessed a discussion on the 'hard problem of consciousness' (Chalmers) and 'embodied cognition' (F. Varela, E. Thompson, E. Rosch, A. Damasio, A. Clark). There appeared to be a proposal to combine philosophical theses, derived from cognitive science, with phenomenological research (this postulate was reported by Gallagher and Zahavi in the well-known book *The Phenomenological Mind*). The problem of the interpretation of test results and their philosophical 'force' remained.

The paradigm 'of the embodied mind' was introduced as an antidote to Cartesian dualism, considered to be too difficult to accept, especially in the context of modern science. Cartesian dualism contains an image, suggesting the existence of mind situated 'opposite' to the world. From this image arose many consequences, including consequences of a theological (Christological) sort. The image, according to which the mind is something transcendent to the world, does not satisfactorily allow one to explain how it is possible to build a 'bridge' between the mind and the world. It is also difficult to indicate the role of the body in cognitive processes. Showing the weakness of the criticized solutions, Lakoff and Johnson wrote:

> 'Mainstream Western philosophy adds to this picture certain claims that we will argue are false. Not trivially false, but so false as to drastically distort our understanding of what human beings are, what the mind and reason are, what causation and morality are, and what our place is in the universe. Here are those claims: […]
>
> 4. Human reason is the capacity of the human mind to use transcendent reason, or at least a portion of it. Human reason may be performed by the human brain, but the structure of human reason is defined by transcendent reason, independent of human bodies or brains. Thus, the structure of human reason is disembodied.
>
> 5. Human concepts are the concepts of transcendent reason. They are therefore defined independent of human brains or bodies, and so they too are disembodied. […]
>
> 9. Since reason is disembodied, what makes us essentially human is not our relation to the material world. […]'[19]

19 George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, *Philosophy in the Flesh: The Embodied Mind and its challenge to Western Thought* (Basic Books, 1999), 20.

The thesis about the 'embodied mind' is interpreted broadly in two ways: epistemic and ontic. As M. Rowlands writes epistemic interpretation assumes that 'it is impossible to understand the nature of cognitive processes without understanding the wider bodily structures in which these processes are situated'. As for the ontic interpretation, there are two possible versions of it. The first is a 'dependence thesis'. Again Rowlands states: 'According to the second interpretation, the embodied mind thesis is a thesis of the dependence of cognitive processes on wider bodily structures. The idea is that cognitive processes are dependent on wider bodily structures in the sense that these processes have been designed to function only in conjunction, or in tandem with these structures.'[20] The second ontic interpretation can be called a 'constitution thesis'. Rowlands writes: 'The third — the strongest and most interesting, therefore — interpretation of the embodied mind thesis is also ontic, but is based on the idea of constitution or composition rather than dependence. According to this third interpretation, cognitive processes are not restricted to structures and operations instantiated in the brain, but incorporate wider bodily structures and processes. These wider bodily structures and processes in part constitute — are constituents of — cognitive processes.'[21]

I think that for our needs in the field of Christology we can take even the third, the most extreme interpretation. It seems that the first interpretation is quite trivial, while the second does not bring anything new to the existing concepts. The mind is shown here only as embedded in the structures of the world. But it does not mean that it is embodied completely. I have to agree that the third interpretation is naturalistic. But this is not however reductionism aiming to get rid of the category of the mind. It is merely a more precise placement of the mind in the structures of the world. This is a 'non-dualistic' theory at least if the type of Cartesian dualism is taken into account. But this is probably not a monistic theory. The man in this concept is not merely a matter, but rather embodied spirit or spiritualized body.[22] Gallagher and Zahavi remind us:

20 Mark Rowlands, *The New Science of the Mind: From Extended Mind to Embodied Phenomenology* (MIT Press, 2010), 55.

21 Ibid., 57.

22 Christological discussions shed light on antropological problems. See Marc Cortez, *Embodied Souls, Ensouled Bodies: An Exercise in Christological Anthropology and Its Significance for the Mind/Body Debate* (A&C Black, 2008).

> It is not as if the phenomenological way to "overcome" dualism is by retaining the distinction between mind and body, and then simply getting rid of the mind. Rather, the notion of embodiment, the notion of an embodied mind or a minded body, is meant to replace the ordinary notions of mind and body, both of which are derivations and abstractions.[23]

V. JESUS' MIND AS 'THE EMBODIED MIND OF GOD'

I would like to say that the previously presented way of showing the 'component parts' of man, the third interpretation, is the safest for Christology. As noted by O. Crisp, in Platonic dualism (so I guess also in Cartesian one) the soul is separated from the body, and only contingently related to the matter of the body (in this way, we fall into another error with Christology, namely *nestorianism*, which assumes internal breakdown in Jesus);[24] in hylemorphic dualism (though it is questionable whether it is really dualism) the situation is somewhat better — though the soul does not need to be united to the specific body, this relationship is more intimate, because the matter involves organizing body by the soul. The paradigm of 'the embodied mind' gives us insight into the necessary connection of the mind with the specific body.[25] Necessary to such an extent that it is precisely this particular one and no other body. And this specific body constitutes the mental experience of the man — Jesus — and constitutes his mind. In light of this conception, Jesus does not need to have 'an additional' mind. His mind does not have to be built of layers. There is no need to place a 'divine part' of the mind under or above the conscious mind.

Jesus remains in relationship with other persons of the Trinity. He does not fulfil this unity by being partly 'outside the world'. The unity is realized

23 Shaun Gallagher and Dan Zahavi, *The Phenomenological Mind: An Introduction to Philosophy of Mind and Cognitive Science* (Routledge, 2008), 135.

24 See Oliver Crisp, *Divinity and Humanity: The Incarnation Reconsidered* (CUP, 2007), 66–67, and compare A. N. Williams, 'Nestorianism: Is Jesus Christ one person or does he have a split identity, with his divine nature separate and divided from his human nature?', in *Heresies and How to Avoid Them*, ed. Ben Quash and Michael Ward (Baker Academic, 2007).

25 Irrelevance of bodily differences is often pointed out as the reason for scepticism about Caretsian epistemology. The paradigm of 'The embodied mind' is sensitive for differences of this kind, see Louise M. Antony, in *The Oxford Handbook of Epistemology*, ed. Paul K. Moser (OUP, 2002), 465–69.

through the world, in which the self-giving of God takes place in different ways. However, since the incarnation is one part of the process of self-giving, and *ipso facto* the Mind of God has an incarnational part, relationship with other parts is much deeper than any other human person is able to fulfil.

The mind of Jesus is not the least, but the most embodied mind this world has ever known. It also means that Jesus is not the furthest, but the closest to 'matter'. No other man has in himself the divine principle of the unity of these parts of God's self-giving to the world. In any other man can be seen an internal 'break'. So no other humans experience or can understand how parts of the Mind of God can remain together in harmony. That is why we cannot understand how it is possible to reconcile the existing laws of nature with the experience of freedom or to reconcile what is individual with what is common. Jesus, because it is in perfect unity with the other persons of the Trinity, remains in harmony, without the slightest separation, with all parts of process of self-giving. He is well incorporated, perfectly embodied into the structures of the world, which contain the elements of the divine and in which God expresses Himself.

But how to defend the unity of the person in Jesus referred to by the dogma of Chalcedon? How can we say that in Jesus there are two natures: divine and human without separation and without confusion? Is it necessary to maintain the duality and parallelism of the two natures? And whether any dualism (or parallelism) of natures entails dualism (or parallelism) of minds? Historically, dualism was considered necessary to defend the human freedom of Jesus. But it is possible to say that the adoption of the human will to the will of God does not break with human freedom, but only triggers true freedom. Similarly, we can think on the two types of minds. Jesus does not need to have two separate minds. The divine mind does not have to also occupy some part of the mind of Jesus. It is enough that Jesus has a human, 'embodied mind'.

The answer to the question, how can one explain the possibility of concluding in the mind of Jesus, both of the human and the divine, is extremely difficult. It requires accurate answers to other questions. The answer to the question what might be contained in the divine mind, and a question of what is constitutive of the human mind and how the mind and body connect, is possible. Meanwhile, still we are looking for the answers to these questions. And we are not closer than answers about man than to the question of God. T. Morris writes:

> What essentially constitutes a human body and a human mind wait upon a perfect science or a more complete revelation to say. We have neither a very full-blown nor a very fine-grained understanding of either at this point [...] For God the Son to become human, he thus had to take on a human body and a human mind, with all that entails. [...] He just had to take it and created, contingent body and the mind of the right sort.[26]

So we are looking for models that will allow us to bring the answers to these questions. On the one hand we take the concept of 'the mind of God', which is useful in the area of philosophy inspired by science, and in the area of theology. On the other hand we take, discussed by cognitive scientists and phenomenologists, the concept of 'the embodied mind'. It seems that the christological model based on these concepts is able to avoid at least part of the problems faced by Christology. What else can fit within the limits of Christian orthodoxy? The proposal I have just presented is only a draft and needs further development. It seems to me promising. Surely it keeps up with the times. The task of good theology, including natural theology, is teaching the mysteries of faith in a way characteristic for contemporary times. This is already a sufficient reason to make such attempts and therefore to discuss the issue of 'the embodied mind of God'.

Finally, paraphrasing the words of John of Damascus quoted at the beginning: 'Do not blame matter, for it is not dishonourable. Nothing is dishonourable which was brought into being by God', I would like to add: nothing is dishonourable, which is filled by God's presence.

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26 Morris, "The Metaphysics of God Incarnate", 217.

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EPISTEMOLOGY AND WELLBEING

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Abstract. There is a general presumption that epistemology does not have anything to do with wellbeing. In this paper I challenge these assumption, by examining the aftermath of the Gettier examples, the debate between internalism and externalism and the rise of virtue epistemology. In focusing on the epistemic agent as the locus of normativity, virtue epistemology allows one to ask questions about epistemic goods and their relationship to other kinds of good, including the good of the agent. Specifically it is argued that emotion has a positive role to play in epistemology, an example from Aquinas is used to illustrate this and to illustrate the different kinds of good involved in cognition.

I. INTRODUCTION

It is remarkable how quickly views that are taken as solid and central to one philosophical generation are ignored or rejected by the next, often with an unsympathetic or facile caricature of the 'traditional' or 'standard' view. We philosophers seem to define ourselves by opposing. Perhaps an element of general human psychological development is evident here, a need for individuation through rejecting the values of the previous generation. Anyhow, it seems to be the job of philosophers to object, challenge and argue against and one of our first targets is our teachers.

As a student, I was exposed to a traditional Thomistic education, with divisions between metaphysics, special metaphysics, logic and philosophical psychology, ethics and politics. What was intellectually exciting was the way in which hermeneutical, deconstructive and postmodern writers challenged this edifice with all the rhetorical flourishes of 'overcoming', 'transcending', 'rejecting grand narratives' and with the multiple deaths of the 'subject', 'God', 'metaphysics', 'philosophy' itself, or whatever. There was a real sense of the division between cutting edge versus traditional; cool versus staid. Who

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wouldn't want to be cutting edge? However, for me, the cutting edge moved to contemporary analytic philosophy, where many of the same giant-killing tendencies existed, but with what seemed to be sharper and more precise tools. One philosophized with a scalpel rather than a hammer. However, over time, the same deconstructive tendencies repeated themselves there. I experienced a growing awareness of dissatisfaction, a challenging of assumptions, a worry about the force of fashion and pressures of conformity. Often these pressures manifested indirectly in a facial expression or a change of conversational topic rather than direct argument. In response I found myself mining the older traditions, especially the work of Aquinas (possibly the most uncool philosopher in the canon), and relating his work to current issues particularly in epistemology. To my surprise many of the views I had laboriously worked my own way to were anticipated by him and expressed in ways which now seemed limpid and fresh rather than tedious and defunct.[1] In this paper I want to look at ways in which older, pre-modern views can emerge and begin to seem attractive through critical engagement with contemporary issues. To agree with Herbert McCabe, this is not a matter of trying to rehabilitate something called 'Thomism'.[2] Rather it is an attempt to do contemporary analytical philosophy in a historically attuned way.

II. WHAT HAS EPISTEMOLOGY TO DO WITH WELLBEING?

Does epistemology have anything to do with wellbeing? At first glance, no, it does not. Epistemology has to do with the grounds and conditions of knowledge of the world. It engages with objective reasons, abstracts from subjective

1 For example, the debate about the nature of a priori knowledge involving Quine, Lawrence BonJour and Paul Boghossian has interesting and relevant connections to Aquinas's thought — not least by virtue of BonJour's acknowledgement of that link. See Paul O'Grady, *Aquinas's Philosophy of Religion* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), 139–50.

2 'Then the intensely conservative Roman Church of the nineteenth century, terrified by the Enlightenment, went back and dug up St Thomas because they thought he might provide the intellectual framework they needed to hold the crumbling fabric of Christianity together. They invented "Thomism", a specially conservative version of his thought insufficiently liberated from Cartesian questions and it turned out to be a weapon that twisted in their hands. For it led to a new critical historical study of Aquinas. The new study of the text of Thomas proved if anything more corrosive of the Catholic establishment than ever the Enlightenment had been. It was corrosive from inside'. Herbert McCabe, *On Aquinas* (London: Continuum, 2008), 4.

viewpoints and seeks to establish universal, objective truths and is an abstract academic enterprise. Wellbeing has to do with the state of an organism, with what is *good-for* that being. Therefore it is a condition that affects everyone and is not an academic activity at all. And human wellbeing in particular seems to have quite a bit to do with subjectivity, with how people view their situation. A person in ideal material circumstances who views these (for whatever reason) in strongly negative terms is not said to have a high level of wellbeing. For example, someone grieving the loss of a spouse may pine away from distress, despite an ideal social or economic environment.

To use a different example, knowledge of the objective conditions which lead to a debilitating disease of the nervous system have nothing to do with the subjective states of the sufferer of such a condition. The former is clear, objective and impersonal, the latter is murky, subjective and intensely personal. Furthermore it is clear that the state of wellbeing of the sufferer is impacted by their emotional state and the capacity to determine their life (make informed decisions), while the medical knowledge of the disease is not impacted by emotion and seems to have little to do with the actions of the will in any relevant way. In this paper I want to argue that initial appearances are deceptive and that there is an important sense in which epistemology and wellbeing are connected. Specifically I want to argue that emotions are, in some sense, important in making sense of epistemological normativity.

To make this case I want to start in section three with a selective survey of late 20th century epistemology, focussing on Gettier's paper and its aftermath. I shall argue that the debate between epistemic internalism and externalism is the most important effect of Gettier's paper and that a main issue in epistemology at the start of the 21st century is the attempt to explain how epistemic normativity arises. In section four I shall articulate three key assumptions underlying these attempts to make sense of epistemic normativity. These are i) that emotion plays no role in epistemology, ii) the main task of epistemology is to make sense of justification or warrant and it does this by trying to articulate an abstract general form of justification/warrant, using counterexamples, thought experiments and intuitions and iii) this task is theoretical rather than practical—it's not to make better cognizers, but to understand cognition. In section five I turn to virtue epistemology as a response to the internalist/externalist controversy. The revolutionary change suggested by virtue epistemologists is to make the focus of analysis the agent A who holds belief p, rather than

belief p itself. Whatever good epistemic qualities p might have are derivative on qualities A has. This offers a new way of answering old questions in epistemology, but also raises new ones. Specifically questions arise about epistemic goods and how they relate to larger questions of goodness. With the focus now on the agent, the epistemic good of the agent has to be connected to the overall goodness of the agent — hence wellbeing makes an entrance for the virtue epistemologist. In section six I discuss the role of emotion and will for virtue epistemologists. Emotion plays a causal, motivational role in the operation of virtue and so becomes epistemologically relevant. There are several obvious ways in which emotions help epistemological inquiry, but also a study of epistemic vices shows how emotional regulation is important for knowledge acquisition. In section seven I shall discuss Aquinas's treatment of the virtue of *studiositas* and the vice of *curiositas*. Finally in section eight I shall argue that virtue epistemology offers a new paradigm which rejects all three assumptions identified in section four above. i) Emotions do have a role in epistemology, ii) the main task of epistemology is the study of epistemic virtue, best done by a non-reductive, cartographic approach which uses a range of resources, including literature as well as conceptual analysis and iii) the task is both theoretical and practical — it is partly a job of seeking to make better cognizers.

III. RECENT EPISTEMOLOGY

Edmund Gettier's famous short article of 1963 precipitated an avalanche of papers in response.[3] He challenged the adequacy of the longstanding account of the nature of knowledge as justified true belief. His worry was that such an account wasn't sufficient. Counterexamples were devised to show that beliefs could be true and justified, but that intuitively we wouldn't call them instances of knowledge.

One significant aspect of his paper was that he clearly accepted the fallibility of justification. A belief could be justified, but nevertheless turn out to be false. To require that justification be infallible, or always produce truth seems too strong a requirement. It makes knowledge too hard to achieve and leads inexorably to skepticism. So in Gettier's counterexamples, the person

3 Edmund L. Gettier, "Is Justified True Belief Knowledge?", *Analysis* 23, no. 6 (1963). For a survey of the aftermath see Alvin Plantinga, *Warrant. The Current Debate* (OUP, 1993), 6–11.

holding the target belief has good fallible grounds for the belief (testimony, observation, logical inference). The belief also turns out to be true, but there is some sort of disconnect between the justification and the truth. Explaining what this disconnect is and attempting to plug it became a cottage industry. If a fourth condition could be added to the first three necessary conditions, perhaps the package would then by jointly sufficient for knowledge and candidates for a fourth condition typically included a non-defeasibility factor. A defeater is a factor which renders the justification void and one suggested defeater is that the justification rests on false beliefs. The non-defeasibility condition then requires that this cannot be the case and so gets past Gettier's own examples. But following Gettier's impetus new counterexamples were devised to try to show that this didn't work, with ensuing new proposals for 4th conditions.

As the epistemological community tired of repeated attempts to solve this puzzle, the deeper effect of Gettier's paper was to highlight the tension in the traditional definition of knowledge between the truth aspect and the justification aspect. That a belief be true is something objective and potentially independent of the agent's reasoning since beliefs can be true by luck. That a belief be justified is dependent on the agent's reasoning, but crucially is not infallibly connected to truth (if one is fallibilist). Someone may reason impeccably, be in no way blameworthy, but nevertheless end up with a false belief (say in an evil demon scenario). So how are these necessary features of knowledge related to each other? Uneasily, was the main answer, and attempts to relate them tended to eventually drop one side or the other.

Epistemic internalism placed the emphasis on justification and is typically associated with what is called the KK thesis.[4] To know something one has to know that one knows. That is, one has to have some reflective level of awareness such that reasons can be offered if the belief is challenged. Worries about this include the exclusion of children or inarticulate adults from having knowledge. A child may well know their name, but be flummoxed if challenged as to how they know it. In opposition to this view, epistemic externalism focused on using reliable methods to acquire true beliefs. If the use of a method (such as perception) results in a high ratio of true beliefs, then use of

4 First stated in this form by Jaakko Hintikka in his *Knowledge and Belief: An Introduction to the Logic of the Two Notions* (Cornell Univ. Press, 1962).

that method counts as knowledge. However, it may be that one is unaware of the reliability of the method, or indeed have good reasons to think the method is unreliable. It leaves the kind of reflection we associate with knowledge out of the equation and makes knowledge acquisition something mechanical — akin to attributing knowledge to a light sensor which accurately records movement in its vicinity.

Both positions have been finessed in the recent literature and versions of each exist[5] but let's examine the broad contrast evident between them. Internalism is more familiar from the tradition — many of the classic early modern epistemologists are internalists and the typical features appealed to by internalists as epistemologically valuable are features of beliefs available to introspective awareness — clarity, distinctness, vivacity and so on. After the linguistic turn and the general move away from a Cartesian conception of mind, such features seemed less fundamental, as social and linguistic aspects of language and knowledge took centre stage. This allowed Quine, for example, to focus on observational sentences and the behavioural conditions under which people who are linguistically competent might assent to them.[6] For Externalists, considerations of internally accessible mental states drop out of the picture as epistemologically redundant. Forms of truth-tracking replace conscious deliberation. The split between these approaches has led commentators to suggest that they are actually dealing with different phenomena — what one group mean by knowledge and justification is simply different to what the others means and they talk past each other. Terminological quarrels have led some to eschew terms like 'justification' and attempt to introduce new terminology, for example 'warrant'.[7] The presence of such fundamental disagreement and terminological proliferation and confusion led a number of epistemologists to strike out in a new direction. Part of what makes this direction new is the rejection of some assumptions common to both internalists and externalists despite their massive disagreements. So in the next section I would like to characterize some of these assumptions.

5 See for example Hilary Kornblith, ed., *Epistemology: Internalism and Externalism* (Blackwell, 2001), for representative statements.

6 For a succinct statement see W. v. O. Quine, *Pursuit of Truth* (Harvard Univ. Press, 2003), ch. 1.

7 Plantinga, *Warrant. The Current Debate*, 6–11.

IV. STANDARD EPISTEMOLOGICAL ASSUMPTIONS

(i) Emotions do not play a role in Epistemology

When considering the range of factors deployed by epistemologists in explaining what is to be added to belief to augment its epistemological value, emotion rarely features. Internalists appeal to consciously available mental states which can be phenomenologically observed, but typically ignoring emotional states. Externalists appeal to cognitive operations which lead to a high ratio of truths. So one's emotions are not regarded as relevant. Indeed, a significant range of opinion thinks of the emotions as being epistemologically negative, they positively hinder cognition. For example, wishful thinking skews judgement, passions cloud one's assessment. The proper state for cognitive work is dispassionate cool — light not heat is required.

(ii) The Chief Task of Epistemology is Explaining how Beliefs Achieve Epistemological High Value

Common to both internalists and externalists is the focus on belief as the target of analysis. While coherentists emphasize their link to other beliefs and classical foundationalists have a more atomistic approach (both standardly held to be internalist positions), they nevertheless share with externalists of different stripes the assumption that one focuses on individual beliefs and seeks to explain how they come to be true in ways that are not dependent on luck. These ways are then explained as properties of such beliefs and an abstract general account is given of the nature of these properties. The standard way of proceeding is to appeal to pre-theoretical intuitions, counterexamples, thought experiments and a familiar procession of mad scientists, evil geniuses, fake barns, clairvoyants and chicken-sexers parades through the literature. So the primary locus of interest in this way of doing epistemology is the belief, considered abstractly in itself and divorced from the conditions of the holder of the belief.

(iii) The Task is Theoretical Rather than Practical

The job of epistemologists is to come up with explanatory theories about the nature of the added value belief has when it achieves the level of knowledge. The task is not to improve anyone's ability or chance of achieving knowledge, but to understand the conditions under which knowledge occurs. In the pro-

cess, one might acquire transferrable skills, but these are incidental to the main, abstract theoretical task.

All three of these assumptions tend to deepen the initial consensus that epistemology has nothing to do with wellbeing and that emotion and will play no role there. I turn now to virtue epistemology and examine how all three assumptions are rejected there.

V. VIRTUE EPISTEMOLOGY

V.1. Main Features

While virtue ethics has existed since ancient times, virtue epistemology is dated to a paper by Ernie Sosa in 1980.[8] He proposed the use of the idea of a virtue in epistemology as a way through the foundationalist-coherentist debate. His notion of a virtue was that of a process which was reliable at attaining truth. In the aftermath of that work virtue epistemology has quickly developed as a significant position in contemporary epistemology. Differences exist among theorists as to the nature of virtue. But they also disagree about the task of epistemology. For some it is business as usual, defining knowledge, defeating skepticism, explaining the grounds of knowledge and so on. Others have a more revolutionary vision where the very tasks of epistemology need to be change by the introduction of virtue theory, old questions being dropped, new ones emerging.

A fundamental distinction among types of virtue theory is that between those who think of virtue on a reliabilist model and associate it with reliable truth-acquiring faculties such as perception, memory, inference etc., while others think that virtue is more akin to the traditional Aristotelian model, where it is a disposition or train of character which is a form of cognitive excellence. These two positions have been labeled Reliabilist Virtue Epistemology and Responsibilist Virtue Epistemology respectively.[9]

Reliabilist theories would appear to be closer to externalist sensibilities and place less emphasis on internalist factors in the acquisition of knowl-

8 Ernest Sosa, "The Raft and the Pyramid: Coherence versus Foundations in the Theory of Knowledge", *Midwest Studies in Philosophy* 5, no. 1 (1980).

9 See Heather Battaly, "Virtue Epistemology", in *Virtue Epistemology*: *Contemporary Readings*, ed. John Greco and John Turri (The MIT Press, 2012).

edge. Sosa's formulations have changed since his initial 1980 suggestion and he most recently defines knowledge on what he called the AAA model (Sosa 2007).[10] A belief is apt when it is accurate and that accuracy has been brought about by the adroitness of the person who holds the belief. So there is an explanatory causal relation between the truth of the belief and the skills of the person who forms the belief. He uses the image of an archer hitting a target. While on occasion one might hit the target by chance, what we want is to hit the target because of ability and skill. John Greco is also categorized as a Reliabilist and his view is that knowledge is acquired when the truth of the belief is successfully brought about by the action of the agent.[11]

Responsibilist theories on the other hand fit better with internalist sensibilities. Linda Zagzebski has presented a highly detailed virtue epistemology which explicitly links the structure of virtue with that of Aristotelian ethics.[12] A virtue is a deep-seated feature of a person's character which has a success and a motivation component. The success component is that it tends to achieve the sough-after goal — in this case truth. The motivation component is the psychological mechanism with pushes on towards achieving that goal.

Reliabilist accounts of virtue tend to work well with examples of basic perception. When presented with a patch of colour which I reliably identify correctly, it seems not to involve any particularly complicated cognitive processes, or training or excellence. However, when dealing with more complicated situations — perhaps discriminating between different kinds of wine at a blind tasting — then training, experience, sensitivity and skill come in. This has led theorists to reflect on different kinds of knowledge. Wittgenstein once remarked that a diet of one-sided examples tended to skew philosophical theories.[13] And traditional epistemological examples tended to be of simple perceptual beliefs. But it is clear that knowledge includes more than just knowing isolated perceptual truths. Understanding involves seeing relationships between beliefs and grasping explanatory or causal relations. It is not simply getting a new belief, but coming to grasp a pattern between beliefs and being able to generate fur-

10 Ernest Sosa, *A Virtue Epistemology: Apt Belief and Reflective Knowledge* (OUP, 2007), 22.

11 John Greco, *Achieving Knowledge: A Virtue-theoretic Account of Epistemic Normativity* (CUP, 2010), 3.

12 Linda T. Zagzebski, *Virtues of the Mind: An Inquiry into the Nature of Virtue and the Ethical Foundations of Knowledge* (CUP, 1996).

13 Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations* (Basil Blackwell, 1953), section 593.

ther new true beliefs on this basis. One suggestion is that reliabilist and responsibilist accounts are complementary and work well relative to different sets of problems. Reliabilist accounts fit better simple perceptual input issues, while responsibilist accounts suit more complex instances of knowing.[14]

A further dimension, noted above, is that some theorists want to use the virtue framework to make radical changes to epistemology. For example Roberts and Woods argue for a very different approach to the methods and questions of epistemological inquiry.[15] They eschew reductive, hierarchical theory formation and approach the issues in a broader, more descriptive (or cartographic) way, drawing on literature and psychology to support them. The current spread of virtue epistemologists includes those who seek to answer traditional questions using new methods, those who seek to do this but also to expand the range of questions and those who jettison the old questions. Jason Baehr has usefully given a taxonomy of these views ranging from conservative to radical virtue epistemology.[16]

V.2. Epistemic Goods

The tradition has it that there is an important difference between true belief and knowledge. A chief task of epistemology is to explain wherein lies this difference. The problem with mere true belief is that it can come about by luck. So explaining how we come by true beliefs in a way not dependent on luck is important. One of the features of Gettier problems is that they frequently rely on elements which deploy bad luck subsequently countered by good luck yielding true belief. So, when I glance at my watch which is stopped (bad luck), but coincidentally at the exact time at which the watch is stopped (good luck), I acquire a true belief, but do so in a manner which doesn't count as knowledge. Too much coincidence and luck was involved and it could easily have been otherwise.

This explains the appeal of reliabilism, which seeks to rule out such examples (so looking at that watch would be unreliable for most of the day, thus yielding a very low ratio of true beliefs). However, Linda Zagzebski has articulated a problem for reliabilism, which she also thinks generalizes out

14 See Zagzebski, *Virtues of the Mind*, 273 on high-grade and low-grade knowledge.

15 Robert C. Roberts and William J. Wood, *Intellectual Virtues: An Essay in Regulative Epistemology* (Clarendon, 2007).

16 Jason Baehr, "Four Varieties of Character-Based Virtue Epistemology", in *Virtue Epistemology*: *Contemporary Readings*, ed. John Greco and John Turri (The MIT Press, 2012).

to other approaches.[17] We think that having a true belief is something valuable. And so having a method which brings about having such a valuable thing is itself valuable. Thus the extra element (reliable process) explains the extra value in knowledge, as distinct from mere true belief. However, she draws an analogy with espresso coffee. We think that a cup of coffee is something valuable. We also are happy to have a reliable machine which brings this about. But the reliable machine doesn't alter the value of the cup of coffee. The rare cup of coffee from the unreliable machine is just as good as the reliably produced cup. So reliabilism doesn't seem to explain the extra value that knowledge has as distinct from mere true belief. Zagzebski has argued that the analogy of machine to product in terms of belief is misleading and one should instead think in terms of agent and act. The normative qualities of an act (on a virtue-theoretic view) derive from the qualities of the agent, there is an internal connection.

What virtue epistemologists argue is that there is a connection between the holding of the true belief and certain traits, qualities or features of the person who holds the belief. Sosa talks about the adroitness of the agent causing the accuracy of the beliefs.[18] Greco talks about achieving the goal (true belief) through exercise of one's abilities.[19] Zagzebski usefully puts this discussion in the context of what she calls Epistemic Value Monism.[20] An Epistemic Value Monist about knowledge is someone who thinks there is only one genuine epistemic value — and this is truth. All other considerations are understood to be instrumental to this end. A value pluralist on the other hand thinks that there are many and different values in play in knowledge. While truth is clearly important, there are other elements as well. These are the skills, abilities and traits of the person which are related to achieving the true belief. And they are not simply instrumentally related to achieving the truth, but these traits are intrinsically good in themselves. By being fair-minded, accurate, courageous, resolute, humble, I am likely to achieve true beliefs — but even if I do not, these are still excellences. They are constitutive of living a good life. For the virtue theorist, the normative element added to true belief is the exercise of deep-

17 Linda Zagzebski, "Epistemic Value Monism", in *Ernest Sosa and His Critics*, ed. John Greco (Blackwell, 2004), 190.

18 Sosa, "The Raft and the Pyramid", 22.

19 Greco, *Achieving Knowledge*, 3.

20 Linda Zagzebski, "Epistemic Value Monism".

seated traits of character which are intrinsically good in themselves. And the value-laden status that true beliefs which make up knowledge have, derives from the values of these traits in themselves.

V.3. Wellbeing

Zagzebski's account of virtue theory makes a strong link between moral and intellectual virtues. The model of a virtue used in epistemology derives from a broadly Aristotelian approach, whereas she sees earlier versions of virtue epistemology drawing in an inexplicit way on consequentialist models of normativity (that is seeing reliabilism as having a fundamentally consequentialist structure). Intellectual virtues are to be understood as a component of an agent's life, and as an integral part of living a good life. So the normativity involved is to be understood in a eudaimonistic way and individual virtues are to be understood as 'thick' concepts, having both descriptive and evaluative dimensions to them. Intellectual virtues are instrumentally good, since moral virtues require them, but also are intrinsically good as excellences in themselves. So the exercise of intellectual virtue is a constitutive part of living a good life. On this picture, what role does emotion have in epistemology?

VI. THE ROLE OF EMOTION

VI.1. Basic Considerations

The first thing to note is that emotion can have a straightforward relationship to cognition and knowledge acquisition. Theorists who reject the role of emotion in epistemology tend to do so with the assumption that emotion somehow skews cognition. A standard example is wishful thinking. This is construed as a cause of a belief, but not a reason for that belief. That I want something to be so is not a good reason for thinking that it is so. Examples where it is advantageous for me to believe that I can perform an action and this in turn helps me perform the action (for example jump over a ravine) are regarded as pragmatic rather than epistemic situations. There is a good achieved in the believing, but it is not an epistemic good.

Against this one can think of multiple examples where emotion aids cognition. That I am interested in and passionate about an intellectual project helps me apply myself diligently to the work required by it. That I am not

bored by a presentation at a conference allows me to engage with the ideas expressed better. That I like my subject helps me be a better teacher. These are straightforward uncontroversial examples of emotion helping cognition. But they point to a deeper theoretical point.

VI.2. Motivation

Zagzebski's account of virtue requires that it have two components, a motivational element and a success element. The motivational element is that which moves one to action and for Zagzebski this is an emotion. In an intellectual virtue this emotion is a desire for truth. It leads one to develop behaviour and practices which arrive at true beliefs. Emotions are susceptible to being too weak, too strong or to being distorted in various ways. Working well the desire for truth is a form of cognitive excellence. When habitually not working well, it forms the basis for an intellectual vice.

Aquinas denied this account of intellectual virtue, arguing that intellectual virtue didn't engage with the appetitive part of the soul, but rather with the intellectual part.[21] Therefore intellectual virtues weren't full virtues and one might use intellectual virtues to bad ends. Zagzebski challenges the underlying parts-of-soul psychology involved here and argues for the closer integration of the different aspects of the psyche. It seems clear that one cannot achieve intellectual excellence without at least some acts of will, where one trains and develops one's innate capacities. Roberts and Woods agree that the clearcut distinction between moral and intellectual virtue used by Aristotle and Aquinas is successfully undermined by Zagzebski, but wonder to what extent one can identify discrete motivation and success factors for each individuated virtue. Rather they note that motivation, will and emotion play a significant role in a person's overall intellectual character.[22] Now, however one resolves this debate, it is clear that they all agree that emotion, will, practice, discipline play a role in one's intellectual life.

VI.3. Vices

The emotional factors which play a role in cognition can go wrong. They may be deficient, or in excess or otherwise disordered. When pursuing a answer to some question I may not be diligent enough in pursuing all leads,

21 Aquinas *Summa Theologiæ* I-II q. 57, a.1
22 Roberts and Wood, *Intellectual Virtues*, 72.

not courageous enough to face unattractive options (appalling vistas etc), not open-minded enough to contemplate alternative solutions. In each of these cases there is a deficiency in motivation, a deficiency which is a lack of the required drive or emotion to achieve the specific good in question. Alternatively I might be too quick to jump to a conclusion, blinded by prejudice to consider alternatives or consumed with desires which are extraneous to the specific good in question (truth) — I may want to be praised, win the prize, get the research grant. There are the vices of pride — arrogance, conceit, superciliousness, vanity, domination — which skew intellectual life. Who hasn't been on the receiving end of some of these at different points in one's career? The roots of these are clearly emotional and are clear ways in which the good of epistemic inquiry can be endangered. Indeed the insight that this is so is at the root of the assumption that emotion should not play a role in epistemology. The error is to fail to distinguish good, supportive and useful from bad, destructive and hindering roles for emotion.

VII. A CASE STUDY: AQUINAS ON STUDIOSITAS/CURIOSITAS

Philip Ball, in his stimulating and highly readable book, *Curiosity: How Science Became Interested in Everything*, traces the origins of modern science to the cultivation of that eponymous habit.[23] In the course of his discussion he remarks how certain medieval philosophers rejected the very idea and thought it sinful. He interpreted this as reflecting an ascetical, other-worldly attitude which dismissed this world with all its curious features in favour of a different, higher realm. Augustine and Aquinas hold this attitude and it was one of the elements of the medieval mindset which blocked the rise of modern science. In particular it fostered an adherence to an Aristotelian approach which sought generalities rather than focusing on individuals and which tended to inhibit the development of empirical experimental methods.

While it is true that Aquinas treats curiosity as a vice, it is not immediately clear that it has the same meaning for him as for later scientists. Neither is it clear that he had an attitude of dismissiveness for the material world. His philosophical master was Aristotle who displayed an enormous curiosity about the physical world. His immediate teacher was Albertus Magnus who

23 Philip Ball, *Curiosity: How Science Became Interested in Everything* (Bodley Head, 2012).

explored minerology, entemology, optics, botany, as well as ethics, metaphysics and philosophical theology (all of which Ball acknowledges). [24]

Aquinas discusses the virtue of studiousness and the associated vice of curiosity in the context of his general discussion of temperance.[25] The virtue of temperance has to do with living well and is about achieving balance in various areas of one's life. Specifically it has to do with training one's appetites in appropriate ways. Eating too little or too much has its problems. Likewise, drinking or exercising. And Aquinas speaks of the vice of insensibility, where one is indifferent to physical pleasures, a state which is not conducive to wellbeing.[26] So it would be hard to assimilate this approach to a world-denying asceticism. Within this general context Aquinas investigates our desire for knowledge. Is it possible that this could be too much? He looks at the objection that there can never be an upper limit to knowledge and so to think of needing moderation about knowledge is a kind of category error. What is opposed to knowledge is a kind of uninterest or lack of desire to find out, not an excess of this.

Aquinas distinguishes between knowledge itself — understood as a kind of repository — and the desire for and pursuit of knowledge in any given individual person. While there is no upper limit to the acquisition of knowledge itself, it is the certainly the case that ways of pursuing knowledge can be better or worse. For a start, one can distinguish different kinds of knowledge and reckon one kind better than another. Without needing to accept any hierarchical account of reality (as Aquinas clearly did), there is the familiar example from contemporary epistemology of someone who devotes themselves to acquiring lots of low-grade knowledge (e.g. memorizing a phone directory) as distinct from qualitatively different knowledge (e.g. learning a language, or physics). We make a qualitative distinction between better and worse kinds of knowledge and think that merely learning off lots of discrete, uninteresting facts is intellectually low-grade. Aquinas also notes that knowledge has a

24 For a useful discussion of Aquinas's relationship to Albertus Magnus see Simon Tugwell, *Selected writings of Albert and Thomas* (Paulist Press, 1988), 208–13. Tugwell notes 'Albert was fascinated by all the details of what things are … For Thomas, it is not really the marvelous complexity and ingenuity of things that alerts the mind to the reality of God, it is rather the metaphysical implications of very simple observations about things, beginning with the primary fact of their being there at all', (213).

25 *Summa Theologiæ* II-II qq 166-167.

26 *Summa Theologiæ* II-II q. 142.a.1

moral dimension. It can be used for good or ill and that is a factor relevant to the cognizer's wellbeing. If one's primary focus is on abstract propositional knowledge, this makes no sense, whereas if one's focus in on the individual who possesses the knowledge (as with virtue epistemology), then this dimension is indeed relevant.

Another factor Aquinas draws attention to is how someone relates to the knowledge they have — in some cases it can inflates or puff up the possessor or indeed it can lead to a deeper kind of ignorance — where someone misses the bigger picture and gets so caught up in the importance of their particular bailiwick. This is not merely a moralistic or pious desire to prevent pride or vanity, but a realistic comment on the tendency of this kind of pride to develop into intellectual vice and thereby to damage the utility of the cognitive process.

Furthermore, anyone who has experience as a teacher can appreciate the need to harnass effort and energies in students, directing them constructively to make a cohesive point, to defend a thesis or write a decent essay. A feature of an untrained or novice scholar is to try too much, deal with too many issues or follow several leads at once in a confused and confusing way. The virtue of *studiositas* is about achieving excellence in this, acquiring an ability to focus, sustain an inquiry and not to get sidelined by *curiositas*, an uncontrolled scattergun approach.

This is not incompatible with empirical inquiry, *pace* Bell. Indeed it fits well with ideas about the theory-ladenness of observation. Observation is not neutral or contextless. Deciding to observe a particular range of phenomena, deciding what weight to put on what aspects, how to gauge anomalies, how and when to use different kinds of technology all involves a deep embeddedness in pre-existent theory. Good observation is driven by theory, by paradigms and hypotheses.

Aquinas's basic point about anyone's relationship to knowledge is that it is embedded in the context of the individual's wellbeing, which includes affections, action, education, natural abilities and social role. Each element of this list impacts on cognition — affection drives the pursuit of knowledge, actions reinforce dispositions and habits, education inculcates virtue or vice, natural abilities are perfected or blunted, social role places responsibilities and obligations in respect of cognition. It involves a rich account of knowledge where it is embedded in a social, moral and psychological matrix.

VIII. REJECTING STANDARD EPISTEMOLOGICAL ASSUMPTIONS

The foregoing discussion should straightforwardly show that it is false that emotions do not play a role in epistemology. And the role they play is not merely causal but constitutive of epistemic normativity, which derives from virtue. Underlying the epistemological project is the desire for truth — a desire famously noted by Aristotle at the start of the Metaphysics.[27] Note that desire is an appetitive state. This is what Zagzebski highlights in focusing on the motivation element in intellectual virtue — desire drives the search for truth. It is also the case that certain kinds of emotional response aid this project, certain others hinder it. An intellectually virtuous person is one whose emotions are in tune with and support the project of inquiry and support her in achieving true beliefs. An intellectually vicious person is one whose emotions hinder this project whether by being too weak in the pursuit of truth (being careless, lax, overlooking evidence etc) or too zealous in pursuit of some other goal (domination, self-aggrandizement, fame etc). So emotion is constitutive of and central to actual inquiry when one focuses on the agent who knows rather than merely on the beliefs abstracted from the agent. Hence assumption one [(i) Emotions do not play a role in Epistemology] is false.

The chief task of epistemology on this approach is therefore not in establishing the properties of beliefs which give them a high epistemological status, rather it is in understanding the good dispositions of persons who achieve true belief and how these dispositions lead to that goal. This is the revolutionary change proposed by virtue epistemologists. Rather than focusing on individual beliefs, construed abstractly and detached from the conditions of their possessor and environment, the explanatory focus is on the cognizer. True beliefs are ontologically and epistemology derivative on the inquirer. The beliefs don't exist apart from a person making an inquiry and their epistemological status is dependent on characteristics of the inquirer, not on some qualities they allegedly contain in themselves. Virtue ethics avoids rule-based decision making processes by emphasizing the notion of prudence, a governing capacity to judge rightly in the contingencies of specific situations. Virtue epistemology also emphasizes the non-rule-governed

27 Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, Bk.1.ch.1

and context-sensitive processes involved in actual cognition. Good judgment is required in mediating between different demands and good judgment is acquired through training, experience and habituation. Therefore assumption two, [ii) The Chief Task of Epistemology is Explaining how Beliefs Achieve Epistemological High Value] is misleading. Properties of beliefs are derivative on properties of individuals and the more fundamental task is explicating the properties of individuals.

Because intellectual virtue is acquired over a long period of time, requires training and apprenticeship, is sensitive to context and social setting and relates to the totality of the agent's situation, epistemology is made more concrete on this account than on standard views. Roberts and Wood put this nicely.

> Given the central place of knowledge and understanding in human life, one would expect epistemology to be one of the most fascinating and enriching fields of philosophy and itself an important part of an education for life. We might expect any bright university student who got all her way to her junior year without dipping her mind in an epistemology course would have to hang her head in shame of her cultural poverty. But the character and preoccupations of much of the epistemology of the twentieth century disappoint this expectation. We think that the new emphasis on the virtues and their relation to epistemic goods has the potential to put epistemology in its rightful place … the study of knowledge and related human goods connects with ethical and political issues, with the practice of science and other forms of inquiry, with religion and spirituality, with appreciation of the arts, and with the enterprise of education.[28]

Indeed this approach requires one to rethink the distinction between theoretical and practical. As Zagzebski puts it, a virtue theoretical approach can be seen as "emphasizing the practical aspect of speculative wisdom or…the theoretical aspect of practical wisdom".[29] If the explanatory focus is on the person, who thinks, acts and feels in a social setting, all these elements are interconnected with each other. To abstract one area and treat it as if it were hermetically sealed off from others is to falsify the data. One gets sharp, clean, theories, but not ones that have much purchase for people who don't abstract in the same manner. Hence assumption three, [iii) The Task is Theoretical Rather than Practical] is put in question.

28 Roberts and Wood, *Intellectual Virtues*, 9.
29 Zagzebski, *Virtues of the Mind*, 218.

IX. CONCLUSION

This last point might explain why so much philosophy is directed simply to other philosophers, rather than to the broad swathe of theorists interested in the foundational issues treated by philosophy. In this way philosophy has been sidelined and questions about ethics, human identity, meaning, spirituality are widely discussed by literary and cultural theorists, religious studies scholars, scientists, historians, psychologists independently of philosophy, frequently because the philosophical discussion seems too scholastic and in-house.[30]Virtue epistemology offers the possibility of continuing the traditional epistemological project but also of expanding, concretizing and connecting it to other discourses and disciplines investigating the human condition. To what extent this connects to the naturalistic turn in twentieth century philosophy, naturalized epistemology and cognitive science is an open and interesting question. But what is also interesting is the possibility afforded of making connections with the other humanities and for the significance of epistemology in relating the sciences and the humanities.

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30 This has been my experience from working in universities in Ireland and the UK, but also from visiting other institutions in Europe, the US and India. There is a desire for engagement with the discipline of philosophy by non-philosophers, but frequently a dissatisfaction in the actual interaction with philosophers. Hilary Putnam has some helpful reflections on this issue in *Realism with a Human Face*, drawing on a Kantian distinction between what is called a *Schulbegriff* (Scholastic concept) and *Weltbegriff* (World concept) of Philosophy. See especially the Introduction by James Conant p.xxiv in Hilary Putnam, *Realism with a Human Face*, ed. James Conant (Harvard Univ. Press, 1992).

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HOW DO WE RECOGNIZE GOD? THE MOST IMPORTANT EPISTEMOLOGICAL QUESTION OF CHRISTIAN PHILOSOPHY

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Abstract. There are three main ways to acquire knowledge of the existence of God and the knowledge of His nature. These are either the arguments taking into account the nature of the world and our thinking about the world, or the arguments trying to prove the authenticity of certain historical events, or it is a reference to particular types of experiences, called mystical experiences. In the case of Christian philosophy we will have to consider, firstly, the cosmological and ontological arguments for the existence of God, and, secondly, the attempts to show the authenticity of the reports of the events regarding Jesus of Nazareth and, thirdly, the arguments in favor of the objectivity of mystical experiences recorded in the history of Christian religion. In regard to all of the above-mentioned three sources of knowledge about God, I would like to ask the following questions. How do we know that all of them refer to the same object? On what basis can we say that even if these three 'ways to God' are correct, they refer to the same being? Are they independent of each other? But if they depend on each other in some way, what are the relationships among them? If we were not able to demonstrate that the item referred to by the term 'God' in all of these three ways is the same object or being, it would represent a significant weakness in Christian theology and philosophy. I will try to outline what relationship may exist between these three sources of knowledge about God. Then I will attempt to describe the criteria connecting all these sources of knowledge.

Many among the professional philosophers of today are convinced that one of the greatest threats to theistic philosophy in general, and Christian philosophy in particular in recent times has been the so-called verifcationist theory of meaning, proclaimed at the beginning of the twentieth century by the representatives of the Vienna Circle. It stated that any linguistic expression has cognitive meaning only when a sentence containing this expression can be confirmed or rejected by experience. Thus, from this supposition, it

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had to follow immediately that sentences containing the term 'God' must be cognitively meaningless, even though they may have other meanings, emotional, poetic or similar. I do not think we should worry about this position, as the verificationist principle itself can neither be confirmed nor rejected by experience, and this insight is sufficient not to treat verificationism as a serious theoretical proposal.[1]

The second assumption functioning in the contemporary discussions about the existence and nature of God is that to believe in God, one has to have such an argument for His existence and nature, which could not be subject to any objections. It would be best if it was an apodictic argument for His existence, and thus one whose negation would lead to some kind of contradiction. There are interpretations of the so-called ontological argument, which assign to it the value of necessity, but here I am going to leave this issue out of consideration.[2] But even when we take into account only cosmological arguments, then one can notice easily that they can be interpreted as hypotheses to which one can assign a greater or lesser degree of probability. The conclusion following from these arguments is quite trivial, namely, that there is some, albeit difficult to determine, probability that God as a creator of the visible world exists. If one accepts this kind of probabilistic evidence for the existence of God, he in this way acquires a theistic religious belief, even though commonly it would be wrong to say that I believe in God, because I accept that my belief in His existence is entitled to the probability of, say, ½.

Religious beliefs in the above sense become religious faith only when other additional elements begin to function, namely the right moral attitude, trust in God, hope for His help, hope for salvation, etc.[3] Here I do not intend to examine further the relationship between religious beliefs, as the results of the acceptance of cosmological arguments, and faith in the proper sense. About someone who has religious beliefs in the sense just described, although not yet faith in the proper sense, we can say that he recognizes God on the basis of the characteristics of the divine being, which follow from cosmological reasoning,

1 Historical and ideological contexts of the Vienna Circle philosophical theories are discussed in Alan W. Richardson and Thomas E. Uebel, eds., *The Cambridge Companion to Logical Empiricism* (CUP, 2007), 13–90.

2 Cf. Stanisław Judycki, "Descartes' Ontological Proof: An Interpretation and Defense", *European Journal for Philosophy of Religion* 4, no. 2 (2012).

3 See, e.g., Richard Swinburne, *Faith and reason* (Clarendon Press, 2005).

that he recognizes God as the most perfect being, as being omnipotent, perfectly good, as the pure act of existence and so on.

However, we can imagine such a course of history of human cultures, in which this 'speculative recognition' would be the only way to recognize God: there would have been no significant sequences of events that suggested the revelation of God, there would have been no sequences of events such as these described in the Bible, and no one would have had any mystical experiences, that is to say, such experiences on the basis of which he could assume that he directly experienced the presence of the most perfect being. Everything would be limited to the level of hypothetical theistic beliefs, which would be perceived in more or less the same way as the atheistic rival hypotheses. In this case the recognition of God would apply only to those people who would be capable of such a kind of speculative thinking which is required in the case of philosophy, and therefore would apply only to a small number of people. As it may seem, this kind of recognizing God would be purely abstract, without any intuitive content.

But this is not the case, because, as Christians believe, the series of events described in the Bible open another way to God, not an abstract way, but an intuitive one, and in this sense allow for some closer characterization of what God is. But the problem is, how do we know that a supremely perfect being of philosophical thinking is the same being, the same person, as the God described in the Old and New Testament? It cannot be excluded that the major events and teachings are described in the Bible in accordance with the truth, but that all those events were accomplished not by God as a supremely perfect being, and therefore God of philosophy, but by some great acosmic force, and we do not know what the relationship between God as a supremely perfect being and this acosmic force is.[4]

It is also possible that we could have good reasons to accept the truth of the statements contained in the Bible, but that in the history of human cultures no philosophical thinking would have occurred, and no one would have formulated any arguments for the existence of a supremely perfect being. Then the God of the Bible could still be understood as the creator of heaven and earth, but we would not know the possibility of a purely rational dem-

4 Richard Swinburne, *Was Jesus God?* (OUP, 2008) argues for the divinity of Jesus but not in the context of the concept of God as a supremely perfect being. He also does not take into consideration mystical experiences and the concept of God implied by these experiences.

onstration of the existence of a supremely perfect being. Under this scenario one can also assume that there would be no mystical experiences, which after all is quite possible because neither from the concept of God as a supremely perfect being, nor from the concept of the God of the Bible does it follow that He has to reveal himself directly to particular people.

We can also take into consideration the third principal possibility in this context, namely, that in the history of humanity no speculative thinking would have occurred, and there would have been no events accepted as an important revelation of God, but still some people, sometimes, would have experienced the presence of a powerful and good person. This kind of experience would then be deprived of any means of interpretation whatsoever, and, as I believe, would be regarded as something completely incomprehensible.

There is also the possibility of the 'zero option', i.e. God as the most perfect being indeed exists, but in the history of mankind no one has ever formulated any speculative arguments for His existence, no events recognized as revelatory have been reported, and no one has had any experiences of the presence of a person infinitely powerful and good at the same time. This, probably, had been the situation in which mankind had lived for many centuries before Biblical times and before philosophical thinking appeared on the scene of human history, but such a spiritual situation could have lasted even to our own times, in spite of all our scientific, technological and cultural achievements.

However, these three principal possibilities do not exhaust all scenarios, namely, it is also possible that some speculative ways to God would have been formulated in the course of the development of human cultures and that some events considered as a manifestation of God would have been registered, but all this would have happened without the occurrence of any experiences being accepted as mystical. It is also possible that we would have speculative reasons for the existence of a supremely perfect being together with mystical experiences relating to Him, but no events deserving the name of revelatory events would have ever happened. It is also not excluded that events interpreted as revelatory would have appeared and mystical experiences would also have been registered, but without the emergence of any tradition of speculative thinking about a supremely perfect being.

But so it happens that we have all these three elements, namely speculative thinking, revelatory events, as well as different kinds of direct experience of the presence of God. It should be noted, however, that this tripartite division can be

interpreted so that all events accepted as revelatory would be classified as mystical and therefore all that was experienced by the prophets the Old Testament, as well as the experiences of the divinity of Jesus by his disciples would become some kinds of peculiar mystical experiences. But here I reserve the expression 'mystical experiences' only for all those experiences that have happened after the events described in the Bible. Neither do I recognize as mystical those experiences of the presence of God which Adam and Eve had in Paradise.

Let me start with the issue of experience related to the concept of a supremely perfect being. I would like to stress that the formula 'experience related to the concept' is not accidental. Concepts, even very abstract concepts, by appropriate configuration of their components induce some specific experience in the human mind. We are accustomed to the concept of 'God of classical theism', and to the components of this concept which are omnipotence, omniscience, perfect goodness, infinity, simplicity. However, one should pay attention to the content of the attribute of perfect goodness. This attribute includes such features as: nobility, humility, closeness of the relationship, even with the smallest things, and many other components of the 'perfect goodness'.

Similarly, the attribute of wisdom, which certainly must belong to the concept of a supremely perfect being, has to have in its content, among other elements, axiological spirituality. By 'axiological spirituality' I mean the desire to evaluative appreciation of even the smallest things. So when we take into account the characteristics implied by the attribute of perfect goodness and wisdom of God, then the whole concept of God leads to a special kind of experience, namely the experience of a specific 'gestalt-quality' (*Gestaltqualität*), also called 'formal quality' or 'founded content'. The idea of 'founded contents' has been formulated by the representatives of the 'Gestaltpsychologie', and was mainly related to the area of sensory perception. For example, perception of melody is not a perception of individual sounds, but it consists in grasping of a new kind of thing or of a new kind of quality based on relations between particular sounds. I do not see any obstacles to argue that there may exist founded contents not only in special cases of perceptual content, but also with regard to some purely semantic contents.

At first glance the idea of 'abstract gestalt-qualities' may seem bizarre. How, one can ask, should it be possible to have experiences based solely on semantic contents? But the answer can be that all great poetry and all great writers of all

times aimed to discover such 'abstract gestalt qualities', e.g. after reading *The Magic Mountain* by Thomas Mann what our minds experience is the synthetic 'abstract gestalt-quality' which was expressed by this great work of art.

When we imagine a priest from the time of ancient Egypt, who formulated for himself an argument for God's existence in the style of St. Anselm or R. Descartes, and who in this way came to the conclusion that there must be such an entity as a supremely perfect being, then he would have gained access not only to the purely conceptual knowledge of the existence of such a being, but would have probably experienced some new kind of 'gestalt-quality' or a new kind of 'founded content'. This new quality would however have been based exclusively on the components of the concept of the most perfect being and therefore it would be an 'abstract gestalt quality'.

Perceptual 'gestalt qualities' can be very different: they are generated by complicated configurations of elements that underpin them. 'Abstract gestalt quality' based on the concept of a supremely perfect being seems to be generated by a kind of 'tension' between some of the constituents of this concept, namely the constituent of an absolute power on the one hand and the constituents of perfect goodness on the other hand. The third component of this 'abstract gestalt-quality' is wisdom, and by 'wisdom' I mean here a deep and definitive understanding of each individual being. These ingredients in a sense compete with each other in the concept of a supremely perfect being and this competition leads to the constitution of the experience of God's 'abstract gestalt-quality'. 'Power', that in this case must mean total or absolute power, is 'mixed' with humility and with the desire for intimacy and openness that belong to wisdom. But this is exactly what the emblem of God is. His emblem is the unity of opposites (*coincidentia oppoistorum*): the unity of the absolute power with weakness understood as humility and the desire for intimacy and openness. As Christians would say: omnipotence crucified. So for a speculative thinker God should look from the point of view of argument and speculation, the God independent of any historical revelations and independent of experiences called mystical. God should look like this, assuming that the speculative thinker drew enough attention to the ingredients of the concept which he discovered.

The 'competition' and mixed combination of these several features of the concept of God creates a unique and unrepeatable sign, in a similar way as the initial sounds of concerto in E minor by F. Chopin — solemn, but full of

affection and optimism — create a unique sign, or, in a sense at the other end of the spectrum, as the presence of the spirit of R. Wagner can be felt when we are listening to the Tristan Chord of *Tristan und Isolde* — full of emotional tension and at the same time of despair. There is no need therefore to experience the 'whole' God in order to experience Him already within purely speculative thinking, and this experience happens through an 'abstract gestalt-quality'. Usually, however, philosophers do not notice that concepts also have their experiential profiles, their 'gestalt-qualities'. These 'abstract gestalt-qualities' represent their objects in an absolutely unique manner: the initial sounds of the concerto in E minor represent the spirit of Chopin, the Tristan Chord the spirit of Wagner, an 'abstract gestalt-quality', based on the concept of the most perfect being, represents a uniquely personal nature of God.

There is no doubt that neither the disciples of Jesus, nor other persons surrounding Him had at their disposal such concepts as 'a supremely perfect being' or 'God of classical theism'. Perhaps to the main components of their concept of God belonged such elements as: being a righteous ruler and a creator of the world, a ruler of human destinies, a giver of moral law. To recognize that Jesus was the son of God, the miracles he performed were not sufficient, the great power that He showed, the power to heal, to resurrect, to transform water into wine was therefore not enough, because despite of all this it was nevertheless still possible that His power did not come from God as a righteous ruler. All His deeds did not preclude that He was using some force of unknown origin or even an evil force. Only the deeds of Jesus, and therefore His power and His wisdom, added to the humility of the cross and to the resurrection could cause His disciples to make this specific and unique conceptual axiological discovery, namely, that a great power, a power that can do anything, can only then be called God, if it is capable of a radical sacrifice, humility and nobility.

The disciples of Jesus made not only such an axiological discovery, a theological discovery as we would say today, but they could see directly, that in His person the 'gestalt-quality God' manifested itself. They intuitively encountered this 'founded quality' that is the quality based on power, humility and wisdom. This quality can be directly felt, one can feel that only such a being can be called a supremely perfect being which is able to give up His power, to give up absolute pride, to which in a sense He is 'entitled' by the power He possesses, and to participate in what is not comparable in any re-

spect with His power and with His fullness. Before the Resurrection only part of the emblem of God was available to the disciples, after the Resurrection they could see this emblem clearly, they could see this 'gestalt quality', though obviously they could see it in quite a different manner than a speculative philosopher sees it. They saw that God as the absolute power does not contemplate Himself for all eternity, but by its deep nature aims to be close to everything, close to every rational creature and is able to silently endure the folly of human pride.

It is noteworthy that these two kinds of experience, i.e. speculative experiences of God and historically registered experiences of some people support each other and begin to form a coherent whole. I now turn to the third element of this whole, namely mystical experiences. In his already classic book *Perceiving God,* W.P. Alston argues in favor of the objectivity of experiences exhibited by what he calls 'Christian mystical practice' (CMP).[5] Alston justifies the objectivity of the experiences taken from Christian mystical practice by reference to the concept of 'doxastic practice'. According to him doxastic practices are socially sanctioned ways of forming and justifying beliefs. Doxastic practice would be, for example, the practice of forming beliefs about physical things based on sense perception, but doxastic practices would also comprise practices of forming memory beliefs, introspective beliefs and beliefs belonging to the area of *a priori* knowledge (mathematics and logic). In the same line Alston also claims that the practice of forming beliefs about God is based on mystical experiences and argues that each doxastic practice is epistemically circular, that is, its reliability cannot be established independently of the practice itself.[6] At the same time Alston stresses that each doxastic practice is connected to its own 'over-rider system'. CMP has an over-rider system consisting of scriptures and Christian dogma. From all this it should follow that it is rational for a person in such a practice to accept the outcomes of its beliefs as true unless the practice is shown to be unreliable. It should

5 William P. Alston, *Perceiving God: The Epistemology of Religious Experience* (Cornell Univ. Press, 1991).

6 Alston however in a sense distances himself from his own thesis on the circularity of every epistemic practice when he writes (Alston, *Perceiving God*, 10–110) : "So if arguments for the existence of God deployed by Descartes are satisfactory he really was succeeded in squaring the circle. I won't try to go into a critical discussion of the arguments. Suffice it for the present purposes to say that one would be hard pressed to find a defender on the current scene."

be noted that Alston's argument consists in part in highlighting perceptual character of mystical experiences.

In my opinion, however, the main weakness of the argument put forward by Alston lies in the fact that even if the CMP is on a par with other doxastic practices, this fact does not by itself indicate that in CMP we experience God. What is needed is some criterion which would enable us to recognize God. So far I have suggested that this criterion consists of two components: the 'gestalt-quality of God', which simultaneously is revealed and concealed by the concept of a supremely perfect being, and of the same 'gestalt-quality', which was revealed in the person of Jesus. In the first case the presentation of this peculiar quality is more abstract, while in the second case this presentation is more intuitive (experiential), but as it happens with every experience this intuitive presentation can be transformed into general and abstract shape. This transformation happened in the history of Christianity: the teaching and attitude of Jesus led to the constitution of theological and philosophical concept of a supremely perfect being.

In the case of mystical experience we have to do with intuitiveness, which, when subjected to reflection, can also lead to the formation of the concept of a supremely perfect being. I would like to argue here that the principal 'gestalt-quality', which is revealed by CMP, is composed of two main characteristics, which are power and humility. Humility of God in mystical experience takes the form of closeness to the existential situation of each individual. The main goal of God is not to inform about His attributes, but mystic experiences are intended by Him as comforting and reinforcing events for particular people. Let me quote three examples taken from Alston's book:

> In a state of intense inner wretchedness of such intensity that my mind seemed on the point of breaking, I got up at 4 a.m. and began wandering aimlessly on the wooded hillside. This went for some time until, unexpectedly, the words of the 130-th psalm sounded in clearly in my mind: 'And plenteous redemption is ever found in Him; and, from its iniquities, He Israel shall redeem'. With these words a light seemed to enveloped me, and there flowed into my desolate heart such a flood of Love and Compassion that I was overwhelmed and overpowered by the weight of it; it seemed to flow through my whole being with a cleansing and healing virtue. From that moment I knew that Love is the nature of reality.[7]

7 Alston, *Perceiving God*, 18.

> When I was middle-aged and the 2-nd World War upon us, there came a night when I was in deepest distress of mind. I was alone in my bedroom, pacing the floor … Suddenly, I heard a voice firmly say 'Be still and know that I am God!' It changed my life, I got into bed, calm and confident.[8]

> During the night in September 9th 1954, I awoke and looking out of my window saw what I took to be a luminous star which gradually came nearer, and appeared as a soft slightly blurred light. I was seized with violent trembling, but had no fear. I knew that what I felt was great awe. This was followed by a sense of overwhelming love coming to me, and going out of me, then of great compassion from the Outer Presence. After that I had a sense of overpowering peace, and indescribable happiness.[9]

If all these three sources of knowledge about God, that is, speculation, some events from human history and mystical experiences reveal Him by showing the same kind of 'gestalt-quality', then in this way we can also obtain the solution to the problem of cultural dependence of mystical experiences: mystical experiences are dependent on the content of a particular religion, but these contents themselves are not dependent on a particular religion, they were constructed either by speculative reasoning or were based on specific historical experiences. All these three elements form one diagnostic criterion of the recognition of God. How did Teresa of Avila or Faustina Kowalska know that their visions were not illusions? How did they know that these visions were not induced by some powerful being but by God? They knew this because they knew this 'gestalt-quality', which was revealed in different elements of their visions. The same melody can be played on different instruments and in different arrangements. How did Abraham know that the three visitors in front of his tent were God? He could know this because he knew the 'gestalt-quality' of God and quickly recognized it in each of these three visitors.

But how do the mystics, and above all the so-called ordinary people know this quality? They know it because they were created by the most perfect being and are sustained by it in their existence. In terms of the notion of the 'gestalt-quality of God' we can interpret the following famous Bible passage:

> So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created: created man and woman (*Genesis* 1: 27)

8 Ibid., 19.
9 Ibid., 18.

There are people who never knew their parents up until adulthood. We can imagine a situation in which they do not know their parents even purely conceptually when encountering them. Nevertheless they are able, sometimes slowly, sometimes at first sight, to recognize the similarity of appearance, similarity of behavior etc., and in effect to recognize that they have encountered someone very close to them. There is no true love without kinship, and by 'kinship' I mean here spiritual kinship. It manifests itself in everything: in the manner of speaking, in the ways of reaction, in the decisions, in sensitivity. Every like loves his like. Those who do not recognize their parents do so either because of their cognitive weakness, or because of ill will: they do not want to recognize them. According to Christian doctrine all things were created by God, and everything is dependent on Him, but from this it does not follow that everything that has been created, has got the 'seal' of God, and this seal is revealed by innate 'gestalt-quality', which one can recognize in the common people and also in the persons other than human persons.

In this way we can therefore answer the question posed in the title of this text: how do we recognize God? We recognize God by cognitively grasping 'gestalt-quality' that characterizes Him. This quality manifests itself also in our inner experience:

> Thou wast more inward to me than the most inward part of me; and higher than my highest reach (*Confessions* III, 6)

This quality is disclosed in our behavior, as well as in the behavior of other people. Knowledge of this quality is innate, and in this sense can be called *a priori* knowledge, but at the same time it is a hidden knowledge ('tacit knowledge') which is actualized by experience. This experience can be speculative, based on thinking about the concept of a supremely perfect being. Very few people have access to this experience. These are the ones who deal with philosophical and theological issues. Most people actualize their innate knowledge of God through mystical experiences. These mystical experiences belong either to the so called 'great mystique', registered in the history of human cultures, or to the 'little mystique', which is realized in devotion and prayer of many people through centuries. 'Little mystic', I think, does not even need the knowledge of the content of Christian doctrine: in such a case we talk about the '*anima naturaliter Christiana*'. The 'gestalt-quality' of God is also recognized on the basis of the information transmitted by the Old and New Testament. In this way the sense or the meaning of the term 'God' comes

from our experience: it comes either from 'speculative experience,' or from historical experience, or from mystical experience.10 On the basis of all this we can say that even when purely discursive arguments for the existence of God were claimed to be weak, nevertheless the above-analyzed sources of the knowledge of God would support each other and in this way would bear witness to the truth.

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10 Some speculations on the subject of human experience in eternal life can be found in Stanisław Judycki, "Transfiguration of Human Consciousness and Eternal Life", in *The Right to Believe*: *Perspectives in Religious Epistemology*, ed. Dariusz Łukasiewicz and Roger Pouivet (Ontos Verlag, 2012).

EPISTEMIC DEISM AND PROBABILISTIC THEISM

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Abstract. The aim of my paper is to clarify the conceptions of epistemic deism and probabilistic theism and to demonstrate that the two doctrines do not finally collapse into one. I would like also to point some reasons for the acceptance of a certain version of probabilistic theism which I will call in the last part of the article "open probabilistic theism". Open probabilistic theism is not a version of the view called "open theism". The reasons for the openness of open probabilistic theism are quite different from the reasons supporting open theism.

I. MODELS FOR DIVINE ACTION

What is epistemic deism? The very label "epistemic deism" was coined by Leland Harper in 2013 and it was meant to capture the view defended mainly by Nancey Murphy, Thomas Tracy and Robert Russell which they themselves called the doctrine of "noninterventionist special divine action" (called sometimes NOIDA). The doctrine of NOIDA consists in the claim that God acts in the world without breaking or suspending the laws of nature which He created for the universe. One should also keep in mind that the term "special divine action" does not refer to divine creation *ex nihilo* and continuous creation (*creatio continua*). Continuous creation is simply identified as divine sustaining or conservation of everything which has been created *ex nihilo* by God. In other words, continuous creation of an object *x* means bringing about that an object *x* exists after its creation *ex nihilo*. Thus, special divine action does not consist in creation and conservation.

Now, epistemic deism is the view that there exists special divine action and this action does not entail breaking or suspending the laws of nature and it is epistemically inaccessible to us. According to epistemic deism, miracles are to be effects or manifestations of special divine actions. The Resurrection

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of Jesus of Nazareth, changing water into wine, feeding five thousand people with a few loaves of bread and a few fish or parting the waters of the Red See — all these events are miracles performed by God (His special divine actions)[1]. One should stress one crucial point, namely, that miracles are regarded by epistemic deism as divine actions which do not entail breaking the laws of nature. This is a position contrary to the common-sense or the traditional view on miracles (supported by D. Hume) claiming that miracles are events resulting from breaking the laws of nature by God, or, that God is able to deal in two different manners with his creation.

Thus, we can simply say that epistemic deism is a view that miracles are consistent with the laws of nature and the traditional or classical view says that miracles are inconsistent with the laws of nature. In order to better understand epistemic deism, which is not a typical view in our religious tradition, let us place it among other conceptions concerning divine action in the world. I think we have to consider at least four such views:

1. Traditional interventionism
2. Noninterventionism resulting from the project of the demythologisation of the Bible
3. Epistemic deism (noninterventionist special divine action)
4. Probabilistic theism

As already mentioned, traditional interventionism is the view that God intervened in the world by breaking or suspending the laws of nature, and by performing miracles. The very existence of miracles is based on the Biblical testimony. We believe that changing water into wine happened because the Bible tells us about this event and the Bible states it because someone witnessed that event and told to someone else who wrote about it in the text of the Bible. This particular event was not deduced from any general concept of divine action or from any metaphysical system. The same is true in the case of the Resurrection of Jesus and other Biblical miracles.

1 I have some reservations about the terminology proposed by Harper because as I think all divine actions (i.e., not only "special divine action" but any other action as well) are in principle epistemically inaccessible to us because only God can know what the divine action is like. What we can know or believe in are only effects of divine actions and not divine actions themselves.

The noninterventionism view resulting from the idea of demythologisation of the Bible has its roots in the Spinozan project. Accordingly, the Bible does not include true propositions which assert facts or obtaining states of affairs, but it is a set of moral stories and prescriptions whose meaning is rather existential but not cognitive or logical. In other words, the content of the Bible has no factual sense. Another important premise of noninterventionism is methodological naturalism typical of modern science, whose main claim is that all events and facts have a natural explanation, which is or will be provided by the contemporary or future science. Rudolf Bultmann, one of the main proponents of this view, says:

> it is impossible to use electric light and the wireless and to avail ourselves of modern medical and surgical discoveries, and at the same time to believe in the New Testament world of spirits and miracles.[2]

If that school of theology is right, then the world is a causally closed system and all events in this system can be accounted for by other events or causes belonging to it. If, in turn, this is a true proposition, then there was no changing of water into wine and Jesus was not truly raised from the dead. But then, Saint Paul's saying that if Jesus was not raised from the dead, then the Christian faith is futile, is worth reconsidering or reinterpreting.

Epistemic deism is a view that appeared in the end of the twentieth century and was proposed by some (minority) of the participants of the project called the Divine Action Project (DAP). Nancey Murphy, Thomas Tracey and Robert Russell, whom I mentioned above, belonged to the eminent members of this group. The group was active from 1988 to 2002. However, for example, Bradley Monton (the philosopher of physics and atheist) has recently started to continue the main idea of this group and the program was also supported by Alvin Plantinga[3].

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2 Rudolf Bultmann, *New Testament and Mythology and other Basic Writings*, ed. Schubert M. Ogden, Twentieth century religious thought (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress Press, 1984), 4.

3 Cf. Alvin Plantinga, *Where the Conflict Really Lies: Science, Religion, and Naturalism* (OUP, 2011). It is worthy of note that the very idea of epistemic deism was put forth for the first time by a the theologian and physicist William Pollard in William G. Pollard, *Chance And Providence: Gods Action In A World Governed By Scientific Law* (Faber & Faber, 1958). his book from 1958 *Chance and Providence: God's action in the world Governed by Scientific Laws*. The main premise of Pollard's conception of divine action was that there is a level of the physical world — the quantum or subatomic level — where God can act in the physical universe without breaking (violating) any law of nature. The claim that God should not break the laws of nature

I would like to make at this moment three remarks concerning this view. The first is of a historical nature. It was Muslim theologians and philosophers who were the first to suggest that God can act upon atoms or at the atomic level of the physical world. According to this conception, every being is only a combination of atoms and God created both atoms themselves as well as caused all their combinations. Thus, every change or event in the physical world is a result of a recombination of atoms and all these changes are caused by divine actions. God's operation on atoms are epistemically inaccessible to us since we cannot perceive atoms which are fundamental parts of every physical being. God's acting at the atomic level allows him to have a detailed control over the universe and over each of its smallest parts.[4]

The second remark concerns the premise that God should not break rules (laws of nature) which He created for the world. The laws of the quantum world are, as the contemporary science tells us probabilistic and indeterministic, and, therefore, there are free gaps not determined by these laws. By acting within the constraints of the laws of nature God can cause effects at the macroscopic level, and in this way He can control the destiny of individuals as well as of groups of people. On this view, God can also perform miracles without breaking the laws of nature. However, we must keep in mind that in the last case a miracle should not be understood in a traditional way, i.e., as a violation of the natural order.

The third remark is that there are some important differences among epistemic deists. The first important difference concerns the question of which interpretation of the quantum mechanics is to be preferred. Some epistemic deists opt for the "classical" indeterminist interpretation of the Copenhagen School. According to this account, the only free room for any divine action in the quantum world is, in fact, the result of quantum measurement.[5] If there is no measurement, everything is strictly determined by Schrödinger's equation. Others opt for the so called GRW theory of quantum world (named

which He created for the world is based on the idea of divine perfection; a perfect being does not change rules which it issued.

4 Eric Ormsby, "Islamic Theology", in *The Oxford Handbook of World Philosophy*, ed. Jay L. Garfield and William Edelglass (OUP, 2011), 438.

5 David J. Bartholomew, *God, Chance, and Purpose: Can God have it Both Ways?* (CUP, 2008).

after its proponents: G.C. Ghirardi, A Rimini, and T. Weber).[6] The second difference, closely related to the problem of the chosen interpretation of the quantum mechanics, is the number or frequencies of divine interventions at the quantum level. There are two general options: either divine interventions are *episodic* or they are *frequent*. The first option is possible provided that we prefer the Copenhagen interpretation of the quantum mechanics and the second is possible if we opt for the GRW theory or one of its modifications.

Now, there are some possible objections to each of these options and there are also more general objections that could be raised against all versions of epistemic deism.

II. OBJECTIONS AGAINST EPISTEMIC DEISM

Let us start with those more detailed objections to epistemic deism. One could argue against the first option of divine action at the quantum level by saying that they are irrelevant to the macroscopic world because they are episodic, and hence irrelevant to the history of the macroscopic world. Regarding the second option of divine action at the quantum level (based on the GRW theory), one could counter-argue that it takes place *too often*, and, therefore, the divine action at the quantum level of the world leads to theological determinism which, in turn, is incompatible with the human freedom and independence of the created universe from its Creator.

The first *general* objection is well known under the label "God of the gaps". The core of this objection is that if we cannot find any scientific and natural explanation for a given event we assume that God is causally responsible for that event. But when we have already found a natural and scientific account for it, then the hypothesis of divine action and — more generally — the existence of God starts to be unnecessary. To explain the natural course of events we do not need God any more. For a theist that situation can be very uncomfortable.

6 Cf. Giancarlo Ghirardi, "Collapse Theories", in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. Edward N. Zalta (Metaphysics Research Lab, Stanford Univ., 2016). It is an important and interesting fact that the GRW theory violates the principle of conservation of energy. Monton even suggests that it is not at all clear that this is a true principle of physics Bradley Monton, "God Acts in the Quantum World", in *Oxford Studies in Philosophy of Religion Volume 5*, ed. Jonathan Kvanvig (OUP, 2014), 180.

Another *general* objection to epistemic deism in any form is that epistemic deism entails limitations on divine omnipotence. There are two reasons for such limitations. The first is that either God can act in the world only at the quantum level in a way allowed by quantum indeterminism of probabilistic laws or that God always *has to act* at the quantum level (on the GRW interpretation of the quantum world it is possible, for example, that human bodies cease to exist at one instant of time) [7]. The second reason for the limitations of divine omnipotence is that the quantum world is beyond our epistemic grasp. Thus, limits of the human mind would determine the limits and forms of divine action in the world.[8]

It is also possible to argue against any epistemic deism by saying that it is based on a scientific theory which is most probably false; the quantum mechanics does not seem to be the final and complete theory of the physical world. The problem with quantum mechanics now is that it does not cover general relativity and the phenomenon of gravity, and there are intense efforts to find a theory of quantum gravity and that theory can differ from the contemporary quantum mechanics.[9]

Last but not least, if God will always obey his own rules (the laws of nature), He will never fulfil his own promises (for example, the Biblical promise of the new Earth and new Heaven; according to the well-known model of cosmology, the universe will be either too big or too small, and, therefore there will be no possibility of transformation of the nature, another reason for that impossibility can be the second law of thermodynamic). It is also worthy of note that epistemic deism is based on "the bottom-up" model of causality: an event at the lower level have effects at the higher level of the reality, but not conversely.

We have presented here some major objections to epistemic deism. Most probably, it would be possible to find others, or to weaken some of the objections presented, but I think that the problems involved are serious enough and it would be a good idea to search for another model of divine action in the world. I would like to consider a model which I called "probabilistic theism".

7 For more on that topic, see Monton, "God Acts in the Quantum World", 182.

8 Leland R. Harper, "A Deistic Discussion of Murphy and Tracy's Accounts of God's Limited Activity in the Natural World", *Forum Philosophicum* 18, no. 1 (2013).

9 Monton, "God Acts in the Quantum World".

III. PROBABILISTIC THEISM

Probabilistic theism is meant to weaken at least some objections to epistemic deism raised above. The main idea of probabilistic theism is that chance events are part of a divine plan for the world. This could mean that God has a good reason for allowing chance events to happen in the world. By chance (or chance event) I mean an event which has no causal (scientific) explanation and this kind of chance events is usually called an "ontological chance". The existence of an ontological chance entails the existence of an epistemological chance meaning that events which have no causal explanation are unpredictable. Thus, if there are chance events in the world, Laplace's demon cannot exist. Probabilistic theism is based — like epistemic deism — on scientific knowledge. The most important scientific premises of probabilistic theism are: indeterminism of the quantum world and the facts of the cosmic and biological evolution. Very important evidence supporting quantum indeterminism is Bell's famous inequality ("Bell's theorem rules out local hidden variable"). Thus, if our world has its Creator and the world is indeterministic as the contemporary science teaches us, then it follows from this that God allows chance events to happen in the world. Some contemporary metaphysicians provide various possible reasons why God created the universe in an evolutionary and indeterministic manner. The most important of them are the following: the freedom of human will which would be impossible in the world completely determined by God or by natural mechanisms of the universe, the idea of solidarity (the idea of universal interconnection by an evolutionary chain; that is Robin Collins' idea), and the idea of divine perfection. The idea of divine perfection was already alluded to by Saint Augustine in the context of the evolutionary development of the created order of nature. Augustin's idea was that creation by evolution could fit the divine majesty and glory better than creating everything just in one instant of time.

Now, the idea of human freedom which is understood in an incompatibilist sense can be defended on the ground of quantum indeterminism. This is so because if brain events are grounded in quantum states which are essentially indeterministic, then there is no necessity at the quantum level which can be transmitted to the macroscopic level to which the human brain belongs. And then we have two fundamental options (there are more of them but for the sake of brevity I omit them); either there exists nonphysical mind

(in traditional terminology called "immaterial soul") which has the ability and room to act upon the brain and through the brain it can control the human body and its environment, or there exists an emergent mind which is a result of a complex development of the brain, but relatively independent from it, which has the ability and room to act upon the brain and through the brain it can control the body and its parts ("top-down" causality).

The main idea and the key point of probabilistic theism concerning the divine action in the world is that God *does not have to act* at the quantum level in order to achieve his aims in the universe. The indeterminism of the physical level of the world combined with the evolutionary mechanism bringing into existence the creatures willed by God allow Him *not to intervene* in the course of the natural history of the universe. The important premise of this view is that the probability of the emergence of life and human species in the process of evolution is very high and there is no need for any special divine action at the quantum level of the physical world or at the biological level of the world (provided that God wills humans or other complex creatures to exist). One should stress that all proponents of this view share a conviction that theology should be consistent with the contemporary science. All probabilistic theists hold the thesis that God does not break the laws of nature which He created for the world and that He does not act in the quantum world. Such a view seems to be clearly distinct from the epistemic deism. But there are some questions and objections which can be raised against probabilistic theism.

If God doesn't act at the quantum level of the world, then either He acts only at the spiritual level (by influencing human minds but never exerting any form of compulsion; He doesn't act, however, as a *cause* of any particular event — divine action in the world is not causal except *ordinary* divine action, i.e. creation and conservation), or He acts at all levels of the world, the physical and spiritual levels included, but again it is not a causal action (this position seems to be held by process theism).

One remark concerns the "spirituality" or spiritual level of the world. If a probabilistic theist is a proponent of a physicalist (naturalist) idea of human nature, then the spiritual level is simply the most developed, organized and complex physical level of the reality. Anyway, in that case, spiritual means simply physical. That divine action is not causal means that one cannot say that it is God who caused a particular event *x*. Divine causal action in the

world is limited to the creation of the universe (setting the world mechanism in motion) and to the sustaining of the laws of nature (conservation of it).

Well, now let us come back to the problem of miracles, and, at this point, let us remember that miracles were possible within the framework of epistemic deism. Can probabilistic theism explain miracles, such as, for example, the changing of water into wine, parting the Red See or, most importantly, the Resurrection of Jesus?

It seems that, within probabilistic theism, miracles should be viewed in the same way as it was the case in the noninterventionist view based on demythologizing the Bible. Of course, one can try to take a middle position; God acts in a noninterventionist way (through and by the laws of nature) except in miracles when He directly causes a particular (non-natural) event to happen. But if it were the case, then probabilistic theism would collapse or be reduced to epistemic deism or even to traditional interventionism. I think it is a serious trouble for probabilistic theism; either it has to be reduced to noninterventionism or to epistemic deism. Noninterventionism is tantamount to the rejection of Christianity because, if it were true, it would mean that Jesus was not truly raised from the dead. And if probabilistic theism were reduced to epistemic deism, then it would be a position sensitive to the "God of the gaps" objection, as epistemic deism is.

One possibility to avoid the "collapse problem" is to change the model of causality. We can replace the "bottom-up" model of causality by the "top-down" model of it. God acting at the highest (spiritual) level of the world (upon the human minds) indirectly *causes* effects at the lower levels of the world. To illustrate the situation, let us suppose that God by acting upon the mind of a sick person makes it possible for her to heal her sick body or the organ indispensable for life.[10] Let us suppose, that it is a plausible model of miraculous healings and divine action at the level of human minds does not entail breaking any law of nature. But, what about changing water into wine or parting the Red See? It seems that there are two possible options. Either God acts upon minds of the witnesses in such a way that they have a false belief in the miracle which did not happen, or God causes directly such events and intervenes in the order of nature without breaking its laws. The first possibility is inconsistent with divine perfection. The second possibility seems to be a reduction of probabilistic the-

10 David J. Bartholomew, *God of Chance* (SCM Press, 1984).

ism to epistemic deism. Bradley Monton argues convincingly that, if we assume the GRW theory of the quantum world, then the miracles such as parting the Red See or feeding five thousand people with a few loaves of bread and a few fish involve no violation of the laws of nature.[11] But again, if we opt for the second possibility, then we have to do with the set of worries typical for epistemic deism (the "God of the gaps" objection, limitation of divine omnipotence, dependence upon the contemporary state of science). And I have acknowledged that these objections are serious for a Christian theist.

Is there any other position which would allow us to preserve that distinct view on the *special* divine action in the world that we have discussed above and which would be free from the foregoing difficulties? And which would preserve at least some valuable properties ascribed to probabilistic theism; in particular, I mean here some valuable moral intuitions regarding chance evil events which are not to be viewed as part of the divine plan for the world.[12]

I think that there is such a view and it is a very simple modification of probabilistic theism. All the views discussed so far, apart from traditional interventionism, assume that God should follow the laws of nature which He created for the world. But if we assume that the world is a causally open system and we start to understand by *a law of nature* a proposition which "works" or is applied to the world only in the casually closed (isolated) systems, then we are allowed to state that God can act at every level of the world in every way He chooses for this or that reason without breaking any law of nature (Newton/Plantinga solution). In particular, God can cause miracles without violation of the laws of nature and without *being limited in any way by those laws or by human epistemic capacity*. God can act "beyond" the created order of nature. Perhaps, this divine action "beyond" the order of nature without breaking the laws of nature is similar to Thomas Aquinas' idea of miracles?

I am inclined to call this sketchily presented position "open probabilistic theism". I believe the position has all the advantages of probabilistic theism but it is not in danger of collapsing into one with noninterventionism or epistemic deism. Open probabilistic theism has also one important advantage over, let me call it that way, "closed probabilistic theism" in regard to the problem of the

11 Monton, "God Acts in the Quantum World", 175.

12 Dariusz Łukasiewicz, "Argument from Chance", *European Journal for Philosophy of Religion* 7, no. 1 (2015).

emergent mind.[13]. The problem of the emergent mind, or, to state it in a more general way, the problem of an emergent system[14] arises if we assume — as probabilistic theism has assumed — that the world known to us develops by evolution and human beings are only direct products of the evolutionary processes where chance plays an important role. The problem of emergent properties was formulated by Jaegwon Kim in the following way:

> There are no new causal powers that magically accrue to [upper level] properties over and beyond the causal powers [lower-level] properties. No new causal powers emerge at higher levels, and this goes against the claim … that higher level properties are novel causal powers irreducible to lower-level properties.[15]

Thus, in conclusion, we may say that the evolutionary roots of human bodies join us with the organic world and make us part of it, but in the causally open world our minds can be directly created by God without breaking any laws of nature. If this is the case, we are allowed to say that man was created in the image of God himself (*imago dei*). The doctrine of *imago dei* is a deeply Christian idea including the idea of freedom, reason, personality and human authentic creativity. A very close relation of mind and body makes humans the integral beings which belong to two distinct realms: to the physical world of nature and to the real (understood in a non-physicalist way) spiritual world of mind (soul). Moreover, the quantum and evolutionary indeterminism about which we are told by the contemporary science is consistent with: (i) the idea of divine intervention, (ii) a non-figurative understanding of miracles, (iii) the testimony of the first Christians who simply saw and listened to the words of the resurrected Jesus.

Last but not least, the conception of open probabilistic theism is also consistent with (iv) our hope for eternal life after death given not only to all human beings but also to all our animal ancestors and other creatures because for an absolutely omnipotent, omniscient and loving God everything is possible. It is a God who acts beyond all laws of nature whenever He wants and as He wants to act.

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13 I mean by "closed probabilistic theism" a view that God can act in the world only within the constraints of the laws of nature but in fact He does not act in this way because, as I have said, He does not to have to act in the world in such a manner.

14 A. Peacocke was a strong proponent of emergent systems and properties.

15 Jaegwon Kim, *Philosophy of mind* (Westview Press, ²1998), 232. See also Robert Larmer, "Special Divine Acts: Three Pseudo-Problems and a Blind Alley", *European Journal for Philosophy of Religion* 7, no. 4 (2015).Larmer 2015.

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HUMBLE CONFESSIONALISM

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Abstract. Much of the appeal of religious pluralism for those who take religious truth claims seriously arises from the sense that confessionalist alternatives to pluralism that affirm the truth of one particular religion are unacceptable. Pluralists try to foster this sense by portraying confessionalist views as implausible for one who is fully informed about the facts of religious diversity. However, when pluralists attempt to rule out confessionalism, they tend to characterize it in ways that overlook the possibility of what I call humble confessionalism. When humble forms of confessionalism are considered, representations of pluralism as the only viable option become less persuasive.

Religious pluralism ascribes some type of epistemic and soteriological equality to multiple religions. Much of the appeal of the pluralistic approach to religious diversity for people who take religious truth claims seriously arises from the sense that it is unacceptable to think that one religion has done much better than the rest in reaching the truth about matters vital to human fulfillment. When we come to understand and appreciate the admirable features of various religions and the admirable qualities of their adherents, elevating one religion above the rest can seem provincial and narrow-minded, inclining us to entertain favorably the idea that religions with conflicting accounts and diverse prescriptions may, nevertheless, be equally adequate guides to finding the kind of truth available for human beings regarding their highest good.

Peter Byrne uses the term "confessionalism" for non-pluralist views that affirm the truth of a particular religion and evaluate the claims of other religions in the light of the favored religion's account. He distinguishes between exclusivist versions of confessionalism that say the highest human fulfillment is attainable only through participating in the specific path prescribed by this religion and inclusivist forms of confessionalism that acknowledge adherents of other religions can attain the specified end without accepting the distinctive teachings and engaging in the prescribed practices of the religion that is taken

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to be true. If we reject agnosticism about whether any religious accounts are true, as well as views that deny truth to any religious accounts (which Byrne in different contexts labels "scepticism" or "naturalism"), then ruling out confessionalism leaves some kind of pluralism as the only remaining option.

While attempting to eliminate the competition to religious pluralism can be a powerful argumentative move, alternatives to pluralism are sometimes represented in ways that distort the issue of whether they are acceptable. Consider, for example, the way Byrne describes options other than pluralism:

> To the question "Can any one religion be true?" the naturalist answers that we know enough to know that they are all false. The confessionalist answers "Yes; and we know that *this* one is in fact true."[1]

The characterization of confessionalism, as well as naturalism, involves a claim to a high degree of objective justification about what is affirmed. Both the naturalist and the confessionalist accounts are represented as making claims about what "we know".

Furthermore, the confessionalist statement about truth lacks any qualification or nuance. The claim is not that a particular religious view is an approximation of the truth or true with respect to some set of core teachings or more convincing than available alternatives — but simply that it is true. By way of contrast, Byrne specifies precisely the sense in which his pluralist view takes religions to be cognitively equal, and instead of the overconfident stance ascribed to confessionalists, he portrays pluralism as a modest view. It affirms that there is good enough reason for *postulating* that multiple religions are equally successful in referring to a religious ultimate and for *taking an agnostic stance* toward specific claims made by these religions:

> Epistemically it [pluralism] is a form of agnosticism toward religions. In contrast to the religious sceptic, the pluralist affirms that between them, the religions provide enough grounds for postulating a religious ultimate. In contrast to religious exclusivists and inclusivists, the pluralist concludes that the grounds for the specific doctrinal claims of the religions cancel each other out. Adherents of different religions may be entitled to their religious convictions, but no set of creedal claims is objectively more certain than another set.[2]

1 Peter Byrne, "It Is Not Reasonable to Believe that Only One Religion Is True", in *Contemporary Debates in Philosophy of Religion*, ed. M. Peterson and R. VanArrogan (Blackwell, 2004), 204.

2 Peter Byrne, "Religious Tolerance, Diversity, and Pluralism", *Royal Institute of Philosophy Supplement* 68 (2011): 297.

Here we have religious pluralism portrayed as a sort of middle ground between the outright denial of cognitive value to religion and the excessive dogmatism of those who affirm the truth of very specific religious claims that can't be established as "objectively more certain" than alternatives. But aren't there other possibilities than the kind of confessionalism Byrne describes? Suppose a confessionalist agrees that specific religious claims should be treated as uncertain in a theoretical context where they are disputed, but is convinced enough by some of these claims to presume their truth for purposes of practice. Or suppose a confessionalist is committed to a particular religious tradition, but treats the religious doctrines that are accepted as revisable in the light of relevant evidence, rather than claiming to know that a particular formulation is correct. Or suppose a confessionalist regards allegiance to the core claims of some religious tradition as an epistemic strategy that is adopted as more promising than the pluralist strategy of positing equality among major religious traditions. In other words do we have to imagine the confessionalist alternative to pluralism to involve excessive confidence in the correctness of a detailed religious account, or can we entertain the possibility of a more humble form of confessionalism? If humble confessionalism is a realistic option, then it becomes more difficult to defend pluralism by eliminating confessionalist alternatives from the outset.

The kind of argumentative strategy I am challenging presumes the viability of judging positions on religious diversity inadequate on the basis of some deficiency of their general type. To leave pluralism as the only viable alternative, it is not enough to show that particular versions of confessionalism are inadequate; one must show the unacceptability of all positions that fall under this general category. I will be arguing in the first section that it is problematic to try to establish much at the required level of generality because the typology of positions on religious diversity being used is riddled with ambiguities that lead to misleading oversimplifications. Overlooking humble confessionalism is a specific instance of the more general tendency to take for granted a particular paradigmatic form of the type being considered and failing to notice versions that deviate from that paradigm. The initial section shows how easy it is to make this kind of mistake.

In the second section I offer a characterization of humble confessionalism in terms of a disposition not to adopt higher-order epistemic attitudes about religious claims that presuppose a greater level of certainty than is appropriate.

Given a reflective awareness of the facts relating to disagreement about religious claims, humble confessionalists recognize that their religious views involve a significant degree of epistemic risk. I focus on the kind of humble confessionalist who thinks of his or her views as a work in progress that is revisable in the light of relevant evidence. I also argue in this section against confusing this kind of humble position with being tentative. The third section describes and responds to some objections to humble confessionalism. The final section elaborates on a response to a pluralist objection by showing how a humble confessionalist could have reason to presume the truth of a particular religion.

I. AMBIGUITIES AND THE STANDARD TYPOLOGY

The standard positions on diversity for those who adopt some religious approach are usually taken to be exclusivism, inclusivism, and pluralism. Moreover, it is assumed that a given individual's view will fall under only one category. But as I shall show, one can be both a pluralist and an exclusivist, or one can be both an exclusivist and an inclusivist. We can clear up the ambiguities that lead to this result, but when we do, the fact that a view is of a particular type becomes less informative than is generally assumed, and arguments that try to eliminate views on the basis of some inadequacy of their general type become problematic.

Some philosophers, such as McKim and Griffiths, characterize exclusivists and inclusivists as disagreeing about religious truth, as well as disagreeing about salvation or liberation.[3] However, I will follow what I take to be the standard way of using the threefold typology and represent the exclusivist and inclusivist as agreeing about truth, while disagreeing about salvation or liberation. My use of the terms is defined as follows: An *exclusivist* affirms the truth of the basic account offered by one religion (which, following Paul Griffiths, I will call the *home religion*[4]) and holds that the way of salvation or liberation prescribed by this religion is available only to those who accept the home religion's core message. A *pluralist* claims that multiple religions provide accounts that are equally true (or equally adequate with regard to truth)

3 Robert McKim, *On Religious Diversity* (OUP, 2012); Paul J. Griffiths, *Problems of Religious Diversity* (Wiley-Blackwell, 2015).

4 Griffiths, *Problems of Religious Diversity*, xiv–xv.

and that salvation or liberation is equally attainable through the means designated by any of the specified group of religions. An *inclusivist* agrees with the exclusivist position on religious truth (which makes both approaches instances of what Byrne calls *confessionalism*), but extends the opportunity to attain salvation or liberation to some outside the home religion who have not accepted that religion's core message.

Attempting to use the standard schema to classify responses to religious diversity can reveal ambiguities that result in an individual's position fitting under more than one category. For example, the Dalai Lama (Tenzin Gyatso) turns out to be both an exclusivist and a pluralist, depending on what religious end is being considered. He is an exclusivist when it comes to what needs to be accepted to attain Buddhist liberation, claiming, "The *mokṣa* which is described in Buddhist religion is achieved only through the practice of emptiness."[5] Only someone who enters the Buddhist thought world and follows Buddhist practices can attain this Buddhist end. On the other hand, he is a pluralist when it comes to achievement of what he says is an end toward which many religions are directed: "permanent human happiness". He claims that people with very different belief systems can attain this more generic end. From the perspective he calls the "widest possible viewpoint" the conflict between religious doctrines can be regarded as unimportant. From this viewpoint, he says we should think of beliefs in terms of their instrumental value, i.e., their conduciveness to achievement of the desired end.[6]

It might be objected that of the two ends, he will have to regard one as the highest human good and that his stance in relation to that end will determine whether he is a pluralist or an exclusivist. However, by his own account, he is describing things from different viewpoints. From one perspective he can look at religious phenomena and declare that there is a common end that the major religions are achieving in varying degrees. But as an adherent of his own tradition, he offers a rich characterization of a particular end that is attainable only through Buddhist practice. If asked which is the supreme end, his answer is likely to be that it depends on which viewpoint he is using. He might believe that the Buddhist goal is the highest human end, but he refrains

5 Dalai Lama, "Buddhism and Other Religions", in *Philosophy of Religion*: *Selected Readings*, ed. Michael L. Peterson et al. (OUP, 2014), 597.

6 *Ibid.*, 596.

from offering a pronouncement on the matter when stepping back from the Buddhist thought world to take what he calls a wider viewpoint for considering religious phenomena. For example, he speaks from this wider perspective when he advises nonBuddhists who are satisfied with their own religion to stick with it, instead of urging them to become Buddhists.[7]

When John Hick defends his form of religious pluralism, he posits an end that he judges common to the major religious traditions: transformation from self-centeredness to Reality-centeredness. Thinking in terms of this end, he can acknowledge a multiplicity of ways of achieving it and view the various doctrines of each religion in instrumental terms. But there is no inconsistency in recognizing the legitimacy of a pluralist way of thinking about an end described very generally and also having a specific concept of the desired end that is attainable only by accepting particular doctrines and engaging in particular practices. In fact Hick himself insists that it is only by entering into the experiential world of some particular religious tradition and learning to perceive things in terms of a specific portrayal that the more generic end he values is attained.[8] What makes Hick a pluralist and not an exclusivist is that from his viewpoint external to religious traditions he makes meta-claims about the kind of truth that is permissible in each tradition that serve to correct internal religious claims that conflict with pluralism. There is no indication that the Dalai Lama makes a similar move, and it is easy to imagine him thinking that while "permanent human happiness" is a useful concept for certain purposes, it does not replace the thicker accounts of religious ends found in different traditions and that the pluralist viewpoint he accepts cannot be used to override and correct claims made within these traditions. To take such a view, he need not regard particular traditions as immune from criticism. He might simply doubt that the kind of pluralist perspective on religions he thinks legitimate provides a sufficient basis for correcting the claims particular religions make.

Besides the ambiguity about religious ends that gives rise to the possibility of being an exclusivist and a pluralist, there is also an ambiguity that arises in relation to the dispute between exclusivists and inclusivists. When an exclusivist insists that particular beliefs are required to attain some reli-

7 *Ibid.*, 597.

8 John Hick, *God has Many Names* (Westminster Press, 1982), 21.

gious end, should we understand the claim to mean that they are required currently or eventually?[9] If we take the exclusivist claim to mean that one cannot ultimately attain the specified religious end without acquiring the key beliefs, this claim is compatible with the possibility that someone who does not before death have the proper beliefs could acquire them in a postmortem state. But an exclusivist who accepts this possibility may not be much different from an inclusivist who acknowledges continued development after death, but is willing to broaden the description of the religious end from its tradition-specific portrayal to a more generically described end that doesn't require tradition-specific beliefs and would be available now to participants in other religions. The difference between this sort of exclusivist and this sort of inclusivist is that the exclusivist is talking about the fully completed end and the inclusivist is talking about a significant stage in a process that potentially leads at some point to this end. Once we clear up the verbal dispute, we could have someone who is an exclusivist with regard to one description of the end and an inclusivist with regard to another description.

Discussions of religious diversity often assume that claims of exclusivity with regard to some supreme religious end are problematic. For example, Hick says that because Christian exclusivism that affirms a unique divine incarnation through which alone salvation is possible

> … seems so unrealistic in the light of our knowledge of the wider religious life of mankind, many theologians have moved to some form of inclusivism, but now feel unable to go further and follow the argument to its conclusion in the frank acceptance of pluralism.[10]

But what is it about the facts of religious diversity that makes this sort of exclusivism untenable? Hick's discussion does not provide a clear answer, but the problem he identifies as motivating inclusivist alternatives to exclusivism is that "salvation is restricted to this one group, the rest of mankind being either left out of the account or explicitly excluded from the sphere of salvation."[11] If that is the issue, however, the kind of exclusivism he finds problematic is a version that holds that the supreme end must be attained during a single earthly life.

9 Keith Ward, "Truth and the Diversity of Religions", *Religious Studies* 26, no. 1 (1990): 15. Griffiths, *Problems of Religious Diversity*, 157–58.

10 John Hick, "A Philosophy of Religious Pluralism", in *Problems of Religious Pluralism*, ed. John Hick (St. Martin's Press, 1985), 34–35.

11 *Ibid.*, 31.

What about exclusivists who reject this assumption? Consider, for example, the Dalai Lama's exclusivism. He says that because there are many lives, those who do not attain Buddhist liberation in their current life may be ready to attain it in some future life.[12] Significantly, Hick himself posits multiple lives after death in which progress can be made toward an ultimate end. His claims about continued development after death are crucial to his soul-making theodicy.[13] While he prefers to characterize the ultimate end in a way that does not depend on acquiring knowledge that is available only from a specific historical tradition, an exclusivist who thinks that such knowledge is needed for the desired transformation to be complete could posit that it will be available eventually to those who are ready to receive it. Even if some exclusivists reject such a move, Hick's objection would not have force against versions of exclusivism that affirm this sort of extended opportunity.

Noticing the ambiguities that arise when we attempt to apply the standard typology should alert us to the danger of oversimplifying when we refer to the general types as if they constituted a specific position. To discuss a specific view, we need to know more about it than whether it fits into a particular category, and we also need to recognize that some views that fit in a particular category can be closer to views in other categories than to views in the same category. So, for example, an inclusivist who interprets the supreme religious end offered in the home religion in such a way that the beliefs needed to attain it are minimal may be closer to some pluralists than to some inclusivists who share the same religion. Similarly, a humble confessionalist may have much in common with a humble pluralist, but be at a considerable distance from confessionalists in the same tradition whose stances do not exhibit intellectual humility.

II. CAN CONFESSIONALISM BE HUMBLE?

It should be acknowledged that there are plenty of examples of confessionalists who are not humble with regard to their religious claims. But what does it mean to have this kind of humility? Alan Hazlett characterizes intellectual humility as a disposition to adopt proper higher-order epistemic attitudes.[14] The

12 Dalai Lama, 597.

13 John Hick, *Death and Eternal Life* (Harper & Row, 1976), 160.

14 Allan Hazlett, "Higher-order Epistemic Attitudes and Intellectual Humility", *Episteme* 9, no. 3 (2012).

higher-order attitudes he has in mind involve appraisals of the epistemic status of one's first-order propositional assents. It is possible to appraise one's own views in ways that underestimate the possibility of being in error. But someone with intellectual humility refrains from higher-order attitudes that presume a greater degree of objective certainty than that person can legitimately claim. Since competent and well-intentioned people are unable to reach agreement about religious truth claims, a high degree of confidence that one is right about these matters would indicate a lack of intellectual humility.

Recognizing that one does not have a high degree of objective certainty about religious claims could alternatively be described as recognizing that making these claims involves a significant degree of epistemic risk. The fact that others disagree does not by itself imply significant epistemic risk. Sometimes we can confidently explain disagreement by appealing to some cognitive or motivational failure on the part of those with whom we disagree or some clear epistemic advantage that we have. But virtually every substantial religious claim is disputed by people we have reason to think of as being well intentioned, informed, and capable. In this kind of case humility calls for recognizing that we don't have strong grounds for making second-order pronouncements about who is right and who is wrong. It may be that in particular cases one side is in fact better attuned to the relevant evidence than the other, but often we are not in a position to judge with any objectivity which side is better attuned, or even whether the differences are appropriately characterized in purely evidential terms.

It might be imagined that having humility would mean refraining from truth claims on these matters altogether. However, a reflective awareness of epistemic risk exhibited by a disposition to avoid higher-order attitudes that presume an inappropriate level of certainty is compatible with a wide range of first-order cognitive attitudes. One who acknowledges a significant degree of epistemic risk might accept something as true, presume it to be true, adopt it as a working hypothesis, trust that it is true, or even believe it to be true.[15] In

15 In recent years a number of philosophers have provided accounts of a variety of propositional attitudes other than belief that might qualify as faith stances. Examples include:William Alston, "Belief, Acceptance, and Religious Faith", in *Faith, Freedom, and Rationality*: *Philosophy of religion today*, ed. Jeffrey L. Jordan and Daniel Howard-Snyder (Rowman & Littlefield, 1996); Richard Swinburne, *Faith and reason* (Clarendon Press, 2005), 115–18; Robert Audi, "Belief, Faith, and Acceptance", *International Journal for Philosophy of Religion* 63, no. 1–3 (2008); Daniel

religious contexts people often implicitly acknowledge the objective uncertainty of particular views by calling them faith claims or by speaking of their stance in terms of trusting. Such an acknowledgement of uncertainty does not preclude the possibility of a first-order propositional attitude as strong as belief. I might believe that a friend's actions are well intentioned, even while recognizing that because I trust the friend I am viewing what he does with less skepticism than I might have adopted.

Nevertheless, we might wonder whether someone who exhibits this sort of humility is a confessionalist in the sense that this term is used as a position on the issue of religious diversity. To be a confessionalist involves affirming the truth of a particular religion. Is someone who takes the claims made by this religion to be uncertain in a position to make such an affirmation? It depends on what kind of affirmation is required. While at a reflective level, such an individual would presumably refrain from claiming knowledge or a high degree of objective justification, we often adopt philosophical positions that involve no such claims. After carefully considering the issues, I might become convinced of the truth of the libertarian view on free will, defending this position in philosophical debates and presuming its truth in my reasoning about other matters. But I might also acknowledge that the matter is open to reasonable dispute and that while I hold that this view is true, I do so with the recognition that I am taking an epistemic risk. My unwillingness to claim a high level of certainty does not mean that I am not adopting a position in the relevant sense.

So far I have been describing minimal conditions for being a humble confessionalist. However, my focus will be on humble confessionalists who not only refrain from thinking of their own religious views as more certain than they are entitled to, but think of their views as at best an approximation of the truth that is subject to revision. While there can be humble confessionalists who do not treat their views as revisable, a humble confessionalist who is sufficiently well informed and reflective has reason to take such a stance. Reflection on the historical development of teachings within one's own religious tradition provides reason to view individual and corporate formulations of those teachings as more like a work in progress than a finished product.

Howard-Snyder, "Propositional Faith: What It Is and What It Is Not", *American Philosophical Quarterly* 50, no. 4 (2013).

A well-informed member of a long-lasting historical tradition will be aware that the tradition's formulations have undergone significant change. Religious communities that survive rethink and reformulate their claims in the light of new understandings and new circumstances. Consider, for example, the prophetic rethinking of the significance of animal sacrifice in Hebrew religion, or the critique and reinterpretation of anthropomorphic portrayals of deity in the sacred texts of theistic communities. Communities develop interpretations of their sacred texts that diverge significantly from the way they were understood by earlier members of the tradition. Even when the same verbal formulas are maintained, there are often shifts in how the formulas are understood. So a humble confessionalist who is aware of how the tradition's message has been altered over time has reason to regard the formulations at a particular point in time as fallible attempts to articulate the truth that may need additional revision.

Furthermore, if we take any major world religion as an example, there will be conflicting interpretations at the current time of what the fundamental teachings of that religion mean. The extent of diversity within a religious tradition can be significant. For example, Christians may agree that Jesus died for the sins of the world or that he was God incarnate, while having a variety of incompatible accounts of the meaning of these claims. A confessionalist who is aware of the diversity of accounts, even of core religious teachings, within the tradition she is committed to has some reason to wonder whether her own versions are closer to the truth than conflicting versions accepted by other members of the same tradition. When this sort of awareness is combined with the awareness of reflective confessionalists that their own individual religious claims have been revised over time in an attempt to reach a better-informed or more mature or deeper faith, the situation is conducive to thinking of the formulations at any given point as an approximation that should not simply be identified with the full truth.

This sort of openness to revision might be confused with tentativeness. Admittedly, it does mean being tentative about some religious claims. However, being open to revising one's religious affirmations when relevant evidence provides good reason to do so can be compatible with holding tenaciously to some affirmations that are regarded as central to a particular religious identity. I might acknowledge that a particular version of Muslim teachings is no longer viable, but if I can find a version that is viable and arguably faithful to

the overall tradition, I can continue to hold on to my commitment to being a Muslim. Such a stance depends, of course, on distinguishing between core teachings that are not easily revised and elaborations of those teachings that can more easily be altered. Reflective adherents generally draw this kind of line, even if they are unclear about whether some items should be regarded as part of the core or not. But the process of reflection sometimes results in an altered understanding of what the essential core is. When this kind of change occurs, one ideally comes to regard the revised teachings as offering a deeper understanding of the meaning of a tradition. Nevertheless, even though a humble confessionalist might change her mind about a great many things, the epistemic conservatism of this procedure makes it misleading to describe the attitude toward the full range of religious affirmations as tentative.

Some writers say that awareness of religious diversity is a strong reason for being tentative about religious claims. For example, Penelhum says that his awareness of the multiplicity of rational alternatives alienates him from fellow Christians who seem to have certainty. He suggests, "… better, surely, I cannot help telling myself, to be Socrates tentative than a pig without questions."[16] Being tentative here seems to be thought of as contrasting with being too certain to need to question or reflect. But to portray the choice as between being reflective and tentative, or being a pig without questions surely oversimplifies the options. There is a kind of tentativeness that we admire in reflective discourse, an unwillingness to settle too easily or firmly when there is still reasonable dispute we should consider. But when there is a practical necessity of acting on the basis of some view, there is also a kind of tentativeness we do not admire. It is sometimes a virtue to decisively commit to a view that can guide our action, even when we cannot claim a high level of certainty. The choice is not really between being tentative and holding views that are not subject to reflection. The ideal is to integrate the tentativeness that is appropriate for reflection with the decisiveness that is sometimes called for. I suspect that Socrates would agree. His reluctance to claim knowledge about some matters is combined with a noteworthy tendency to treat some claims about how to live, such as his own claim about his call to a particular mission in life, as foundational.

16 Terence Penelhum, "A Belated Return", in *Philosophers Who Believe*: *The Spiritual Journeys of 11 Leading Thinkers*, ed. Kelly J. Clark (InterVarsity Press, 1993), 234.

Because of the practical function of religious truth claims, at least some of them need to be accepted with a degree of firmness that it would be misleading to call tentative. Compare the religious situation to other situations in which there is something of practical importance, as well as something of epistemic importance, at stake. I might hold with considerable firmness to the view that my spouse is faithful, despite recognizing that this is the kind of claim people are often wrong about and that the kind of evidence I have cannot provide certainty, even if I am not myself in doubt about the matter. I might even view my tenaciousness as needed for seeking a relational good that I am otherwise unlikely to attain. My firmness of belief does not have to mean that I could never question it or that I would hold onto it regardless of what evidence against it I become aware of, but being open to revising a belief under conceivable circumstances does not amount to holding it tentatively.

III. OBJECTIONS TO HUMBLE CONFESSIONALISM

One objection to the sort of humble confessionalism that I am describing is that there appears to be a tension between recognizing first-order religious claims as uncertain, yet being confident enough about them to act with the kind of wholeheartedness that a religious way of life calls for. Even if humble confessionalism is a possible stance, it might be urged, it would fall too far short of the confidence that religious communities regard as an ideal. I think that this objection is a product of confusing different notions of confidence.[17] Sometimes philosophers speak of levels of confidence, with a maximal level correlating with an appropriate judgment of absolute certainty. If we are talking about this sort of confidence, the humble confessionalist who recognizes significant epistemic risk would have a relatively low level of confidence. However, the aspiration for religious confidence is not primarily about the quality of assent to particular propositions. It is more fundamentally about acquiring modes of perception that are conducive to full engagement with a religious way of life.

Someone who believes some core set of religious teachings with great confidence might be a long way from living the way of life those teachings are

17 See my "Confident Religious Faith and Intellectual Virtue", *International Philosophical Quarterly* 57, no. 2 (2017).

used to promote, and someone whose cognitive attitude would not qualify as belief might have developed the ability to perceive events habitually in ways that are conducive to living this way of life.

The confidence that arises from inhabiting a perceptual world that is structured by a religious account and trusting that what is perceived is a reliable indication of the way things are does depend on acquiring the right kinds of cognitive and affective states. However, the states that are cultivated in learning to perceive things in religious terms should not be identified with those that we might adopt in a reflective context where more skeptical attitudes are called for. Hence, a humble confessionalist can aspire to the sort of confidence most relevant to acting wholeheartedly without aspiring to the kind of certainty that would be needed for the epistemic confidence philosophers describe.

In addition to objections regarding the religious adequacy of humble confessionalism, there are also objections that arise from a pluralist standpoint. However some of the standard pluralist arguments against confessionalism seem weaker when applied to humble confessionalism. Consider the charge that there is something arrogant about thinking that your own religious revelation is true and that everyone else's is false. Wilfred Cantrell Smith represents Christian exclusivists as saying to devout and intelligent people from other faiths, "We believe that we know God, and we are right; you believe that you know God, and you are totally wrong."[18] Part of the problem here is that Cantwell Smith conflates the question of whether a particular way of thinking is permissible with the question of whether it should be bluntly expressed to another person. But even aside from that issue, the declaration of one's own rightness and the other party's wrongness can be understood in different ways. If I believe some proposition, then I think it true. But for some claims, I will recognize that I am not in a position to make a second-order pronouncement about whether it is true because the claim is open to reasonable dispute. Saying that it is true might just be a confirmation that I believe it, or it might be a declaration that there is no more need for discussion, since the matter is settled. One way of understanding the claim makes it arrogant, but the other does not. With regard to judging the other person totally wrong, the expression "You are totally wrong" could just mean that I think that your position is wrong in some fundamental way. But it seems objectionable because

18 Wilfred C. Smith, *Religious Diversity: Essays* (Harper & Row, 1976).

it sounds like a rejection of the other person's core convictions as unworthy of serious consideration or a repudiation of the person's way of life as unworthy of respect. While there are confessionalists who make such judgments, we might expect humble confessionalists to have greater awareness of their own fallibility and perhaps greater appreciation of alternative forms of spirituality.

In the imagined conversation with someone of another religion suppose that both parties begin with an acceptance of the core teachings of their own tradition. Suppose also that the teachings of these traditions conflict in significant ways. In such a case we can say that each person thinks that the other is wrong about some things. But we don't have to assume that those who approach this kind of conversation think that announcing their rightness and the other party's wrongness settles anything, and we can imagine a conversation in which both are open to the possibility of learning from each other. Even if I think that my religion is fundamentally true or that it is an approximation of the truth, I don't have to claim the kind of certainty that results in dismissing other perspectives without a hearing. For a humble confessionalist who accepts the possibility of being wrong and is willing to revise her account in the light of relevant considerations, the encounter with an intelligent and pious representative of another religion might even provide an impetus for rethinking some of her own truth claims.

Besides the arrogance objection, another standard pluralist objection to confessionalism is the claim that it is arbitrary. We might suspect that this objection is particularly problematic for a humble confessionalist. If the confessionalist acknowledges that his religion can't be established from a neutral standpoint as rationally superior to the alternatives, on what grounds can it be designated as true? I will consider the arbitrariness objection in a version that comes from John Hick. Hick says, "I think that there is in fact a good argument for the rationality of trusting one's own religious experience, together with that of the larger tradition within which it occurs, so as both to believe and to live on the basis of it…"[19] But Hick argues that if only one religion is true, religious experience generally is an unreliable way of forming beliefs. Thinking that in the case of your own religion it is a reliable way to reach the truth, but not for other religions, Hick claims, appears "arbitrary and unjusti-

19 Hick, "A Philosophy of Religious Pluralism", 37.

fied unless it is supported by good arguments."[20] The alternative Hick offers, of course, is a revised assessment of the meaning of your own truth claims in the light of a pluralist understanding of religious truth that revokes a privileged status to your own religion that is not granted to others.

It is important to notice what Hick means by religious experience. On his account religious experience involves what he calls "experiencing as" where one construes events in terms of some conceptual system that is brought to experience. So, for example, one might experience some incident as divine guidance or as a result of a karmic process. Having this kind of experience can be thought of as a product of training in the use of a particular community's religious terminology and learning to apply it in paradigmatic ways. Experiencing this kind of religious significance will involve presuming truth claims that are embedded in the community's framework, and typically one who becomes proficient in using a particular framework to structure perception and guide action comes to believe some claims that have been presumed. Hick endorses this pattern of belief formation and characterizes it as trusting one's own religious experience. However, he thinks that there is something arbitrary about trusting religious experience in the case of your own religion, but regarding it as untrustworthy in the case of other religions.

Would such selective trust be arbitrary? It would if we think that what is reliable is something called religious experience, functioning apart from the particular religious claims that structure it. However, for the kind of experience Hick is discussing, it doesn't seem particularly surprising that doxastic practices that involve perceiving things by means of religious frameworks that contain conflicting truth claims would result in conflicting beliefs. To trust this kind of religious experience to produce true belief one would need to presume that the teachings structuring this experience are true. Whether or not this kind of trust is arbitrary depends on whether one has reason to presume the truth of a particular religion that is not a reason to presume the truth of other religions as well.

20 John Hick, "The Epistemological Challenge of Religious Pluralism", *Faith and Philosophy* 14, no. 3 (1997): 278.

IV. PRESUMING THE TRUTH OF A RELIGION

The question of whether to presume the truth of a particular religion can be understood as arising within a practical context where we need some account that could structure a way of life. We may be able to live without an explicit account of what makes life worthwhile, but our choices tend to reveal implicit assumptions about reality and value. If the assumptions were systematically developed, we might call the resultant account a vision of human fulfillment. Religious accounts offer this kind of vision, as do functionally equivalent secular accounts. There are obvious advantages to having an explicit vision of this type that can serve as a practical guide. Insofar as we want a fairly coherent way of life, we could even call having this kind of guide a practical necessity.

However, visions of human fulfillment are explicated in terms of contestable claims about reality. Religious views contain claims about transcendent realities, such as God or Nirvana, but secular accounts also include disputed metaphysical claims, such as the claim that all reality is physical. When we consider religious views, it is these metaphysical claims that stand out. But while deliberation about metaphysical claims can be relevant to deciding whether to adopt a religious view or a nonreligious alternative, it is not by itself decisive. Finding metaphysical claims unbelievable is a reason for ruling out an account, but to find an account acceptable, one must be attracted to its ethical vision. As Samuel Fleischacker puts it, "… we can't and normally don't simply base our religious beliefs on metaphysics, but we may use views on these matters to choose among religious claims that otherwise strike us as morally and telically attractive."[21]

Given our practical concerns, we have reason to presume the truth of some view of our overall good. But the situated character of human rationality and of human ethical responses means that our assessments of the alternatives will diverge. A humble confessionalist acknowledges as much. She does not claim to have surveyed all possible views from some neutral standpoint and determined that a particular one is true. Rather, she is drawn to a particular ethical vision and judges the account that makes it intelligible to be defensible. As long as she is aware of no alternative that seems clearly supe-

21 Samuel Fleischacker, *The Good and the Good Book: Revelation as a Guide to Life* (OUP, 2015), 70.

rior, presuming the truth of this view can be regarded as both a practical and an epistemic strategy.

Pluralists find this strategy defective. The pluralist suspicion of confessionalism appears to be connected with the appeal of what we might call an egalitarian epistemology that makes truths about matters related to shaping a way of life equally available. Byrne says that his own views on the issue reflect a "dislike of claims to epistemic privilege" and a drive toward "universalist and egalitarian ideas about cognition".[22] Having this sort of aversion or attraction may explain of why he prefers pluralism, but it is not the sort of reason that shows some pluralist account more likely to be true. Regardless of what we prefer, it may be that some tradition has made assumptions or acquired insights or developed concepts that have put its adherents in a superior position to be receptive to some kinds of truth.

Perhaps, however, the issue is not really whether some particular religious view might be closer to the truth. Byrne acknowledges the possibility, but he argues that not being able to establish that any religious view is "objectively more certain" than any other gives us a reason to take an agnostic stance toward all detailed religious accounts. He understands this agnostic stance to conflict with reasonably believing particular doctrinal claims. He says that even if particular claims of this sort might be true in the sense of corresponding to reality, they are "presumed by pluralism not to describe reality truly, in detail, with any certainty" and, hence, can't be affirmed to be "unequivocally, categorically true."[23]

Byrne seems to me to conflate the issue of whether a view is true or might be reasonably accepted with the question of whether detailed accounts can be regarded as objectively certain. In the first place, we can distinguish the detailed accounts, roughly at least, from the core vision of things. To think that all such accounts are significantly flawed when we get to the details is different from thinking that we have no reasons for regarding the central core of some account to be closer to the truth than the core claims of competing accounts. Byrne might object that those reasons don't amount to objective certainty, but here he is setting a high bar. When I try to establish that a comprehensive guide of this

22 Peter Byrne, *Prolegomena to Religious Pluralism: Reference and Realism in Religion* (Macmillan Press; St. Martin's Press, 1995), 193.

23 *Ibid.*, 202.

kind is objectively more certain than the alternatives, I have to set aside some intuitions and assumptions that I am fairly confident of, but which I recognize as open to challenge. In other words I have to disregard much of what makes an account of this type seem plausible or implausible from my own perspective. A policy of accepting only what I can establish as objectively more certain means being fairly skeptical with regard to some kinds of truth claims.

Even if no religious account can be shown to be objectively more certain than the alternatives, it wouldn't follow that the only reasonable response is to presume that all such accounts are untrue. When we need to act on the basis of some view of things, it can be reasonable to presume the truth of a view we find more convincing than the available alternatives. If we consider potential ethical visions that might guide our lives, we can rule out some on the grounds that we are unable to presume the accounts they offer to be true. But there are likely to be some that appeal to what William James called our "believing tendencies". It is possible that there are multiple views that we could presume to be true, but often a particular view will have in James's terms a greater degree of liveness.[24] When, to use T. W. Mawson's phrase, we need to put our money on something,[25] it is surely not unreasonable to commit to a view we find convincing enough to live by.

Presuming a view to be true may lead to first-order states that are indistinguishable from belief, but whether it does or not, it makes possible a project of learning to perceive and act in accordance with the view that is presumed. In presuming a view to be true, one is also presuming that truth claims that conflict with it are false. Pluralists propose various ways to resolve such conflicts, such as positing multiple phenomenal realities or suggesting that some truth claims be understood as mythological. Confessionalists can agree that some apparent conflicts can be dissolved, but they reject the kind of revision of the meaning of truth claims needed to interpret all such conflicts as only apparent. In the case of conflicts they take to be genuine, confessionalists follow the ordinary procedure of rejecting claims that conflict with what they have presumed true.

24 William James, "The Will to Believe", 5 (2011 [1919]): 2–3.

25 T. J. Mawson, "'Byrne's' Religious Pluralism", *International Journal for Philosophy of Religion* 58, no. 1 (2005): 51–52.

I have not been trying to assess the merits or weaknesses of pluralism. Instead I have been trying to resist a seductive move often made by pluralists to remove confessionalist competitors from the field. There are undoubtedly versions of confessionalism that are defective for various reasons, but a sufficiently humble form of confessionalism is able to incorporate some pluralist insights without abandoning the kind of deep engagement in a particular tradition that is difficult to reconcile with pluralist views. When pluralists dismiss confessionalism easily, I suspect that they overlook the possibility of what I have called humble confessionalism.

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THEISM AND THE CRIMINALIZATION OF SIN

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Abstract. The free will theodicy (a standard theistic response to the problem of evil) places significant value on free will: free will is of such substantial value, that God's gift of free will to humans was justified, even though this gift foreseeably (and regularly) results in the most monstrous of evils. I will argue that when a state criminalizes sin (by punishing producers of sinful materials such as illicit drugs, or punishing consumers), it can restrict or eliminate citizens' exercise of metaphysical free will with respect to choosing to partake in or refrain from these activities. Given the value placed on free will in the free will theodicy, theists who endorse this theodicy should thus oppose the criminalization of what I will call *Millian sins* — that is, actions which are immoral, but which do not directly harm another person. In other words, such theists should oppose legal moralism.

Recently, Yoweri Museveni, the evangelical Christian President of Uganda, a nation which is itself overwhelmingly Christian, signed into law a bill harshly criminalizing homosexual acts, with penalties ranging from 14 years in prison for first-time offenders to life imprisonment for those convicted of "aggravated homosexuality."[1] Museveni himself has claimed that homosexual relationships are against God's will,[2] and the bill was strongly lobbied for by the influential Ugandan pastor Martin Ssempa, founder of the Makerere Community Church, who describes the anti-homosexuality bill as an attempt "to save us from the great punishment coming on the earth when the sins of Sodom are practiced."[3] Both before and after the 2009 introduction of the bill, Ssempa

1 Sudarsan Raghavan, "Ugandan leader signs harsh anti-gay bill, ignores warning from Obama", *The Washington Post*, 24 February 2014, A06.

2 Xan Rice, "Uganda considers death sentence for gay sex in bill before parliament", *The Guardian*, 30 November 2009, 16.

3 Martin Ssempa, "Anti-Homosexual Bill in Uganda Causes Global Uproar ABC News", http://martinssempa.blogspot.com/2010/03/anti-homosexual-bill-in-uganda-causes.html (10 March 2010).

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and the bill's sponsor, David Bahati, were lobbied by US evangelicals such as Scott Lively and Lou Engle, who urged Ugandans to oppose gay rights.[4] (Lively and Engle have since disavowed Uganda's anti-homosexuality bill.)

This is an extreme case. And surely not all, perhaps not even most, theists (particularly academic theists) advocate using the coercive power of the state to punish behavior they deem sinful. Nevertheless, the practical impetus for the criminalization of immoral behavior often derives from theistic motivations. In this paper, I will argue that many, if not most, theists have collateral commitments that should lead them to oppose legal moralism. In particular, given the value most theists are committed to placing on metaphysical free will, theists should, for the most part, oppose legal moralism as involving a highly problematic restriction on the metaphysical free will of would-be sinners.

When confronted with the problem of moral evil, most theists respond with a free will theodicy or defense.[5] A central premise of this theodicy is that free will is of such great value that even though human possession of free will foreseeably results in great (even monstrous) evils, it is better for humans to possess this sort of free will than for them to possess no free will, or even a substantially truncated form of free will (either of which option would reduce or eliminate the moral evil produced by humans). I will argue in this paper that endorsing the free will theodicy gives one good reason to reject legal moralism. We can provisionally define legal moralism as follows: *A state may legally proscribe activities viewed by society as immoral, even if such activities do not harm others*. Thus, legal moralism is the view that the state may criminalize what I will call *Millian sins* — that is, actions which are immoral, but which do not directly harm another person. I will argue that when a state criminalizes Millian sin (by punishing producers of sinful materials such as illicit drugs, or punishing consumers), it can restrict or eliminate citizens' exercise of metaphysical free will with respect to choosing to partake in or refrain from these activities. Given the substantial value placed on free will the free will theodicy, theists endorsing this theodicy (whom I shall call *free will*

4 Frederick Nzwili, "Uganda's anti-gay bill refocuses attention on US evangelical influence", *The Christian* Science, http://www.csmonitor.com/layout/set/print/World/2014/0225/Uganda-s-anti-gay-bill-refocuses-attention-on-US-evangelical-influence-video, 25 February 2014.

5 For ease of phrasing, I will simply refer to free will theodicies, and not to defenses. The two are technically distinct, but I do not think the distinction has a bearing on the course of my argument.

theodicy theists, or for ease of reference, *FWT theists*) should agree that criminalizing Millian sin is an unwarranted restriction on the free will of citizens.

As noted above, one might not find a coincidence of these two view (the free will theodicy and legal moralism) among very many academic theists. However, there is good reason to think that these two views are widely held outside of academic circles: a recent survey (n = 3178) revealed that 25% of American adults theists *both* (a) agreed or strongly agreed with the thesis of legal moralism, *and* (b) endorsed some version of the free will theodicy. (See appendix.) This fact alone makes it reasonable to subject these views to critical scrutiny.

A few final notes before beginning. First: many wish to refute the legal moralist by arguing that the typical targets of morals legislation (homosexual acts among consenting adults, for example) are not actually immoral. I will grant, for the sake of this essay, that such actions are immoral. I will argue that even granting the immorality of such actions, the FWT theist should in most cases oppose their criminalization.

Second, this paper is not addressed to theists who reject a free will theodicy; nor is it addressed to those who reject legal moralism. As I said, empirical data suggests that a substantial proportion of ordinary theists *do* hold both of these views under discussion; and it is the coincidence of these two views that is the target of this paper.

Finally, some argue that there is no such thing as a purely Millian sin, and that all sin harms others. Although I will briefly address later in the paper the indirect (e.g., social) costs of Millian sin (as this seems to be the focus of many legal moralists, such as Devlin), this paper is not directed toward those who simply deny the existence of a category of sins which do not, in Mill's terms, violate "a *distinct and assignable* obligation to any other person or persons."

I. THEISM AND THE LEGISLATION OF SIN

Although much contemporary discourse (particularly that outside of academic circles) surrounding the legislation of morality is couched in religious terms, historically, mainstream theistic thinkers have been divided on the question of whether it is the job of the state to enforce God's law. Augustine, for example, argued that because humans are fallen and sinful, a temporal political state (employing coercive authority) is needed to allow people to live together in (relative) peace. However, because any leaders of such a state are

also fallen and sinful, they are fundamentally unsuited to attempt to enforce God's law, or to try to make their subjects virtuous. Thus, for Augustine,

> temporal justice…consists in maintaining as far as possible a secure and orderly environment to conduct the external aspects of life in…Human law cannot make us good; for the most part, it can create only the conditions that make it possible for us to sin in safety.[6]

Thus, a well-ordered state need not even be a Christian state. As one commentator writes, "earthly justice consists in the maintenance of external peace and order. But earthly order does not depend on the blessing of the Church: even well-ordered or well constituted pagan States can exhibit it."[7]

Similarly, Calvin and Luther subscribed to a 'two-kingdoms doctrine': God's law is sovereign over spiritual matters, and earthly (civil) authority extends not to the spiritual lives of men and women, but only to maintaining order.[8] This isn't to say that Augustine, Luther, and Calvin would have opposed punishing various 'victimless' crimes; but they did not think it was the proper function of the state to compel its citizens to live Christian lives.

There have been significant historical attempts to use state power to compel citizens to follow Christian morality — notably, the puritans in England during the late 17th and early 18th centuries, who (through the Societies for the Reformation of Manners) attempted "to marshal the resources of the coercive state toward the effective prosecution of immorality and vice in order to bring about a godly order."[9] Puritans such as John Disney argued that God would punish the English nation as a whole for tolerating vice among its subjects, and that "laws that prohibited vice were…signs of compassion on the part of the ruling class for the miserable sinners entrusted them by God."[10]

Many contemporary Christians also argue for the legislation of morality. Norman Geisler and Frank Turek, for example, argue that while states should not legislate according to specifically scriptural law, they should legislate ac-

6 Robert W. Dyson, *St. Augustine of Hippo: The Christian Transformation of Political Philosophy* (Continuum, 2005), 66, 71.

7 Dyson, *St. Augustine of Hippo*, 153.

8 See, for example, Luther, "On Secular Authority"; and Calvin, *Institutes of Christian Religion*, 3.19.15.

9 Brendan L. Hill, "Puritans in the Public Sphere: The Societies for the Reformation of Manners and the Continuity of Calvinism in Early Eighteenth-Century England", (PhD Diss., Georgetown University, 2004), 1.

10 Hill, "Puritans in the Public Sphere", 124.

cording to the moral law given to us by God. Geisler and Turek write, "The Bible was not designed by God to be the normative basis for civil government. For that, He gave the Moral Law."[11] They argue that "legislating morality is not only constitutional but unavoidable and necessary",[12] and suggest that contemporary states should criminalize homosexual acts, recreational drug use and distribution, prostitution, abortion, and other typical targets of morals legislation.[13] Other popular authors, such as Rod Dreher, lament the increasing secularization of the law; Dreher, for example, writes that "The U.S. Supreme Court's Obergefell decision declaring a constitutional right to same-sex marriage was the Waterloo of religious conservatism",[14] and argues that Christians should exercise the 'Benedict option' and retreat from secular society into like-minded Christian communities until such a time as they are better-able to influence the political order.

It is, of course, far beyond the scope of a single paper to rebut all of the arguments in favor of legal moralism (or even all the theistic arguments). But I do wish to argue that theists who endorse a free will theodicy as a response to the problem of moral evil have a powerful reason to resist using the coercive power of the state to inhibit citizens' behavior on grounds that it is sinful. Let us begin by examining the notion of free will endorsed by most defenders of the free will theodicy.

II. WHAT KIND OF FREE WILL IS AT ISSUE?

Typically, defenders of the free will theodicy endorse a libertarian conception of metaphysical free will. Van Inwagen's free will libertarianism is motivated largely by his endorsement of the Principle of Alternate Possibilities. Van Inwagen states free will's reliance on the principle as follows: "A belief in one's free will is the belief that one can sometimes do otherwise."[15] Plantinga, in a

11 Norman Geisler and Frank Turek, *Legislating Morality: Is It Wise? Is It Legal? Is It Possible?* (Wipf and Stock Publishers, 1998), 102.

12 Geisler and Turek, *Legislating Morality*, 24, emphasis removed.

13 Thinking in other religious traditions displays the same bifurcation between those who desire a separation between religion and state and those who seek their union.

14 Rod Dreher, *The Benedict Option: A Strategy for Christians in a Post-Christian Nation* (Penguin Publishing Group, 2017), 9.

15 Peter Van Inwagen, "When is the Will Free?" In *Philosophical Perspectives*, Vol. 3: Philosophy of Mind and Action Theory, ed. by James Tomberlin (Ridgeview Publishing, 2009), 404.

similar vein, writes, "If a person is free with respect to a given action, then he is free to perform that action and free to refrain from performing it; no antecedent conditions and/or causal laws determine that he will perform the action, or that he won't. It is within his power, at the time in question, to take or perform the action and within his power to refrain from it."[16] C.S. Lewis expresses similar commitments: "Some people think they can imagine a creature which was free but had no possibility of going wrong; I cannot. If a thing is free to be good it is also free to be bad."[17] By contrast, Swinburne argues that libertarian free will could include merely the freedom to choose (uncaused) among various goods, but that such free will would be worth little; and so God created us with the free will to choose between good and evil:

> Free and responsible choice is not just free will in the narrow sense of being able to choose between alternative actions, without our choice being causally necessitated by some prior cause. I have urged…that humans do have such free will. But humans could have that kind of free will merely in virtue of being able to choose freely between two equally good and unimportant alternatives. Free and responsible choice is rather free will (of the kind discussed) to make significant choices between good and evil, which make a big difference to the agent, to others, and to the world.[18]

Theists' reasons for preferring libertarian accounts of free will are, I suppose, well-known, and display significant overlap with the usual reasons for preferring libertarian accounts of free will to compatibilist accounts of free will. I will continue based on what I take to be the consensus view among theists — that libertarianism is true. There are compatibilist theists, but I see no reason to think that compatibilist version of theism are immune to the argument laid out in this essay.

III. THE VALUE OF FREE WILL

In discussions of the problem of evil, the sort of free will discussed above is taken to be of such great value that even though human possession of this type of free will results in great (even monstrous) evil, it is better for humans to possess this sort of free will than for them to possess no free will or a sub-

16 Alvin Plantinga, *God, Freedom and Evil* (Harper and Row, 1974), 29.
17 C.S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity* (HarperCollins, 1977), 48.
18 Richard Swinburne, *The Existence of God*, 2nd edition (Clarendon Press, 2004), 86–7.

stantially truncated form of free will, though either of these options might reduce or eliminate the amount of moral evil produced by humans. For example, Plantinga writes,

> A world containing creatures who are significantly free (and freely perform more good than evil actions) is more valuable, all else being equal, than a world containing no free creatures at all. Now God can create free creatures, but he can't *cause* or *determine* them to do only what is right. For if He does so, then they aren't significantly free after all.[19]

A similar thought is expressed by C.S. Lewis in *Mere Christianity*:

> Why, then, did God give [His creatures] free will? Because free will, though it makes evil possible, is also the only thing that makes possible any love or goodness or joy worth having. A world of automata — of creatures that worked like machines — would hardly be worth creating…Of course, God knew what would happen if they used their freedom the wrong way: apparently He thought it worth the risk.[20]

Similarly, van Inwagen writes:

> God made the world and it was very good. An important part of its goodness was that it contained creatures…that were fit to be loved by God and to love Him in return and to love one another. But love implies freedom: for A to love B is for A freely to choose to be united to B in a certain way. Now even an omnipotent being cannot *insure* that some other being *freely* choose *x* over *y*. For God to create beings capable of loving Him, therefore, it was necessary for Him to take a risk: to risk the possibility that the beings He created would freely choose to withhold their love from Him.[21]

As noted above, Swinburne holds that the ability to make morally significant choices, free choices between good and evil, is of great value:

> It is good that the free choices of humans should include genuine responsibility for other humans, and that involves the opportunity to benefit or harm them…A world in which agents can benefit each other but not do each other harm is one where they have only very limited responsibility for each other…A God who gave agents only such limited responsibilities for their fellows would not have given much.[22]

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19 Plantinga, *God, Freedom and Evil*, 30.

20 Lewis, *Mere Christianity*, 48–9.

21 Peter Van Inwagen, "The Magnitude, Duration, and Distribution of Evil: A Theodicy", *Philosophical Topics* 16, no. 2 (Fall 1988), 163.

22 Swinburne, *The Existence of God*, 87–8.

The idea expressed by these various FWT theists is similar: it is surely not a good thing when someone performs an evil action. But free will is such a great good, God's gift of free will to humanity is justified even if one foresees (as God no doubt did) that it would be misused for evil (even great evil).

IV. FREE WILL AND THE LEGISLATION OF SINFUL BEHAVIOR

Clearly, a common belief among many (perhaps most) theistic philosophers is that free will, and the ability to make morally significant choices, is a central part of God's plan for humans. This naturally suggests the following conclusion: if God judges free will to be so valuable that the gift of free will to humans is justified even granted the terrible evils that foreseeably result from this gift; and if God judges that a substantially truncated form of free will (e.g., one that would render humans unable to perform the worst sorts of atrocities, like the Holocaust) is not a suitable substitute for our current broad (albeit still limited) free will; then we would have to have a very compelling reason indeed to interfere in someone's free will.

In this section, I will endeavor to establish two theses. First, I will argue that given the value of free will, the criminalization of purely moral offenses should be opposed by the FWT theist. Second, I will establish that the criminalization of victimless moral crimes does, in fact, result in a restriction on perpetrators' metaphysical free will, and not merely their civil liberty.

IV.1. Criminalization of Sin

The FWT theist must agree that any infringement upon the metaphysical free will of citizens in a state is a serious matter, not to be undertaken lightly. Recall, again, that on a free will theodicy, free will is of such significant value, that God's gift of free will to humans was justified, even though this gift foreseeably (and regularly) results in the most monstrous of evils; and God has sufficient reason *not* to intervene to prevent these monstrous evils which we see unfolding around us. Thus, we must be very clear that any restriction we impose on free will may only be done when clearly required.

This strongly suggests that a FWT theist should oppose legal moralism. We have defined legal moralism as follows: *A state may legally proscribe activities viewed by society as immoral, even if such activities do not harm others*. Granted, the behavior in question is immoral, but if God didn't think that people's in-

evitable misuse of free will was a good reason to deprive humans of free will, then there is no justification for *our* placing a lower value on free will. I have called such actions — actions which are immoral, but which do not directly harm another person — *Millian sins*, as these are roughly the sorts of behaviors Mill designated by his category of actions which do not violate "a *distinct and assignable* obligation to any other person or persons." Thus, a more compact definition of legal moralism is: *A state may criminalize Millian sins*.

The core of the argument is this[23]: the FWT theist acknowledges that free will is a great good. But of course, people have other interests that are also considered good; and so in society there is often a 'balancing of goods' whereby we restrict a person's free will in order to protect the interests of others. However, Millian sin is sin that by definition doesn't adversely affect the interests of anyone but the agent sinning,[24] and so a restriction of the agent's free will is not offset by a protection of other people's interests. While we can readily acknowledge that a consideration of other people's interests can justify restricting an individual's free will — there is a legitimate 'balancing of goods' here — if the agent's interests are the only ones adversely affected by her actions, then the 'balancing of goods' consideration is not in play, and restricting the agent's freedom will be difficult to justify for a FWT theist. (Does the fact that a Millian sin might harm the agent committing the sin justify coercively preventing the sin? I will take up this question shortly.)

A few comments are in order. First, despite the reference to Mill, my criticism of legal moralism is not based on utilitarianism. My argument starts with the idea that metaphysical freedom is of such value that infringement of it can only with difficulty be justified. Second, citing Mill does not imply that I think that the harm principle is the only legitimate basis upon which the state may limit the liberty of its citizens. I do not defend any theory of the extent of state authority in this essay, beyond arguing that the FWT theist should oppose legal moralism.

Third, the question of which behaviors harm others (in the sense of violating an obligation to others) is contested territory. But a paper cannot settle every debate, and must simply take certain assumptions as given. I will assume a certain division of actions into those that are criminalized chiefly because

23 A referee for *EJPR* suggested this way of clarifying the core argument.

24 And others who consent, but we can consider them to be agents by this definition.

they violate the rights of others, and those Millian sins that are (or may be) criminalized chiefly because they are sinful. I take it that we have a rough idea of this division, even if the edges of this distinction are blurry and/or contested.

Millian sins do not directly harm others, but some Millian sins can be harmful to the participant. Is this a compelling reason for making such behaviors illegal? First, this is a question of harm to self, not others; and paternalistic legislation is technically a separate issue from legal moralism. Second, not all Millian sins are necessarily harmful to the participant. While drinking to excess and alcoholism are harmful to the participant, moderate drinking (for example) is probably not harmful.

Finally, it is not clear that harm to self is a good reason for criminalizing a behavior, when starting from a FWT theistic standpoint. Let us begin by considering a somewhat different point. Atheists have often argued that what is valuable about free will is not the outcome, but the act of choosing; and that God can allow people freely to choose evil, but arrange things so that the evil outcome is not realized. FWT theists have, to my knowledge, uniformly rejected such proposals. Responding to such a proposal by Steven Boër and Robert McKim, Frank Dilley writes,

> To be deprived of doing evil (or dreadful evil) to some other person is not to be able to regret having done so, and regrets of that type are genuinely character building. If I have nothing to fear, if no evils or dreadful evils can happen to me, what about the virtues of courage? What about sympathy for undeserving victims if something evil or dreadfully evil befalls them? No doubt natural evils might take up some of the slack left by the absence of moral evils, but they cannot provide for those virtues which relate to our humanity or inhumanity toward each other.[25]

Hick, responding to the much more radical suggestion that God could prevent all evils (moral and natural) by intervening each time at the appropriate moment, writes that,

> Courage and fortitude would have no point in an environment in which there is, by definition, no danger or difficulty. Generosity, kindness, the *agape* aspect of love, prudence, unselfishness, and all other ethical notions which presuppose life in a stable environment, could not even be formed.[26]

25 Frank B. Dilley, "The Free-Will Defence and Worlds without Moral Evil", *International Journal for Philosophy of Religion* 27, nos. 1–2 (February-April 1990), 14.

26 John Hick, *Philosophy of Religion* (Prentice Hall, 1963), 45.

Theists like Dilley and Hick point out that if we lacked the free will to harm each other, then there would be less scope for virtues like courage, generosity, kindness, etc. But a similar argument can be made for the kinds of self-harms that can be the result of Millian sins — not being allowed to engage in Millian sins prevents one from regret, atonement, heroic recovery from addiction and sin. It limits the opportunity for friends and loved ones of the sufferer to display virtues such as compassion, generosity, and so forth. Granted, many who sin will fail to achieve regret and atonement; many of their friends and loved ones will fail to display compassion and generosity. But isn't this just as true when one is harmed by another as when one harms oneself? Thus, it seems like the FWT theist has no more business trying to prevent people from sinning (even when they thereby harm themselves) than we have asking why God doesn't intervene to prevent us from harming each other.

IV.2. Free Will and the Legislation of Morality

Now I must argue that criminalization of Millian sin restricts (would-be) perpetrators' metaphysical freedom, and not just their civil liberty. Legislating morality works on both the demand side and the supply side. That is, when immoral acts are made illegal, legislators typically make illegal not only the consumption of sinful materials, but also the production and distribution (if the sinful act is such that it requires production and distribution). Thus, criminalization of drugs involves punishment not just of users, but also of producers, suppliers, and so on.

Let us focus first on the supply side of legislating morality. The thought behind targeting the supply of immoral products like drugs or sexual services is that if such products are not available for purchase, then it doesn't matter how much demand there is, for there will be no supply. Clearly, if the supply of pornography or drugs is eliminated, then procuring these products will be impossible. This, in turn, would make it impossible for people freely to choose to consume pornography or drugs. As Frank Dilley points out, "One is not free(i) with regard to what is impossible"[27] (where the 'i' distinguishes the indeterminist/incompatibilist sense of free will from the compatibilist sense of free will). Thus, targeting the supply side of the immoral trade with

27 Frank B. Dilley, "A Modified Flew Attack on the Free Will Defense", *Southern Journal of Philosophy* 20, no. 1 (Spring 1982), 28.

the aim of eliminating such supply has as its ultimate aspiration a goal which directly entails limiting people's free will with respect to violating religious morals.

One might argue that such efforts at eliminating the supply of sinful products are never entirely successful, and thus, that access to them is never rendered impossible. Therefore, people's free will with respect to choosing to consume these products is never eliminated. I would offer two responses to this argument.

First, making a product more difficult to acquire (either merely by limiting the supply, or indirectly by making it prohibitively expensive for some due to limited supply and the dangers of transport) arguably can limit the free will of consumers even if it doesn't completely eliminate it. And someone who holds free will to be of tremendous value should not regard imposing limitations on free will as a morally unproblematic alternative to elimination of free will.

Second, even if interdiction efforts are never entirely successful, the *goal* of such interdiction efforts is not to be partially successful. If a legal moralist targets drug producers, the intention is never to stop some smuggling, and to allow others. An interdiction effort would not be regarded as having failed to meet its original design or intention if it had a 100% success rate; on the contrary, it would be trumpeted as a resounding success. Thus, even if interdiction efforts necessarily fall short of full effectiveness, the *intention* behind them is to deprive would-be sinners of the option to sin, and the practical effect of this policy would be to limit the metaphysical free will of would-be sinners. To say, "If we succeeded in our intended policy, it would deprive people of their free will, which would be wrong; but it won't, so we should be allowed to pursue our policy to the fullest extent possible" has the same paradoxical air as saying, about a bumbling but persistent attempted murderer, "If he succeeded in committing murder, that would be wrong, but he always fails, and always will, so his attempts are not immoral."

Turning to the demand side, legislation of morality often takes the form of punishing the consumers of sinful products. This is particularly the case when the sin in question is a behavior (e.g., consensual homosexual behavior), and there is no product to be produced or distributed (i.e., the sin in question cannot be targeted on the supply side). Does this punishment of consumers limit their free will?

One way in which laws criminalizing Millian sin might abrogate the free will of would-be sinners is by coercing them into behavior that is outwardly moral. Of course, one of the main points of legal penalties associated with undesirable actions is that they are supposed to change the calculus of costs and benefits associated with various actions, thereby altering people's behavior. Could these legal penalties serve as a sufficiently coercive threat that they undermine the free will of would-be sinners?

Part of how one answers this question depends on how sensitive free will is to negation by coercion. Michael Murray writes that "one cannot act freely when one is in the condition of compulsion by another in the context of a threat",[28] but goes on to outline very stringent conditions on what counts as compulsion. By comparison, van Inwagen writes, "There are…few occasions in life on which — at least after a little reflection and perhaps some investigation into the facts — it isn't absolutely clear what to do…An incompatibilist should believe that on such occasions the agent cannot do anything other than the thing that seems to him to be clearly the only sensible thing."[29] Thus, van Inwagen thinks we seldom act freely, and on his account, the threat of a severe legal penalty associated with a sinful act would coercively negate the free will of most (but perhaps not all) agents. A different possibility altogether is again suggested by Murray, who says one might hold that one acting under compulsion might act freely, but his or her action is robbed of the sort of moral significance theists wish for free actions to have. Thus, one might hold that "[b]ecause praise or blame are not justifiably imputed in such cases of compulsion it would appear that although freedom *simpliciter* is not eliminated, the moral significance of the action performed is."[30]

Again, though, Murray has a very strict definition of what counts as "compulsion by another in the context of a threat" — a gun to one's head counts, as does God revealing himself in a way that is rationally undeniable and guaranteeing punishment for evildoers. But does threat of punishment by temporal authority count as compulsion or coercion of the sort that undermines free will? Indeed, the defender of legal moralism might say that the legal penalties associated with Millian sins do not (and are not intended) to rob would-be

28 Michael J. Murray, "Coercion and the Hiddenness of God", *American Philosophical Quarterly* 30, no. 1 (January 1993), 29.

29 Van Inwagen, "When is the Will Free?", 415.

30 Murray, "Coercion and the Hiddenness of God", 30.

sinners of their free will, but are merely intended to provide them with additional reasons to incline them freely to choose not to sin. This argument, however, is not compelling in light of how legal penalties are actually structured: the escalating nature of legal penalties for repeat offenders shows that legal penalties are not merely in the nature of a fee to participate, intended to discourage participation (but not to coerce non-participation), but are eventually intended to make participation prohibitively expensive, either in terms of money, jail time, or other legal or social costs. Thus, legal penalties are designed to escalate (for repeat offenders) until a coercive level is achieved.

The problem is particularly acute when we consider those who are imprisoned for the commission of Millian sins. Recall the earlier formulations of the Principle of Alternate Possibilities, which state that an action is free only if one could have done otherwise. If one is imprisoned, one is obviously not free to choose to purchase drugs, or solicit sexual services from a prostitute, etc.[31] (And it will do no good to say that prisoners are free to *choose* to buy drugs, etc., even though they are not free to *actually purchase* them, unless we are assuming serious delusiveness on the part of our prisoners locked up for moral crimes. As we discussed earlier, FWT theists are generally critical of atheists who claim that God could allow us to *choose* sin, but not *actually perform* sin. See, for example, Dilley (1982).)

This point about incarceration, and other sorts of punishments which clearly limit free will, is worth dwelling on for a moment. An oft-bandied statistic in the United States is that nearly half (over 99,000) of all inmates in US federal prisons are incarcerated in drug charges.[32] In US state prisons, almost 223,000 inmates are incarcerated on drug charges — over 55,000 merely for possession.[33] Of the 71,000 inmates in England and Wales as of June 2013, 10,000 are imprisoned for drug offenses.[34] An inmate incarcerated in a prison where there

31 At least, not in an ideal world. For example, drugs are available for purchase in some prisons, but this is not a situation a legal moralist can view with equanimity. Presumably, if the legal moralist wishes to prohibit (for example) the sale and purchase of certain drugs in society at large, he or she also does not wish for them to be available for purchase or barter by criminals imprisoned by that society.

32 Anne E. Carson and Daniela Golinelli, "Prisoners in 2012: Trends in Admissions and Releases, 1991–2012", NCJ 243920 (US Dep. of Justice Bureau of Statistics, 2013), 5, Table 3.

33 Carson and Golinelli, "Prisoners in 2012", 5, Table 3.

34 Gavin Berman and Aliyah Dar, "Prison Population Statistics", SN/SG/4334 (House of Commons Library, Social and General Statistics Section, 2013), 21, Table B.

is no access to drugs (as a legal moralist must surely intend) is not free with respect to using or abstaining from drugs; his or her freedom is abridged. Similar comments apply to incarceration for any other moral crime, where access to the sin in question (and many other activities, besides) is rendered impossible: the inmate's freedom with respect to choosing to participate or refrain from engaging in this sin (or *anything* that cannot be done within the confines of prison) is removed by secular authorities. Thus, secular authorities in a state with legal moralism (as in the US) are engaged in a widespread abridgement of the free will of individuals. I have argued that if the FWT theist supports this, it can almost certainly not be on theistic grounds.

I will conclude this section by noting that the legislation of sin is particularly problematic for theists like Swinburne, who aren't merely concerned with free will *per se*, but with morally significant choice. Remember, Swinburne argues that libertarian free will could include merely the freedom to choose (uncaused) among various goods, but that such free will would be worth little; morally significant choice requires not merely the ability freely to choose, but the ability freely to choose either to benefit or to harm, freely to choose good or evil. So the ability to make morally significant choice entails the existence of libertarian free will, but the latter does not entail the former. This means that a limitation imposed on us by the state which did not rob us of our libertarian free will could nevertheless prevent us from exercising morally significant free choice by removing certain options. So it seems as though morally significant choice may be even more sensitive to negation through morals legislation than is libertarian free will; and so a philosopher who endorses a theodicy like Swinburne's has a powerful *prima facie* reason to oppose the criminalization of Millian sin.

Thus, it would seem that attempts by FWT theists to use the coercive power of the state to control Millian sin do, in fact, diminish metaphysical free will or eliminate opportunities for its exercise, and as such must be regarded as impermissible by those theists who regard free will as of sufficient value to serve as a general justification for God's forbearance of moral evil.

Before concluding, let us consider a final objection. One might object that although the free will defense provides God a reason not to interfere to prevent even terrible evil, this reason for God not to interfere cannot be a reason for humans not to interfere.[35]

35 I owe this objection to a referee for *EJPR*.

This objection cannot be correct, though, if we think about how the free will defense is actually structured: God is not confronted with human creatures, who are already created with free will, and faced with a decision as to whether or not to interfere in their exercises of free will. Thus, the question is not merely a question of whether (and who) is allowed to interfere. Instead, God is confronted with the question of *whether to create humans with free will in the first place*. Thus, the question addressed in the free will defense is primarily one of the *value* of free will: is the value of free will sufficient to compensate for the evils that will (and do) inevitably result from its misuse? Therefore, the question of whether (and who) may intervene is in an important sense a secondary question, which is parasitic on this primary question of the value of free will, and must be answered in terms of it. If God may not intervene in human free will, it's because that would defeat the purpose of giving us this valuable gift in the first place.

But if we then acknowledge that free will is such a valuable and important gift, then it seems clear that it is not only wrong for God to intervene in human free will. It seems that it is at least *prima facie* a serious wrong for us humans to intervene in other humans' exercise of free will. Because the question of the free will defense is in the first instance a question of the value of free will, it seems that this value serves not merely as a reason against God's intervention, but also against human intervention.

V. OBJECTIONS

V.1. Justifying State Use of Coercive Authority

One objection immediately arises: if my thesis is successful, wouldn't it prove too much? Wouldn't it argue the state out of existence? Surely, without some mechanism to enforce rules to protect the individual, the dreaded state of nature looms. But won't these mechanisms often deprive people of at least some measure of free will — involving imprisonment for serious or repeat offenders, for example?

I shall give a cursory explanation (for that is all I have space for) why a state can use coercion (short of legal moralism) without offending against the basic thesis of this essay (that given the value of free will in a common theistic world-view, restrictions on free will are very difficult to justify). I have argued that some civil punishments a state might levy upon an individual (particu-

larly incarceration) will restrict that person's metaphysical free will. I have also argued that the value of free will (for a FWT theist) constitutes a strong *prima facie* reason against using the state's coercive power to limit people's free will by enforcing theistic morality. But it would be implausible to argue the state out of existence. Surely it is sometimes justifiable to limit people's free will, particularly when those individuals are threatening the lives of others. But if I am arguing that free will is of such value, isn't it incumbent upon me to explain how a state is ever justified in infringing upon the free will of its subjects — or even having any subjects?

Two comments are appropriate at this point. First, it is the FWT theist who places such significant value on free will; and so ultimately, it is incumbent upon the FWT theist to explain why the state is justified in infringing upon the free will of its subjects. A second, more sympathetic comment, is this: it seems to me that a FWT theist can explain without too much difficulty why a state is justified in exercising various forms of coercive authority (short of legal moralism) over its citizens. Obviously, I don't have the space to defend an entire theory of political authority (even if I *had* such a theory), but an obvious place to start would be with defense of the person. Starting from the plausible idea that people may exercise self-defense against aggression (even if this compromises the life or freedom of the aggressor), it is a short step to the conclusion that the state may legitimately exercise this power on behalf of its subjects.

A familiar way of elaborating this story is, of course, Locke's: one begins with the idea that in a state of nature, one has the right to defend oneself against aggression and punish those who commit crimes against ones "life, liberty, health, or possessions."[36] When one forms a commonwealth, one transfers this 'executive power,' this right to use coercive force against aggressors, to the state. However, even if one may transfer to the state the coercive power to defend oneself and others, that doesn't mean one may authorize the state to infringe upon people's liberty with regard to purely self-regarding actions (particularly when one did not originally have this right in the state of nature).

36 Locke, *Second Treatise*, II.6. Of course, Locke also thinks you have the right to seek restitution for damages caused, but I am ignoring this complication.

One needn't give a social contract account. One could give a Humean, social-utility type of justification for the authority of the state to punish certain crimes in order to maintain order:

> A small degree of experience and observation suffices to teach us, that society cannot possibly be maintained without the authority of magistrates, and that this authority must soon fall into contempt where exact obedience is not paid to it.[37]

Implicit in this idea, again, could be the idea that even though the subjects do not (through their consent) authorize the government to defend them from aggression, the government is enforcing a right that people at any rate do have.

Although I have started out modestly — with a cautious defense of a relatively minimal state — the reader should not infer that I am defending political libertarianism. Indeed, I think it quite plausible that someone who cares deeply about negative liberty (including, as this may well, the FWT theist) can defend far more than a minimal libertarian state. For example, G.A. Cohen has famously argued that those who care about negative liberty — that is, freedom from interference — should care about poverty (and by extension should think that a comprehensive theory of justice includes redistribution). Cohen imagines an able-bodied woman who wishes to visit her sister in Glasgow, but who cannot save enough money to purchase a train ticket. Cohen writes, "If she attempts to board the train, she is consequently without the means to overcome the conductor's prospective interference…There is no deficiency in her ability to [go to Glasgow] which restricts her *independently* of the interference that she faces."[38] Her lack of negative liberty results directly from her lack of money: "So to lack money *is* to be liable to interference… Money provides freedom because it extinguishes interference with access to goods and services." (Cohen 2011, pp. 177 and 181). Thus, there is good reason to think that beginning with premises a libertarian would accept need not lead one to embrace a minimal state.

I will say no more about what kinds of state coercion are permitted, for the thesis of this paper concerns primarily what kinds of state coercion are

37 Hume, "Of the Original Contract."

38 G.A. Cohen, "Freedom and Money", in *On The Currency of Egalitarian Justice, and Other Essays in Political Philosophy*, ed. Michael Otsuka (Princeton University Press, 2011), 176.

not permitted for the FWT theist. I merely wish to emphasize that I am not defending a libertarian state, or any particular vision of political authority; I only wish to offer a brief defense against the objection that my thesis argues the state out of existence.

V.2. Legal Moralism and Social Harms

Although I do not have the space to address every argument advanced in favor of legal moralism, I would be remiss in not addressing perhaps the best-known advocate, Patrick Devlin. Devlin argues that significant harm is done when the criminal law does not enforce a common moral code, but the harm is done to society as a whole:

> [A]n established morality is as necessary as good government to the welfare of society. Societies disintegrate from within more frequently than they are broken up by external pressures. There is disintegration when no common morality is observed and history shows that the loosening of moral bonds is often the first stage of disintegration, so that society is justified in taking the same steps to preserve its moral code as it does to preserve its government and other essential institutions. The suppression of vice is as much the law's business as the suppression of subversive activities; it is no more possible to define a sphere of private morality than it is to define one of private subversive activity.[39]

A couple of comments are required. First, even Devlin acknowledges that considerations like the ones above must be balanced against the requirement that "there must be toleration of the maximum individual freedom that is consistent with the integrity of society."[40] So Devlin, too, acknowledges the value of freedom (although it is unclear whether Devlin is speaking here of free will or political liberty; he likely means the latter).

More importantly, though, a FWT theist should regard a Devlin-style attempt to justify legal restrictions on Millian sins with a healthy skepticism. Again, given the substantial value of free will, the mere infliction of harms cannot in all cases justify its restriction. If that were the case, then the free will theodicy could never get off the ground in the first place. In particular, as potential harms become more indirect and diffuse, concern about preventing them must give way before the imperative of respecting the metaphysical free will of persons.

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39 Patrick Devlin, *The Enforcement of Morals* (Oxford University Press, 1996), 13–14.

40 Devlin, *The Enforcement of Morals*, 16.

Indeed, the sort of argument advanced by 20th-century legal moralists — that tolerance of Millian sins causes harm to other members of society[41] — was foreseen by Mill, who imagined such advocates of legal moralism arguing as follows (in favor of temperance laws):

> I claim, as a citizen, a right to legislate whenever my social rights are invaded by the social act of another…If anything invades my social rights, certainly the traffic in strong drink does. It destroys my primary right of security, by constantly creating and stimulating social disorder…It impedes my right to free moral and intellectual development, by surrounding my path with dangers, and by weakening and demoralizing society, from which I have a right to claim mutual aid and intercourse.[42]

Mill also saw the dangers inherent in such a standard, arguing that "So monstrous a principle is far more dangerous than any single interference with liberty; there is no violation of liberty which it would not justify; it acknowledges no right to any freedom whatever, except perhaps to that of holding opinions in secret, without ever disclosing them."[43] While there is perhaps something hyperbolic in Mill's statement of the case, it is true that appealing to social harm does threaten greatly to expand the scope of government interference in the free will of citizens. This is a prospect FWT theists should regard with alarm. FWT theists have argued in their theodicy for the great value of free will, and now must demonstrate a commitment to this claim in their political philosophy. Let us examine the various ways in which Millian sins might harm society, and see whether, from the FWT theistic point of view, these social harms might justify infringing upon citizens' free will.

First, a sinful behavior might present a *bad example* to others, and tempt another into sin. However, this argument seems weak: if free will is of such value, then surely making people choose good options by limiting their acquaintance with bad options is a morally dubious strategy. Someone who chooses the good only because she has been kept deliberately ignorant of the available bad options has not exercised her free will in any significant or important sense.

41 This is also one of the lines of argument Geisler and Turek (*Legislating Morality*) advance in favor of legal moralism.

42 John Stuart Mill, *On Liberty*, ed. Elizabeth Rapaport (Hackett Publishing, 1859/1978), 87.

43 Mill, *On Liberty*, 87.

Second, sinful behavior might impose *indirect costs* on society. Thus, alcohol consumption might increase health care costs for everyone (due to the necessity of caring for alcohol-related diseases), or cost the economy money by increasing worker absenteeism. This may well be the case, but if we are trading off between two values, we must assess the relative weight of these two values. And if we consider the weight of free will (extremely high) vs. the value of these indirect costs (money, whose value is obvious), it seems clear that it will be difficult to justify restricting people's metaphysical free will for purely economic reasons.

Finally, sinful behavior might cause *direct harms to individuals*. Thus, a drunk driver might kill someone; an addict might mug someone to acquire money for another fix; alcohol might fuel a date rape; etc. These harms fall much more heavily on individuals, and it is much more difficult to justify these in the name of free will. But in the absence of a necessary or even a regular connection between the sinful activity and direct harm to other individuals, it is difficult to justify interference in the free will of sinners. Most consumers of alcohol do not kill; drug use does not always (or even usually) lead to violent crime. When direct harms to individuals are perpetrated, intervention by the state is surely justified. But when one is engaged in sinful behavior that is correlated with direct harms being inflicted on individuals, without the sinner actually engaging in those direct harms, then it seems like there is no case to be made for restricting the free will of the individual in question. True, allowing these sinful activities will result in an increase in direct harms to individuals. But then so does allowing free will, generally, result in direct harms to individuals; and this is not taken as a decisive objection to allowing free will, or as a reason for God to give us a significantly truncated type of free will. Again, I would like to reiterate that given the value placed on free will in the theodicy, the FWT theist must admit that certain harms (perhaps even serious ones) must be tolerated in name of free will, and that there must be a *prima facie* presumption against further restrictions on free will. If these claims are not true, then it becomes difficult to see how the FWT theist can argue that a world in which we are free, but commit terrible evils, is better than (or just as good as) a world in which we are unfree, but do no evil.

VI. CONCLUSION

Many contemporary theists recognize a tension between theistically-based moral values on the one hand, and political liberty on the other hand; but many, recognizing the value of freedom, argue that liberty ought not be compromised. Thus, Julián Carrón recently wrote, "The combination of these two factors, the collapse of what is self-evident and freedom, might suggest that because the exercise of freedom is risky, the surest way to defend values would be to impose them, so freedom would not go astray."[44] Carrón rejects this path, arguing instead that "The truth cannot be imposed from the outside; it must be embraced and appropriated by man in freedom."[45] Carrón interprets the parable of the prodigal son as teaching a lesson about the necessity of freedom. Discussing Carrón's presentation of the parable, Jason Blakely writes,

> Carrón stresses Jesus' famous parable of the prodigal son whose father gives him his inheritance early so he may fully pursue his freedom and desires even to the point of complete moral dissipation. Why does the father not intervene by the use of force? Why is he not scandalized by the muck of his son's desires? Central to the Christian claim is that every human heart has a desire for the infinite, such that every other desire remains restlessly unsatisfied until a relationship with God is formed. Jesus recognized that real faith must always pass through the free desire of the human heart. Instead of coercion, Jesus' approach was to offer people a bigger, more engaging love.[46]

As Mill pointed out in *On Liberty*, society has many tools besides the law for infringing on the liberty of its citizens. Thus, it may be that the argument of this paper has broader implications for theistic social and moral philosophy. For example, although it may be customary in certain cultures or sub-cultures for a person to appeal to a theistic justification to limit the liberty of family members on moralistic grounds (or to limit their acquaintance with 'worldly' options, and thereby foreclose the possibility of certain free choices), the argument of this paper might be extended to demonstrate that this practice is

44 Julián Carrón, *Disarming Beauty: Essays on Faith, Truth, and Freedom* (University of Notre Dame Press, 2017), 27.

45 Carrón, *Disarming Beauty*, 32.

46 Jason Blakely, "The Book Christians Should Read Instead of 'The Benedict Option'", https://www.americamagazine.org/arts-culture/2017/06/14/book-christians-should-read-instead-benedict-option (14 June 2017).

inconsistent with the very theistic values which are appealed to to justify it. My argument may also demonstrate that it is inconsistent for a society to appeal to theistic grounds to justify the use of other, extra-legal methods (of the sort discussed by Mill) to limit the liberty of its members to engage in Millian sin. It is beyond the scope of this essay to explore these options; I only wish to point out some further possible implications of this argument.

But even if I cannot explore these issues, I hope I have made the case that theists who endorse a free will theodicy cannot defend (on theistic grounds) the sort of legal moralism that we have recently seen in Uganda and other places. Such an appeal to theistic morality to justify the criminalization of Millian sin is inconsistent with the FWT theist's claims about the importance of free will and the overwhelming value of its exercise.

APPENDIX[47]

A survey of 5159 adults residing in the US was conducted in October 2016. Of these, 3178 either agreed or strongly agreed with the statement, "I believe in the existence of a personal God, who created the universe and all living things." Of these 3178, 796 *both*:

> agreed or strongly agreed with the statement, "I believe that a country or state should be allowed to make some activities illegal (such as homosexual acts, or blasphemy, or private recreational use of mind-altering substances, etc.) just because society sees these activities as immoral (even if these activities don't directly harm society);"

and

> answered the question, "Why does God allow humans to perform immoral actions, like murder and rape, which harm other people?" by choosing (from among four options) the following answer: "God gave humans the valuable gift of free will, which allows humans to choose between good and evil."

We can say with 95% confidence that the proportion of US theists holding both views (legal moralism and the free will theodicy) is within the interval [.235 to .265].[48]

47 I am very grateful for Daniel Westbrook's assistance in the statistical analysis of the data.

48 The outcome of the survey is very sensitive to the wording of the survey questions. A pilot survey (n = 505) in which the legal moralism question was worded slightly differently resulted in 48% of theists affirming both views (legal moralism and the free will theodicy). In the full

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BOOK REVIEWS AND NOTICES

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Andrew T. E. Loke, *God and Ultimate Origins: A Novel Cosmological Argument*, London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017, 200 pp.

If the debate over God's existence is a chess match, then the Kalam cosmological argument is a well-worn opening with many classic variations. Major and minor moves have been studied intensely by the greatest minds throughout history. This opening is about as powerful, or as weak, as the player who delivers it.

Enter Loke. Loke is not interested in playing a game of intellectual chess. His goal is more ambitious: he sets out to reveal *entirely new lines* available to the Kalam proponent. These lines emerge a few moves beyond typical first moves. In this review, I will consider some of the most interesting lines Loke proposes.

I first setup the position with the basic Kalam opening:

(1) Everything that begins to exist has a cause.

(2) The universe began to exist.

(3) Therefore, the universe has a cause. (1, 2)

(4) A cause of the universe would be a powerful, timeless (sans creation) personal agent.

(5) Therefore, a powerful, timeless (sans creation) personal agent caused our universe to begin to exist. (3, 4)

Start with (1). Loke begins by examining historical and contemporary lines in the debate over (1). He pays special attention to a "battle on the edges" exchange between Graham Oppy and William Lane Craig. What's at stake here is an argument for (1), which begins with a principle I shall call "Causal Modal Uniformity" (CMU):

> CMU: If something *can* come into being without a cause at the first moment, then things *can* come into being without a cause at later moments.

Loke identifies dialectical drawbacks in Craig's defense of CMU. For example, Craig weds himself to the controversial dynamic of time by his A-theoretic analysis of "comes to be". Moreover, Oppy advances a piece that threatens CMU. The threat is this: once things already exist, the placement of those things act as a necessary causal condition for any new things that might appear. If so, then once the first stuff appears uncaused, no new stuff *can* appear free from causally relevant conditions. This result knocks off CMU.

Loke tries a slight variation on CMU. I shall call his variation, "Causal Counterfactual Uniformity" (CCU):

> CCU: If the initial state of reality began to exist uncaused, then certain states of affairs *would* begin to exist uncaused at later moments of time.

To reinforce CCU, Loke appeals to an argument from *inexplicable differences*. His detailed description of the argument leaves open a number of interpretations. Here is one, briefly. Suppose S can begin to exist uncaused at the first moment. Then *nothing* prior to S's existence could explain why S has *its* particular properties. Therefore, S may be anything and may obtain anywhere at any time. Nothing stops that.

Loke highlights advantages of his strategy. First, it is not vulnerable to an attack on a dynamic theory of time. That is because mere differences in times, whether they are B-theoretic or A-theoretic, are not causally relevant. Moreover, Loke thinks he can block Oppy's threat by describing states of affairs (in particular, certain changes in energy fields), such that existing things would be causally irrelevant to their obtaining.

Loke's moves highlight a territory deserving further analysis. I see a few countermoves worth examining. First, a Platonist might suppose that there are brute necessary truths about uninstantiated properties, including truths about which properties can begin to be instantiated uncaused. On this theory, perhaps (*contra* Loke) there *are* things — abstract things — prior to an uncaused beginning that could explain why that beginning has its particular properties. Second, one might decline to accept that there needs to be any explanation of why only certain things, such as our universe, can begin uncaused. Perhaps it is just brute. Third, perhaps we can reinforce the Oppy-threat by developing further hypotheses about how existing things place

causal conditions with respect to *any* new state of affairs; then, only a first state could begin without a causal condition.

These potential countermoves are far from decisive. But they show that the "inexplicable differences" argument doesn't yet take us into an end game. There are more moves to play on both sides.

Loke's most imaginative argument is his defense of (2) — a finite past. After reviewing a pattern of moves in the current state of the debate, Loke tells a Christmas story. One version of the story goes like this:

> A Christmas present generator generates presents at regular intervals for as long as time has existed. Meanwhile, a person generator generates persons at the same regular intervals. Happily, each person grabs a present. The end.

The point of the story is to highlight this:

> P. Each person grabbing one present from one temporal location rather than another has no causal power with respect to the presence of leftover presents.

For example, suppose *two* people and *two* presents are produced. Then each person receives a present and no presents are leftover. It makes no difference *when* people grab their presents. No matter when they do, all presents are unaccounted for at the end.

Things become strange, however, if we allow an infinite causal chain. Suppose, first, that each person grabs the present the same day it is produced, where one is produced each day. Then no presents are left over at the end. Next, suppose instead that people grab their presents this way: the person produced today grabs the present produced *yesterday*, and the person produced n days ago grabs the present produced $2 * n$ days ago, where n is an integer ≥ 0. Then there will be infinitely many presents left over. Notice that the only difference between these cases is *when* certain produced presents are grabbed. This result violates P.

We now have Loke's argument for a finite causal history:

(1) If an infinite causal chain is possible, then P is possibly false.

(2) P is not possibly false.

(3) Therefore, an infinite causal chain is not possible.

You may wonder what might underwrite P. After all, P is about *Christmas presents*, and any necessary truth about Christmas presents will surely depend on more basic truths. Loke hints at a more basic principle when he suggests that causal power depends entirely on the *things* with causal power, not those things plus their *number*. One way (among others) to unpack this suggestion is in terms of inexplicable differences. In the two Christmas stories, the causal acts involve the *same* presents and the *same* people each performing the *same* type of act of grabbing a present. Yet, the effects are infinitely different: infinitely many presents are left over in the one story but not the other. What accounts for this difference? Loke argues that no differences are *causally relevant*. In other words, we have a difference in the effect without any relevant difference in the causes. That's absurd.

We are far from checkmate, however. There are defensive moves to explore. Perhaps we can put pressure on the premise that the differences between the cases are causally irrelevant. Or, we could explore ways to challenge the premise that a causal difference is required.

Still, there may be a way to reinforce his basic strategy by clarifying the connection between the cause and the effect. Consider a variation on his story. Suppose an infinite causal history has produced infinitely many villages. Each village elects a tree planter to provide more resources for producing Christmas presents. There are two planting strategies, Sparse and Plenty. In Sparse, the tree planters each plant a tree in their village. The result is that each village enjoys one more grown tree, from which a fancy snow sled is constructed. In Plenty, by contrast, the tree planters plant their trees in different locations. The soil is equally good, and the trees all grow at the same pace as before. But this time the tree planters plant in *other* villages. They arrange their planting as follows: for each village V_n, the ten tree planters from villages V_{10*n} to V_{10*n+9} plant their trees in V_n, where n is an integer ≥ 0. The result is that each village now grows ten new trees. In other words, planting the same seeds in different places yields *more stuff* for every village.

We can be precise about the meaning of "more stuff": scenario s_2 has more stuff than scenario s_1 if and only if s_2 has whatever s_1 has, while s_1 lacks something in s_2. Placing trees in one place gives each village a table, while placing those *same* trees in different places gives each village a snow sled plus nine additional trees for constructing a variety of other gifts. That's more stuff.

This result is strange, to say the least. The causal acts in both scenarios are qualitatively the same, yet the effects are wildly different. The causes only differ in their *location*, but locations don't have causal powers over and above the powers of the seeds and soil at those locations. Thus, we have the same causal acts with qualitatively different effects. If you have the intuition that this result is problematic, then you have an intuition that gets at a root of Loke's reason for the necessity of P.

Interestingly, a similar sort of "inexplicable differences" principle appears to be at work in many of Loke's other arguments. It guides his argument against uncaused beginnings (as we saw). It also appears to reinforce a Thomist variation he proposes. His basic thought there is this: whether causal chains are infinite or looped, there is something in the chain that isn't *explained* unless there is an uncaused cause of the chain. Take loops. Loke cites a case where someone learns to build a time machine from his future self, where his future self merely reveals what he remembered learning from *himself*. Here we have an *effect* — i.e., information about how to build a time machine — with no ultimate explanation. The same is so if knowledge is passed down from generation to generation, ad infinitum. In both cases, an effect exists (i.e., some knowledge) without any explanation.

You might wonder why an explanation should even be required. Loke has various things to say, but it appears to me that an "inexplicable differences" principle may be a root of Loke's thinking. Consider that there is no knowledge of how to build a time machine in *our* world. That's because *no one figured it out* (and we can assume for sake of illustration that it could be figured out). Yet, the same is so in the above scenarios: no one *figured out* how to build a time machine. Thus, no causally relevant difference explains how such knowledge exists in the loop and infinite regress scenarios but not ours.

Loke completes the book by considering the identity of an Uncaused Cause. Here he follows a "William Lane Craig" pattern of play to argue that the Cause is timeless (in an initial changeless state), powerful, and personal. The main moves here are not new.

I conclude with a note about how to get the most out of this book. I recommend thinking of the book as an invitation to analyze strategies rather than as a playbook for decisive lines of victory. Loke displays details of many contemporary arguments for and against each premise in the Kalam argument. He skillfully navigates through current debates as he finds his way to certain dia-

lectical positions. He then contributes some ideas for how to make progress on those positions. Many of his proposals are tweaks, or comments, on existing lines, and they are generally consistent with a number of distinct interpretations. If you read his proposals too narrowly, you may miss avenues for further exploration on both sides. If, instead, you see his proposals as invitations to have a closer look at some classic board positions, then Loke's book will help you see more than you had. You will get an up-to-date landscape of analysis of one of the most significant and widely "played" arguments in history.

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R.T. Mullins, *The End of the Timeless God*, New York: Oxford University Press 2016, 248 pp.

There is an old anecdote on a question posed to Augustine: "What was God doing before creating the World?" It seems that the venerable philosopher answered: "He was preparing Hell for curious people!" Putting aside Augustine's wry irony, the story concerns one of the deepest questions which presses the human intellect: what is the relation between God (as intended by the principal monotheistic religions) and time? Is God outside time? What do we mean when we say that He is eternal? Was there a time in which only God existed and there was no World? Similar questions arose over the course of theological and philosophical reflection for two thousand years.

Mullins' book has a twofold purpose: it aims both at reconstructing the debate within Christian theology about the temporality of God and at arguing that a timeless conception of God is incompatible with the God of Revelation. Although the aim is ambitious, the book keeps the promise: it is a very well written, informed, and stimulating work. Obviously, there is plenty of food for thought and I will give just a hint of the main topics discussed through the chapters and, by way of conclusion, I will sketch some reflections on it.

The introduction and first chapter are dedicated to methodological questions; straightforwardly, Mullins does not approve of many of the contemporary positions in theology exclusively based on a metaphorical and evocative use of language, alien to any discussion with modern scientific theories and recent

metaphysical investigations. It is, after all, the core idea of the Analytic Theology Project (cf. for instance, Oliver D. Crisp, Michael C. Rea (eds.), *Analytic Theology. New Essays in the Philosophy of Theology*. Oxford University Press 2009) to whom a series of books edited by Crisp and Rea for OUP, is dedicated.

In order to investigate the relationship between God and time, it is essential to scrutinize the concepts which occur in such relation; Mullins provides an interesting overview of the main views in the metaphysics of time and of persistence. It is an important point since many debates in the analytic philosophy of religion lack a clear characterisation of the concept of time they are assuming.

The third chapter is devoted to the analysis of eternity construed as atemporality. Accordingly three intuitions ground this concept: being beginningless, endless, and successionless. Furthermore, the intrinsic plausibility of a timeless conception of God depends on how precisely one is able to determine eternity as a mode of being. Moreover, the concept of eternity is deeply intertwined with the divine attribute of necessity and, in turn, with God's immutability. The leading models of necessary and immutable entities, at least in Western metaphysics, are the Platonic Forms. However, immutability seems to be a feature at odds with the idea according to which God is essentially and chiefly a Person. Here, we can find, *in nuce*, one of the fundamental intuitions of Mullins' proposal, that is, that God's timelessness is not compatible with the features of God that make Him the God of Revelation and Faith.

Chapter four takes into account a classical topic in philosophy of religion: can a timeless God be omniscient? Kretzmann ('Omniscience and Immutability', *The Journal of Philosophy*, 63, 14, pp. 409-421, 1966) put things as a dilemma: a timeless God, if omniscient, always knows what time it is. Since the present moment is changing God cannot be immutable because His knowledge must change from time to time. Therefore, either God is immutable but not omniscient, or He is omniscient but not immutable. Mullins makes explicit the underlying metaphysics of these arguments: a dynamic conception of time. According to Mullins, presentism is the dynamic view of time par excellence and it is assumed within theological discourse. Mullins seems to agree with Kretzmann's analysis; however, according to him, the main set of reasons that refute the idea of a timeless God concern Revelation and its historical character. I will shortly come back on this point in the conclusions.

The fifth chapter focuses on the metaphysical assumptions that are necessary to support the idea according to which God creates the World ex nihilo

and He sustains it at every instant. The problem with this account is the following: the Creation relation is construed as a form of dependence between God and temporal entities. But, then, since this relation essentially involves temporal entities, God Himself must exhibit some temporal features and this, according to Mullins, would lead one to accept a temporal God.

If presentism is a problem for conceiving of a timeless God, the alternative metaphysics of time, that is, Four-Dimensional Eternalism (chapter six) is similarly puzzling. Katherin Rogers (cf. for instance Katherin A. Rogers, *Perfect Being Theology*, Edinburgh University Press 2000) alters the explanatory order: since her intuition of God is Anselmian in character (God is the Perfect, Eternal, Immutable Being) and since this account is not compatible with a dynamic vision of reality, it follows that the World has to be four-dimensional. Unfortunately, this account shows rather serious problems for a religious conception of world. First, it is not clear how to give a meaning to the concept of Creation ex nihilo: from Rogers' point of view there is not a state of affairs including God but leaving out the World; on the other hand, she has to account for the ontological asymmetry between God and World. Generally speaking, four-dimensional eternalism entails, according to Mullins, the collapse of modality: all reality becomes a necessary emanation of God, removing, then, freedom and Grace which are at the heart of the Christian Research Program.

Eventually, chapter seven is the most theologically-oriented in character and it deals with the Incarnation. Mullins examines many Christological accounts: they differ in the anthropological and theological structure ascribed to Jesus Christ. But in each paradigm it is hard, again, to account for the fact that God the Father embodies Himself into Christ without admitting a temporal dimension within God.

As said before, there are many questions calling for discussion. I will limit myself to a couple of points, one more specific and the other more general. Mullins assumes presentism as the classical dynamical view of time. There is no doubt that this view meets the common sense requirement. Moreover, Mullins' historical reconstruction is totally plausible: classical theology assumed a presentist view of time. But presentism is a very puzzling metaphysics for those who want to include a timeless God; in fact, one supposes that God holds many kinds of relations (epistemic, of dependence, and so on) with entities which, according to presentism, do not exist since they are future entities. "God cannot act at non-existent times, nor is God eternally

sustaining yet-to-exist futures times" (p. 106). Mullins is perfectly right; but presentism is not the only option which allows a dynamic metaphysics. Specifically, the moving spotlight theory (for a recent debate, see: Ross P. Cameron, *The Moving Spotlight*. Clarendon Press 2015; Bradford Skow, *Objective Becoming*. Oxford University Press, 2015) admits the entire domain of facts (present, past and future facts) with a dynamic feature of reality, the changing now. Also, more exotic solutions such as Fragmentalism (cf. Kit Fine, 'Tense and Reality', in *Papers on Modality and Tense*, Clarendon Press, 2005.) could give an alternative solution in this regard.

The more general remark to Mullins' overall strategy is the following: doubtlessly, metaphysical properties which Perfect Being Theology ascribes to God are hardly compatible with the conception of a Revealed God. However, it could be a bit early to throw in the towel. God's eternity and God's temporality can be two modalities, equally real, of His being. The twofold perspective is discussed by Mullins but quickly discarded: "One could talk about God under the perspective of eternity and under the perspective of creation, but all such talk is a red herring because the eternal perspective is the true description of reality on the divine timeless research program." (p. 139). In my opinion, this is not a necessary conclusion. Of course, a superficial discussion of this twofold perspective is not enough; one must provide an account, a description, and ideally a model of it. But it is not sympathetic with this intuition to state that the point of view of eternity is the right one, since if one advocates this pluralist view he then allows the soundness of the other perspective too. An example could help to clarify this point. Mullins criticises the concept of eternity by echoing Kenny's argument: "All of time is simultaneous with eternity. Time t1 is simultaneous with eternity. Time t2 is simultaneous with eternity. Thus t1 is simultaneous with t2. [...] It has the high price of collapsing the chronology of time." (p. 153). But, Stump and Kretzmann (Eleonore Stump, Norman Kretzmann, 'Eternity', *The Journal of Philosophy*, 78, 8 (1981), pp. 429–458) try to provide a theory of eternity which is able to account for this objection by introducing the concept of ET-simultaneity, which is not transitive. As it is known, Stump and Kretzmann want to keep a "robust" concept of timeless God without abandoning the idea of a really temporal world; in other words, even if they do not make it explicit, they aim to provide a coherent account of a timeless God and universe characterised by A-theory. In that, the concept of ET-simultaneity is crucial: it is the tem-

poral sui generis relation between God (the Eternal) and the World (the Temporal). So, from Stump and Kretzmann's point of view, it makes sense to say that God is intrinsically tenseless but, at the same time, He maintains genuine temporal relations with temporal entities.

It is not the purpose of this short review to investigate the feasibility of Stump and Kretzmann's proposal, but nevertheless it shows that it is possible to maintain a twofold perspective about God's timelessness and temporality. That said, I would like to reaffirm that Mullins' book is extremely informed and could be useful also as an introduction to these topics. It is, above all, a great book of theology and philosophy of religion which looks for the truth with an open mind and does not hide into any comfortable "mystery".

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Duane Armitage, *Heidegger's Pauline and Lutheran Roots*, London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016, 212pp.

Perhaps the greatest achievement of Duane Armitage's book is its sobriety; it renders Heidegger's mystifications clear, even when the discussion turns to the *Beiträge*. The rarity of this feat alone justifies the book's existence. But, this modestly sized book offers more than clear exposition, it also persuasively argues for the continuity of Heidegger's thought from his earliest interest in Luther to his lectures on Paul to *Being and Time* to the aforementioned *Contributions to Philosophy*. Instead of reading the lattermost text, normally noted as the book marking Heidegger's *Kehre*/turn, as a break from his earlier work, Armitage rather shows a homologous continuity of this text with Heidegger's thought that precedes it.

This review, however, will not just summarize and praise Armitage's book. I will rather try to forge possible lines of criticism to expose questions and assumptions operative in Armitage's text that he may be unaware he is asking and assuming.

Armitage understands Heidegger's *Seinsfrage*, in *all* of its formulations leading up to and including the *Beiträge* of 1936-1938, as the question of intelligibility itself. "What are the conditions for the possibility of intelligibility?

…what makes intelligibility possible?" (2). This formulation implicates Armitage's Kantian understanding of Heidegger's question as a transcendental question about the necessary condition(s) of the possibility of the experience of being as intelligible. While this is an already well established approach to Heidegger, more scandalous is that Armitage argues that Heidegger retains this way of transcendentally posing and attempting to answer this Parmenidean question even through the *Beiträge*.

Armitage does not understand Heidegger to be asking about what makes some specific being or even being in general intelligible, which would be to ask after its "beingness (*Seiendheit*)", but he rightly understands Heidegger to be asking why there is even intelligibility at all. He is right to see that Heidegger is ultimately not asking for the specific structures and categories of intelligibility – although that may seem to be the case in *Being and Time*, Heidegger's most transcendentally oriented text – but rather why or how such transcendental conditions themselves are at all? I, however, remain less convinced that Heidegger does not move away from a transcendental form of the question of being in the *Beiträge*, given that Heidegger there acknowledges that other conditions of intelligibility are possible and hence that none are necessary.

If Heidegger's question is about why or how there is intelligibility as such, whereas metaphysics deigns to actually provide *the* intelligible condition itself as *the* ultimate condition of "beingness" – i.e., since Plato, beings are grounded in the intelligibility of the idea – then Heidegger's question is about the condition(s) for the possibility of metaphysics. Armitage is thus obliged to explain and trace the lineage of Heidegger's *Destruktion* of metaphysics. Metaphysics, as mentioned, makes the condition of being, beingness, coincide with intelligibility. Metaphysics conceives of a being "according to it being the grounded of a ground (*Seiendheit*)" (27). Relying on the well-known meaning of *Grund* as referring to both cause and reason, I suggest that metaphysics be defined, in a way compatible with Armitage's own understanding, as the reciprocal grounding of the principle of sufficient reason in a first being (God) and the inverse grounding of God by means of the fact that the sufficient reason for his existence is contained within God's own essence, as in the ontological argument. Metaphysics is thus ontotheology or the coincidence of God and the principle of sufficient reason, which means that metaphysics,

failing to ask why there is *Grund*/reason/intelligibility in the first place, omits the question of the "truth" of being.

Armitage's analysis begins by showing that Heidegger's deconstruction of the metaphysical tradition is rooted in Luther's destruction of the metaphysics of the Aristotelian, Scholastic tradition. This connection has already been drawn by others, perhaps most brilliantly by Sean McGrath in *The Early Heidegger and Medieval Philosophy: Phenomenology for the Godforsaken*, but Armitage expertly shows that for both Luther and the early Heidegger the deconstructive project is tethered to the desire to expose a "primitive" or "primordial Christianity." Of lasting significance, as one sees throughout *Being and Time*, is that this return to the primitive and factical is only possible by removing the theoretical. Armitage concludes, "Deconstruction then is primarily aimed at the theoretical, whether it be the theoretical theologizing of the Scholastics or the theoretical philosophizing of the metaphysical tradition" (25). One is here provided with what is apparently so problematic with metaphysics: "'metaphysical' thinking, namely, the privileging of the theoretical intelligibility over pre-thematic and pre-theoretical existentiality or facticity" (40). This, however, is something Heidegger learned not just through Luther, but directly from Paul, as Armitage demonstrates in chapter two.

Many valuable connections between pre-*Being and Time* Heidegger and the Heidegger of *Being and Time* are drawn in the second chapter on Paul, but the most central among these hinges upon the notion of temporality that Armitage argues Heidegger first discovered in Paul. Once the theoretical has been repealed and primitive or factical Christianity phenomenologically laid bare, the Christian appears as one called faithfully to live in a between-time ecstatically stretched out between the first and second coming, the *Parousia*, the still-to-come, the future toward which the Christian is called and toward which their whole being is gathered in all its possibilities. In *Being and Time* this becomes the fact that authenticity is only possible in one's anticipation of a death they cannot share with others. There is, in any event, no privileging of the present, but the Christian, *per* Paul, lives in anticipation of a future possibility on the basis of a past event by means of her presently being called (the call of conscience in *Being and Time* and the winking of the Gods in the *Beiträge*). As Luther exclaimed, the Christian does not regard beings as they are now, but "as if not." Faithful or authentic existence is futural, regarding beings not as they are but as they ought to be. The theoretical desires knowledge

of how beings are, but faith and authentic resoluteness regard beings as they may be and oneself as called to be.

I harbor no objections to Armitage's genealogy of concepts in Heidegger's early corpus. When Armitage moves to the *Beiträge*, however, I become more skeptical, but a skepticism by which my mind is set at play. Here I think it proves useful to question Armitage's formulation of Heidegger's question of being as well as Armitage's own assumptions, as he explicitly wants to show that Heidegger's Pauline and Lutheran roots, *and*, implicitly, also his Kantian, transcendental roots are still operative.

If, in the *Beiträge*, Heidegger regards being as the source of its own forgetting, then the human being is seemingly let off the hook for her inauthenticity, her deliverance over to technology and the *Gestell*. How consistently are we think being rather than the human being as source of agency? If the forgetting of being in metaphysics derives from being's own withdrawal, would it not follow that the destruction of metaphysics is also enacted by being rather than the human being? Can only a God can save us now?

Armitage provides an excellent analysis of the temple in the *Origin of the Work of Art* as a way of explaining the passing by (*Vorbeigang*) of the Gods in the *Beiträge*. There is here an ambivalence in Heidegger that Armitage is unable to render less ambivalent. Under a deflationary reading, talk of God and the temple becomes just a fanciful way of pointing to radical shifts in cultural understanding, so that it would not be the case that a God first beckons a people to build a temple/dwelling for itself, but rather that certain events radically reorient human understanding and this is all that is meant by the passing by of a God. So, how much ought Heidegger be demythologized? How demythologized and deflationary is Heidegger's account of the Gods? Does the passing by of the God draft the space of the holy itself or is the temple a prerequisite for the God's advent? Does God only come if humans have first done the work of preparing his entry or do humans first work because called by the coming God? Does grace result from works or are works only wrought in grace?

One indication that God's advent or absence lies in human hands is Armitage's correct gloss of Heidegger that "appearing occurs in *naming*" (123). Yet, "it is the gods who first draw us to name them. The naming of the gods is always an answer or response to the beckoning of the gods" (124). Additionally, "The holy gives the word, and it is this given word that is *Ereignis*

itself as the event of the holy" (127). Nevertheless, in the last chapter Armitage will also defend Heidegger from Kearney's critique that if being and the gods are the real agents, this leaves us ethically impotent, insisting "The impotency before the last god is rather a *metaphysical impotency*" (146) as opposed to an ethico-political impotency. This still means that without the human being as the preserver of the truth of being, the one who names and brings the Gods into unconcealment, their passing by cannot occur. Ultimately, Armitage fails to remove this ambivalence in Heidegger's thought. Is the temple built because the Gods have promised to come – making *Field of Dreams* quite Heideggerian: "if you build it, he will come" – or do the Gods advene only as a consequence of human building? Is *Gelassenheit* a lack of works, as in Paul, Luther and Protestantism, or is the (de)construction of temples a human work performed prior to the advent/departure of the God as its very condition? Or, is this a false dichotomy and ambivalence ought to remain? Is a middle voice appropriate? Or, are Gods the anterior agents and human works and understanding consequent, *but* agents only exist through their consequents, what Levinas has termed the posteriority of the anterior? Perhaps to be is to have a consequence and not to have a consequence is not to be, so that though Gods and being are the agents, if their agency does not result in consequents, that agency is as much as naught? I remain skeptical about all of this, but these would be questions I would pose to Armitage.

Armitage has masterfully shown that Heidegger's Pauline and Lutheran roots are not just present in *Being and Time*, but also in the *Beiträge*. But, he does not stop there. He boldly concludes, "My thesis is that since Heidegger is the root to all continental philosophy of religion and postmodern theology, insofar as all presuppose methodologically his onto-theological critique as axiomatic" – a fairly indisputable point! – "and since Heidegger's disdain for onto-theology is rooted in Luther" – as he, and others, have deftly demonstrated – "essentially all postmodern theological thinking is fundamentally Lutheran" (153). This last clause is audacious, but it follows. I will not combat this conclusion, but attempt to push this radical thesis farther. To recall Armitage's transcendental formulation of Heidegger's *Seinsfrage*, could one also conclude that although transcendental philosophy began with Kant that critical philosophy – these are not synonymous concepts – the tribunal of reason, began with Luther and his reading of Paul's critique of the reason of

the Greeks and the signs of the Jews in favor of the foolishness of the Cross? Armitage claims,

> The deconstruction of the history of ontology and the overcoming of the Western metaphysical tradition is precisely a critique of rationality itself, insofar as rationality is taken to mean the basic fundamental categories of cause, essence, substance, and so on (166).

Armitage justifiably reads Heidegger as a Kantian, but what remains unthought is the possibility that *criticism* has its origins in a Pauline and Lutheran tribunal of reason that does *not* yet pose this critique as a transcendentalism, i.e., as Kantian critique. Perhaps the post-Heideggerian tradition can remain a form of criticism while extricating itself from transcendentalism. If Paul and Luther founded metaphysical critique, do they not also offer a way of bypassing Kantian criticism? This is an unthought possibility liberated by Armitage's penetrating reading.